No. 53.

On judging others.
Matth. vii. 1. "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

This is one of those excellent directions for the regulation of our thoughts and expressions, which has so forcibly inculcated in his admirable sermon on the mount. It is a rule of most extensive meaning and application. Like most of the precepts of , it goes to the foundation of our actions. It is intended to guard the heart, as well as the lips, to seal upon the fountain of unkind and uncharitable judgments, as well as upon the tongue, that loves to send abroad the whispers of suspicion or the clamours of an accusing spirit. Would we but obey this generous & righteous precept, many a sort of bitterness, whosoever
springs up between man & man, would be eradicate
many of those contentions, & poison the happiness of
life, would be quelled. & many of the rough places
of union, of a chord of love, we should find it to be a
better, while we became more charitable to others.

The precept of the text, like many others on the
is stated in general terms. But we are not to understand
it as intended to forbid, in any way, to check the hor
exercise of the judgment. This indeed would be imprac
cable, & neither reason nor religion requires it. On the
various events & actions, that pass before our eyes in the
world, we may, & indeed of our own thoughts, we must
form an opinion. The faculty of judgment is iner	
able from many; if we renounce it, we renounce of the
tingushng privileges, by which we are raised above the
orders of the animal creation. No does the precept of
whence we now considering, prohibit all diminisin
ments with regard to our neighbors & friends. It certainly
allows us, for instance, to form favorable opinions, to think
well of, & kindly of our fellow men, for this is the very fruit
of religion. It permits us to urge all that truth & sympa
thetic will allow, to exonerate the faults, whom are so
kind of charging upon each other. Now there is a sort of most
amount of judgment, & this way, & the precept of the text
does not forbid; & of this laudable zeal be an illusion, it
is to be wished that there was more of this sweet illusion
among those, who bear the name of Christ. And there is
another sort of judgment, & this is not only allowable, but an
indispensably necessary; & that is the judgment which
is passed upon those criminal actions, by which the peace &
fare of society are endangered. Who shall forbid us to ad
sign & judge the man, whose guilty passions have hur
ried him on to that point, where his own becomes no
longer a mere matter of personal concern, but involves the
safety & happiness of all around him? If there be men who
can overlook the mounds, which are reared around the rights
of society, the hand of public justice must grasp them.
before misery & confusion have followed in his tracks, yet points of view I shall now proceed to consider the pre-
who does not know that a thousand cases occur in life, the
men in it is so plain, if the proofs of it so clear, that
not justify it to ourselves & to others would be but a mo-
less, the passions? And in cases like these, most mean
of all teachers is the most reasonable to
not command us to shut our eyes on evidence or to the
ple against the truth.
Thus we see that there is room enough for a fair light, which receives the images of external objects. When we
proper exercise of the judgment; without passing any
the step beyond the line marked out by our Saviour in the
text. What then is the prohibition intended in the
precept? The answer is, that it is designed to regulate
thoughts & to regulate our expressions; — the object
our Lord had in view was to guard & condemn that
that disposition of heart, which inclines men to judge hastily, maliciously, or harshly of the actions of their fellow men; to judge otherwise to condemn those actions. The sufficient evidence that they deserve to be condemned
is in asserting the facts as they have been presented.
other minds & giving them a lasting place

I am forbidden to cherish an accusing spirit & a con-
manifest when we judge precipitately & hastily of the
communication of our fellow men. It is true, the first impression
is not always in our favor. There are certain feelings of
apprehension & disappointment, which seem to warn us in the
as naturally & promptly as the eye, when open to things

in our thoughts & feelings, when it may be we shall afterwards find that they ought to have been bade so forever. It is true, we cannot but see objects such as they present themselves to us; but then we ought not to remember that they may be very different from what they seem. Who has not learned from experience to recognize that appearances are deceitful? Has often do so done, find our opinions incorrect, even when we think we have been furnished with the best means of information, & how much more shall we judge with securer means of information at all? And who can wonder to submit to this slow process, though reason & religion frequently prove to unjust, unkind, uncharitable, irritable, & unpardoned from that feebleness of spirit, which dreads to incur the might as well expect to meet a stable edifice in a torrent of investigation. If it allow us to suppose ourselves mistaken in our first what you see & hear merely on first impressions. Then the multitude of your friends & your neighbors has with the loud voice of censure, even if you feel disposed to think the censure unjust, does not condone does not charity, does not religion require you to our lend your judgment. Ask yourself, whether you are sufficiently acquainted with the facts, whether you have with accuracy the accompanying circumstances; whether you can look behind the action & see the motive, the intention, & whether too you own mind, while passing a hasty decision, do not underrate some of the numerous influences of interest or of passion? These are questions, such as men & as persons we are bound to put to ourselves, before we suffer any opinion or impression on the subject to take deep root in our hearts. Yet how unerring are our
would be well for us to reflect a little, before we condemn in our hearts a brother of the human family. We forget indeed that it is by no means necessary for us to judge at all; - nothing, as we are, self constituted judges, we do not hesitate to pronounce a decision without an adequate knowledge of the cause.

