

This Will Make You Stop Judging Others Immediately

“Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven” (Luke 6:37).

A 16th-century English church Reformer named John Bradford allegedly said, “There, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford,” as he watched executioners lead his fellow prisoners to their deaths. Bradford, who had been imprisoned in the Tower of London for his Protestant faith by Queen Mary I of England, was later burned at the stake, dying a martyr’s death.

It is said that, “Before the fire was lit, [Bradford] begged forgiveness of any he had wronged, and offered forgiveness to those who had wronged him. He subsequently turned to his fellow and said, ‘Be of good comfort brother; for we shall have a merry supper with the Lord this night!’” (Wikipedia).

What an amazing man of God!

Forgiveness was the last sentiment Bradford felt, not judgement. How easy it would have been for him to judge those who harmed him, but instead, as he stood chained to a stake facing his accusers, this man echoed the words his Lord had spoken a century and a half before. Just as when Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34) as He hung on that cross, Bradford spoke words of love in the face of hate. Words of *mercy* and *grace* in the face of great darkness. And words of *forgiveness* in the face of unimaginable persecution.

From Bradford’s quote, “There, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford,” came the well-known statement, “There, but for the grace of God, go I.” Bradford didn’t look upon the

offenses of his fellow prisoners with condemnation, though he had every opportunity to do so. He—being a righteous man, imprisoned for his faith in Christ—didn't judge those around him for their sins. He didn't compare his sins to others, considering himself greater than the other inmates, but instead, *he knew his place*. He knew he was no better than any other. He knew that apart from God's grace, we are all capable of doing the unthinkable.

And I think that just may be the key. Perhaps humbly accepting our propensity to sin is the very thing that protects us from sin. Maybe recognizing our proclivity toward sin is what enables us to keep a humble heart. To judge *ourselves* with sober judgment. To not think more highly of ourselves than we ought (Rom. 12:3). All of which should drive us to God. When we rightfully believe we're capable of doing things we never thought we could, we begin to understand what I believe Bradford understood—our incredible need for God's amazing grace. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10), and he was right. It is by grace alone that we stand ... that I stand.

We are *all* prone to folly; we are all prone to sin. And so, it is not our place to judge.

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