

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expositional
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

111- Jesus Chooses His Apostles- Part 8
John- Part 2

Church September 1, 2024

Matthew 10:1-4

1 Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;

4 Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

This morning, we rejoin our verse-by-verse “Journey” through the **Gospel of Matthew** that we began on November 14, 2021. And we are at the Point here in Chapter 10- where Jesus is choosing His twelve Apostles. And I want to camp out on this Passage for a while so we can become acquainted with these men- because these men literally changed the world! And what we have found out so far- as we have come to know Peter, Andrew, and James- is two things that are common with all of them:

1. They had the single most extraordinary Calling of anyone before or after them
2. They were very ordinary and common men

... and I suppose that among all the Apostles- I personally relate more to John than any of the other men whom God chose to be in this *unique*

Ministry. And I relate to John because I do not feel very qualified or capable of doing what I am doing. Most of the time- I feel as though I am such a child; and so unprepared; and so unqualified to preach the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ but I do so simply for one reason- it *needs* to be done- it is *deserving* that it is done.

You see, I do not think I am particularly interesting; and I do not think that what I say is particularly powerful or moving. I try very hard to get this stuff Right- I study for many hours every week; and I research the data; and I agonize over the Scriptures; and I pray very hard that I will not mess anybody's Life up by what I teach.

And my Motivation to do what I do- is that the Word of the one, true, and living God is so important; so glorious; so true; and so worthy of whatever Effort anyone puts forth. And I don't think I am alone in this- because I think that is how John believed.

You see, I do not believe that any of the Apostles thought very highly of themselves. I do not believe that they were caught away with the Trappings of their Position; or their Authority; or their Calling; or their Anointing- as so many people seem to be in our day.

I believe that God was very Good to these men to equip them with the Grace that they needed to be very, very Humble. And to that End- God allowed great Sufferings; great Afflictions; great Pain; great Betrayal; and great Agony to come into the Lives of every one of these 12 Apostles- to assist them in being Humble- so they would not get caught away; and so others around them would not get caught away; with what God was doing in, with, and through them.

Here is what the Apostle Paul said about this very issue in **2Corinthians 12:1-12:**

1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine

infirmities.

6 For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness**. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

11 I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

So, as we study the Lives of these twelve men- you begin to realize how “*matter of factly*” the Apostles went about their Ministry. And even though we marvel today at how God used these men; and as we stand amazed at the fact that these men actually *did* receive direct Revelation- from the very Mouth of God; and these men *did have* Visions; and they *did* have spiritual Dreams; and they *did* conduct sometimes very lengthy Conversations with Angels; and with the Lord Himself- we are silenced at how these men were literally “moved upon” by God the Holy Spirit- in the very same way as the Wind moves Ships through the Sea- to pen down the only Words on earth that are Perfect and without Error and Eternal.

In fact- these men actually *did* have these supernatural Experiences that so many lay claim to today. But *unlike* so many in the modern Church- these Apostles were among the most *humble*; and among the most *unassuming*; and *meeke* men- who ever walked the earth- who actually ran away from public Recognition; and would rather die than be praised.

But we *cannot* and we *must not* separate how those men suffered

from who they were- because who they were- who they became- was, in great part, due to the many horrific Sufferings they endured. And *that* Aspect is completely different from those who lay claim to be Apostles in our day.

I think you can go many miles before you will find a man whom God is *genuinely* using; and whom God is *genuinely* speaking through; and yet find that man to NOT be puffed up; and to find him NOT impressed with his own Reputation; but to find a truly humble and gracious and unassuming and meek man- who speaks often about his own inherent Sinfulness; and begs God for Cleansing- and yet preaches with Power and Conviction. That is such a rare Gift- of which we certainly need a Revival- in the modern Church. We need many more of men today who possess both Power and Humility- rather than the “prancing peacocks” that dominate the Pulpits of the modern Church.

And so, we should all pray to that End- that God would be Good to send great and horrific Sufferings to the men who stand in the Pulpit. That God would grace those men with great Persecutions and great Afflictions- so they may learn the Grace of God; and be the humble and broken men that God desires them to be.