But this is not all. The text does not merely forbid preconceived notions in judging. There is another fault the precept of our Saviour is designed to prohibit. And that is to think we are much deeper sinners than others. I mean, that bitterness of spirit, that acidity of feeling, so often have a place in our hearts and minds, we turn our opinions of the actions of others. It is a universal truth, that the greater part of mankind are disposed to condemn, or to interpret in the bad sense, the conduct or conversation of others. If we can but furnish to ourselves a reason for thinking evil of those with whom we associate. We are fond of exaggerating favorable examples, the conduct of conversation, of thinking. We can but furnish to ourselves a reason for thinking evil of those with whom we associate. We are fond of exaggerating favorable examples, the conduct of conversation, of thinking. We are fond of exaggerating favorable examples, the conduct of conversation, of thinking.
sition of the spirit of all human may tinge our judgment from our fellow men by harsh & bitter judgments
with their own sprinkling trees. And there are certainly not it is, we are willing to trust evil reports, though for
men's minds, perhaps we have contracted against themselves, they are but the suggestions of malice of the common
noods, which incline us without examination to receive with a perfectly
tuth, that may be said against them, the state, where they take the shadow of unkind thoughts,
argued especially from one thing to another, from the soul even it till it becomes an imagination a fact
unless the idea of events & principles. Such are a partial reality. What we cannot find in the action, we
trivial facts to general principles. Without the motive: 8 of this explanation
the numerous motives which all human the society are willing to seek in the motive: of this explanation
our judgments, renders us unkind in our judgments time nh might be given of our neighbours' conduct, it
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learn to adhere with more fidelity to our own duty in the midst of our being, as restraining censures let us believe, we should not pass the bounds marked out by the Bible. To the words of St. James, "but if ye have bitter enmity of our religion, then we might extract good from strife in your hearts, glory not, nor be not against the truth, it might not be in vain that we had bode the wisdom delivered not from above, but is earthly, sensual, wickedness of men. But how few are there, who call, diabolical: for when envy is working, there is condescension, wise enough to be thus moderate. After having judged every evil work, oun..."

Thus far. I have spoken of the unjust judgments which we hastily and harshly condemn without pity or with reservation. Instead of softening the sentence, without supporting them to have gone beyond it more rigorously stern. The fault with our neighbors thorns. So long as our judges on the conduct of others has committed we are too apt to represent as inscrutable, or prudent to proceed that its pertinent consequences may be, however we may have suffered, as our will spread themselves over the whole of his charadry. Insidious consequences are confirmed to ourselves, of our own hearts and the remainder of his life. We are even inclined to make a merit of this very severity as we exercise it in justice, or the love of order, or zeal for virtue, the glory of God. Under the refuge of these fine names give the reins to our passions, gratify our feelings of vanity, of bitterness, strange that we should imagine can do honour to God by being unjust to man. But if we pass it over, and apply ourselves to any part of this subject, with the severity and candidness that the precept of the Lord made me remember the precept of our Saviour. He that makes few remarks...
There is scarcely any disposition of human nature has more force upon our feelings than that by which
we are drawn together in social intercourse. But here,
the dispositions, it may, as we use it, be turned
for good or to a bad account. The gift of speech is
the noblest gift of God to man. But we may as well
see what we deem, perhaps a good ground, err in it,
and the best thing when abused becomes the worst.
In the conduct of some of our actions, we are not
necessarily that we should make it the subject of
common conversation, endeavours to impress on all whom we
meet the same unfavourable views with which we have adopted. The
abroad our dark suspicions, our rash judgments, our kind feelings.
when its bad influence she can not know. It is all the brighter of glorious works of God,
they shine in the arch of heaven over our heads, or are,
that are in miracles of mercy, in an overflow of mercy through
earth, we have had it, in all the vast variety of
seeks to adapt itself to improve, adorn, and make our mind,
or moral powers, in all the compassions of sympathy,
our gratitude, affection, in all the truths of religion, in all the
suggests of encouragements of religion, in all the
is not sufficient to enable the few hours in which we
come to the tomb; you despise of these, are we other