I think John was among the men who knew *exactly* what they had to do. They knew that God was with them- and they had absolutely no Doubt whatsoever that God was going to reveal Divine Revelation directly to them. And yet, they were gifted by God to not let it all go to their head; and they remained focused on Jesus; focused on the enormous Task at hand; focused on the Calling; and focused on the Commission before them! And so, even as God moved through them MORE than anyone else in the History of the World- to a man- they were *debased* in their own minds; and their hearts were kept *pure* and *holy* and *humble*.

And John fits this Description perhaps better- at least in my own Estimation- than just about anyone else- with the possible Exception of Paul and Peter.

It is important that we all remember that the Purpose of strong biblical Ministry is to move the people of the Church- out from the Vulnerability of *naive and immature* Childhood and into the Wisdom of spiritual Maturity- until everyone in the Church comes to the Position of the...

**... the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.
(Ephesians 4:13b)**

... that's the Goal- where the called and chosen people of God actually *know* and *love* and *believe* the Truth; and have become *equipped* to be able to *speak* that Divine Truth in the Divine Love of God.

People, who have already experienced the Miracle of the New Birth; and who have been justified by Faith alone; and who have already been adopted- are to grow up in all Aspects unto Jesus- Who is the Head of the Church and the Savior of the Body!

And *part* of being “*spiritually Mature*”; *part* of being “**Strong in the Lord and in the Strength of His Might**” (Ephesians 6:10) is for us to *read* what men like John wrote down; to *listen* to what men like John taught; and to *learn* what men like John meant by what he said in the five Books that God blessed him to write.

So, just what does it mean to be “*spiritually Mature*”? It means to have the Capacity to speak the Truth in Love. And that *presupposes* that we must already know and understand and love- the Truth. And that's *why* we have the Bible Studies that we have on Tuesday Evenings.

But friends, we need to know that along with *knowing* and *understanding* and *believing* and *loving* the Truth- it is *necessary* that we suffer. Because it is through our Sufferings where we become genuinely *broken* over the Sins of the people and not just angry about them. And it is through our Sufferings that we learn how to speak that Truth and live out that Truth in genuine godly Love.

And if you are on that Journey where you are learning and understanding the Truth along with being molded by your Sufferings to be a person, who does ALL that he does- in Love- then you understand *exactly* what God had to do with John. John had to learn *how* to balance Knowledge of the Truth with genuine, godly Love. And this Balance is very easy to talk about- but it usually takes a Lifetime to actually achieve it.

Because to balance Truth with Love takes a constant Scrutiny on your *own* Life; and it takes the ongoing and constant Work of the Spirit of God *inside* us along with the ongoing and constant Work of the Word in our Lives to produce that perfect Balance between Truth and Love.

And this Balance means knowing sound, Biblical Doctrine- yes!

But it also means bearing the fruit of the Spirit which is Divine Love to be able to teach others the Truth in a loving and kind Way.

But hear me when I tell you that this is a very *elusive* Balance- because “by nature”- as fallen Creatures- Knowledge *almost always* tends to puff us up; and understanding Truth usually brings forth the most hideous form of Pride; Self-righteousness; and Arrogance that *insults* the Mercy of God and drives people *away* from Jesus.

But by the Grace of God- John was used by God to teach about this perfect Balance between Truth and Love. And so, by reading what John wrote; and by understanding what he meant by what he wrote- and through the mighty Power of the Holy Spirit at work in our Lives- we can strive to reach that perfect Balance also.

But as we do that- we need to be reminded that spiritual Maturity is nothing more nor less than us walking in Christ's Likeness. It is being in “*Union with Jesus Christ*”. Because, you see, Jesus was the perfect Expression of Truth and the perfect Expression of Love. And we need to know that Jesus is the Model to follow- not John- even though John can be a great Blessing to us.

Now as I said- this Balance is very hard to come by. First of all, there are many people in the modern Church who don't even understand that reaching this Balance between Truth and Love is the Goal. They have learned a small thimble full of Truth and now they are as dangerous as a monkey with a machine gun!

But everything we are doing as individual Believers and everything we are doing together as a Church- should be defined by this one Goal- reaching “spiritual Maturity” by reaching this Balance between Truth and Love.

Because everything that comes out of our mouth should be a right representation of Divine Revelation- spoken in Love. That's where God is leading us- NOT because we are Intellectuals, who are simply smarter about the Bible than everybody else; and not because we are Academics, who take great Pride in how much Time we spend in the Study of the Book- so we can win the Arguments- but simply because we love Jesus and want to please Him.

It was Christ Who spoke the Truth and only the Truth. He said, “*I only speak what the Father shows Me to speak.*” Jesus never spoke a single word that was not an accurate and full Reflection of the Mind and the Heart of His Father. And Jesus *always* spoke that Truth in

pure Love. No one could ever question the Love that Jesus Christ demonstrated not only by His weeping over the very people that God would judge- but demonstrated by His willingness to go to the Cross to give up His Own Life for those God had given to Him. That is the perfect Balance and that is spiritual Maturity!

Now back in the 1st Century- Jesus was *routinely* condemned by the religious Leaders because they saw He as being much too soft and much too tolerant with wicked Sinners. You see, Jesus spent time with Sinners- dirty, filthy Sinners! And He urged people to forgive their Enemies; and to pray for them- even to do them, “Good”! So, in their mind- it was obvious that Jesus was compromising with Divine Truth- that absolutely condemns all Sin.

But if God had waited; and had Jesus been born just thirty years ago- back in 1994- this very SAME Jesus; speaking the very SAME words; and doing the very SAME things as He did back in the 1st Century- would be *routinely* condemned today as being way too harsh and unloving! I can just imagine that it wouldn't be too long before the “*Gulf Coast Ministerial Association*” would pay Jesus a visit- to try to get Him to “*lighten up*”; and to be more loving and stop talking so much about Sin and Repentance!

So, since Jesus was the Same- what has changed is us! Back in the 1st Century- the Danger inside the Religious circles was the Heresy of Legalism while today the great Danger we face inside the modern Church for the most part- is the Heresy of Antinomianism.

Today, in many quarters, people view genuine Love as something that causes people to compromise with the Truth. While others say that speaking the Truth compromises our Ability to genuinely love and work with the Sinner! And so, people today have either Truth or Love- but it is very hard to find anyone that has both or who is even *seeking* to have both! But until we have both Truth and Love- we are “*spiritually Immature*” and *childish* in our Walk with God.

So, I challenge those who say they have Love- but NOT Truth. Because Love without Truth has much more in common with human Tolerance and sinful Leniency than it does with genuine biblical Love.

But I also challenge those who say they have Truth- but no Love. Because *whatever* Truth people, who can't even seem to get near the Love of God- may have- has much more in common with dictatorial Abuse than it does with biblical Truth.

Without knowing and understanding Divine Truth- all that is left is Error and Shallowness and contradictory and inconsistent Beliefs that don't have the Power to forgive a single Sin or save a single Soul. But without us truly possessing the Love of God (or without being possessed by the Love of God)- all that is left is the Horror of cold and sinful Self-exaltation.

We must always understand that Truth is our best Friend. Because without Truth- we have no idea what to believe or how to live. But if that Truth operates without genuine Love- it becomes a Tool to simply beat people into Submission.

Dear Friends, it is *impossible* to read the Bible with any degree of Honesty- and not see the Importance of Divine Truth. And for *anyone* to think that they have to sacrifice Truth in order to be loving- proves that they do NOT have the Truth- they are so proud of. But it is also *impossible* to read the Bible with any degree of Honesty and NOT see how vital genuine Love is. And for anyone to think that they have to sacrifice Love in order to have the Truth- proves that they do NOT have the Love they think they have.

Divine Truth always makes people to be loving. And genuine, godly Love- causes everyone to search for and to have Divine Truth!

So, neither of the Group that has Truth without Love or those who have Love without Truth are correct- neither one of these Groups have arrived at "spiritual Maturity". Neither one is stronger than the other; neither one is more pleasing to God than the other. Both Groups are weak; both Groups are immature; both Groups are childish; both Groups are lacking; and both Groups are ripe for Deception because the Reality is that unless we have both Truth and Love- we have neither!

The real Problem is that neither Group understands the Grace of God. To try to hold on to Love while letting go of Truth- will cause you to fall into the Heresy of "*Antinomianism*" (Lawlessness) that *abuses* Grace. But to try to hold on to Truth while letting go of Love- will cause you to fall into the Heresy of "*Legalism*"- that *ignores* God's Grace.

Manifesting both Truth and Love is only possible to the *mature* Believer- who has grown into the "*Measure of the Stature which belongs to the Fullness of Jesus Christ*". And the only Way that you can define "spiritual Maturity" is with these two Attributes of Truth and Love that will work *in* us; *around* us; and *through* us on an ongoing basis.