It is well to pass the brief flight of time, by
considering the hours of improvement in reflection
the character of the actions of our neighbours.
No, we are not for something better than to talk more
of each other's faults. Let us suppose that we have seen
the noblest gifts of God to man. But we may as well
see what we deem, perhaps a good ground, err in it,
and the best thing when abused becomes the worst.
In the conduct of some of our actions, we are not
necessarily that we should make it the subject of
common conversation, endeavours to impress on all whom we
meet the same unfavourable views with which we have adopted. The
abroad our dark suspicions, our rash judgments, our kind feelings.
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they shine in the arch of heaven over our heads, or are,
that are in miracles of mercy, in an overflow of mercy through
earth, we have had it, in all the vast variety of
seeks to adapt itself to improve, adorn, and make our mind,
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our gratitude, affection, in all the truths of religion, in all the
suggests of encouragements of religion, in all the
is not sufficient to enable the few hours in which we
come to the tomb; you despise of these, are we other
The bow has been bent, & the arrow is on the wing—
irresistible:—you have given it the direction. I shall
not delay its course, but perhaps will counteract the
feelings of others against the man whom I have
condemned. — But whatever the motive may be, the
consequences of the fault will be still the same. If the
motive is found, we cannot assert, to justice, if not, the
arm to a blow, we cannot be healed. — methinks not in such
a way as to be on our guard against the unanimous
motive.

Induce us to give utterance to the harsh opinions
induce us to give utterance to the harsh opinions
exclusive of the habit of throwing out all those
exclusively, without once considering whether
less in our minds:—without once considering whether
less be the madman who casts the arrows,
brands, arrows, & death, & with an Inst. in short?
when we slander others for want of something else,
there is no need of a reason, if we must tell it, tell
nothing: so taking no scandal. As it may be well
to be thought more acute observers of the conduct of
fellow-men, than others are:—we would have it open
that we are gifted with serious penetration, if the
others can see only the surface which is fair, we can look

We have thus considered some of the feelings of
the passions, as meant to condemn, when he said, "just as the
blind man." And now, my sir, if we are fond of thinking that
by word of others, let us ask ourselves, whether we should
be to have our own characters treated as our actions mistak-
ent, our motives distaste, whether we should think
favorable to have our characters constantly mistaken by the
cage, of malice or suspicion? — Must surely we should justify
ourselves, for we were thus treated? — if we are then such
persons as these, the model we have a right to complain of

of
such treatment?—Besides, let us reflect how much better it is to inspect ourselves, than to inspect others; let us look into our own hearts, and see if there do not some bad passions to subdue, some corrupt desires to some impure motives to be banished, some dying vices be revived.—While we are sharp sighted to the faults of others, & blind to our own, while we are busy at work of censure, & idle at the task of self-improvement, we forget that “He that siteth in the seat” is looking on our souls.—Whence are those souls employed?—My first dreadful thing to reflect is that God is sending the glance of His omniscience into our hearts at the very moment, when they are eagerly employed in condemning them perhaps our B. F. may judge more mercy of mercy than ourselves.—If there be a tablet in our ones, from wh. nothing can erase the inscriptions, us inscribe in it these words of r.—“Judge not, that ye not be judged; condemn not, that ye shall not be condemned; forgive, if ye shall be forgiven.”—Mon., March
And we pray one another that by cherishing the spirit of the Lord in this world, we may be prepared for the world of glory through our faith and obedience.
Year. Dear Sir, we thank thee that thou hast framed us to be happy in the service, & to live by thy laws. Therefore, placed us in society, that we may instruct, edify, & gladden each other: & we pray we may cherish that spirit wh as thou members of society we ought to possess.

we, according to our last precept judge that we may not be judged, knowing with what judgment we judge we shall be judged, & with what measure we measure it shall be measured unto us again. As we beseech thee from all unkind & unstable feelings, let it never be our plea to invade thine awful prerogatives, ing & condemning our brethren. May all this misery, this clamour, this evil speaking not far away from us, but may our hearts be due to the power of religion & virtue. At home, March 26th, 1820. - forenoon.