And that's the Framework that defines the Apostle John. So, if

you're looking for a biblical Example of both of these Attributes at work- then John will do you very well. Jesus Christ of course is the Perfection of those two Attributes- while John is the human Example of them.

And the interesting part about this is that John did NOT have either one of these Attributes when Jesus chose him. So, John had to *learn* Truth; and John had to *learn* how to Love; and how to be *loving*. And so, Jesus *molded* John. And Jesus *shaped* John. And Jesus brought John to this perfect Balance of Truth and Love.

And that should give us great Hope today that wherever you are in the Realm of Truth; and wherever you are in the Realm of Love- that as you yield yourself to God- God will be faithful to *mold* you; and *shape* you; and *change* you into His Image and Likeness.

Now that could be said for almost every Era of the Church. It's certainly true today. There's a real Struggle to find the Balance between Truth and Love. There was a time- when I was first saved- when Preachers were just firing out hell Fire, Wrath, and Damnation and they needed a dose of balancing Love. And now it seems as though we live in a Day when it's all about Love and who cares about the Truth anymore?

But this is the Objective of true spiritual Maturity. Inconsistent and Contradictory and Unbiblical and Shallow Teaching abounds in our Day. And the result of that kind of Preaching is that a tolerance of Error abounds. And so, the modern Church is being filled with Error and even ancient Heresies that the Christian Church courageously confronted and bravely fought against and soundly defeated many, many Centuries ago are making a huge Comeback. And they are being *repackaged* and *relabelled* as "*new and fresh and improved Revelation*". And the masses of people in the modern Church are just eating it up- when in fact, most of this is simply old fashioned Paganism and outright Heresy and Blasphemy.

But we, who are blessed to have eyes to see this sad Decline in the Pursuit of biblical Truth and doctrinal Precision in the modern Church, must realize that Legalism does NOT defeat Antinomianism. Cold Orthodoxy is NOT the Answer to religious Liberalism; false Teaching; and loose Living. We *cannot* raise up Truth by *putting down* Love; and we *cannot* manifest true godly Love by *ignoring* or *minimizing* Truth. And the critical Mix of these two vital Attributes of Truth and Love- is visible to us in this beloved Apostle John.

Now because of John's Treatment of himself in the Scriptures and because of the way he refers to himself in his Gospel Account- we tend to think of John as being a very humble man. But we always need to remember that John *became* humble over time- because he certainly wasn't humble at first.

John was *eventually* Humble. But because he's so Self-effacing in the five Books that he wrote- it is *assumed* by most people that John was *always* that way- sort of a meek, mild, wimpy, pale-skinned, ashen kind of guy- which is the way John shows up in a lot of Medieval art. Michelangelo painted John as leaning on Jesus' Shoulder- looking up with this blank "doe eyed" stare into space- sort of a gentle, passive, almost effeminate guy.

But John *became* very loving and very humble. And John *responded* to the shaping Ministry of Jesus in his Life. And he achieved, in great measure, this Balance between Truth and Love- but he surely didn't start out that way.

John started out, along with his brother James, as a "*son of Thunder*". Over in **Mark 3:17** it was Jesus who called them both "*Boanerges*" which is Aramaic for "*sons of Thunder*". So, John *began* as a very *volatile; hot tempered; violent; rude; mean;* and *angry* man when Jesus called him into the Ministry. But at the Beginning, John was brash. John was aggressive. John was passionate. John was zealous. And John was personally very ambitious.

We need to remember that when James was calling down Fire from Heaven to burn up the Samaritans- John was echoing that very *same* Sentiment. It was *always* James and John- the two sons of Thunder. Now there was Andrew- who was quietly bringing people to Jesus; and it was James and John who were asking God to burn up all the pagan unbelievers. And when their mother- the wife of Zebedee- came to Jesus and said, "*I want my boys on Your right and left Hand,*" it wasn't just James there- it was also John.

So, John was very driven. John was very ambitious. John wanted Prominence. John was right in the middle of all the Arguments among the Apostles about who was going to be the greatest in the Kingdom. So, don't assume that when it says, "James and John," even though James is named first; and may in some ways have been the stronger of the two; and may have been the older of the two- that this means that John was silent or neutral- because John was a "son of Thunder", too.

Now interestingly enough- if you study **Matthew, Mark** and **Luke** you always see John with Jesus and with Peter and with James. Only one time does John appear and speak by himself in all those Gospel Accounts. And so, if we want to know what John is like- that's a good place to go. So please turn in your Bibles to **Mark 9**.

Here, we get John without either James or Peter- so this is pure John. This is the only singular Glimpse of John in the three "*Synoptic Gospels*" of **Matthew, Mark, and Luke**.

You see, the first three Gospel Accounts are called the "*Synoptic Gospels*" because they were written to be "*seen together*". The Gospel according to John deals more with Jesus' Deity being expressed through a series of Miracles and Self-proclaimed Statements of His Own Identity.

But in **Mark 9** we get this one picture of John all by himself. And the rest of the things about John we have to construct from his Gospel Account and from his three Epistles and from **The Book of the Revelation**- but here is an historical Narrative on John.

Now let's go to the beginning of **Mark 9**- verse 1 so we can get this snapshot of John. In verse 1- John Mark is quoting Jesus as saying,

Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.

So, here Jesus makes this incredible Statement that some of the people standing there that day would not die- until they saw the Kingdom of God coming with Power! Now this is an amazing Statement! Some of you people here aren't going to die until you see Kingdom Power!

Well, you and I are living in the 21st Century- some 2,000 years *after* Jesus made this Statement. And the fullness of God's Kingdom hasn't come and yet all of the people who were alive then are all dead now; and they have been dead for over 2,000 years! So, what is Jesus talking about? Is this a Place in the Bible where there is a Contradiction of a Statement by Jesus that is not true?

No, Jesus was talking about "*Previews of Coming Attractions*"- or as one hymn writer put it, "*A Foretaste of Glory Divine,*" which happened immediately after Jesus made that Statement- in fact, just six days later. Now look at verses 2-4:

2 Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them;

3 and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.

4 Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.

So just six days after Jesus said, “*Some of you are going to see the Glory of the Kingdom before you die*”, Jesus took Peter, James, and John- that intimate “inner Circle”, who were with Jesus more than any other Group- apart from Andrew- and Jesus brought them to a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them! And they saw the Kingdome coming with its Power- just like Jesus promised!

Now what actually happened here is that Jesus pulled back the Veil of His Own human Flesh and the “*Shekinah Glory of God*”- the very “*Essence*” of the Nature of the eternal God- was shining out in blazing Brilliance before them! And that is the Power and that is the Glory of the Kingdom of God- not anything that we do or any Act that we perform as so many teach today.

Now the record of **Matthew 17** is that this event was so shocking that the Disciples were literally terrified into a coma. They fell over like dead men. This is something they had never experienced. This was a *transcendental* Experience, the likes of which they had never even imagined. The very Garments of the Savior became radiant, exceedingly white as no launderer on earth could whiten them. There isn't any product on the market today- no bleach that can get these garments as white as they were white here.

The Greek word is *leukon*- which means: *blazing, shining, glowing white like light*. And then the great OT Prophet Elijah showed up and then the great Lawgiver- Moses showed up in some kind of glorified Manifestation. And these three Apostles became terrified- verse 6 says- and read verse 7 with me:

Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!"

... and then verse 8 says:

All at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus alone.

Now this is an incredible thing for Peter, James and John to experience as well as a very *unique* Privilege! But then to make things *worse*- in verse 9- it says:

As they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man rose from the dead.

Now that would have been very hard for me to do. I mean, you've just seen the most incredible thing that could ever be seen by anybody and you can't tell anybody about it? This is a great Restraint to put upon these men.

But we must remember that it was not God's Will at that time for Jesus to be adored and worshipped. God's Will for Jesus at that Time- was that He would be rejected and to be scorned and brutally beaten- and to die for the Sins of the whole world! And if people knew that Jesus had just been glorified as being Deity- they would have *worshipped* Him instead of *killing* Him. But it was God's Will for Jesus to die! And so, in order to complete God's Will- Jesus had to put this Restraint on His Apostles.

And also remember that the Apostles were always arguing about who was going to be the greatest among them. And I'm sure it was very, very difficult for them not to use this Experience as Ammunition for their own Case. The Temptation must have been great for either Peter, James, or John to come down the mountain and say to the rest of the Apostles, "*Hey, guys- we have the inside Track to being the Greatest now because where were you when Jesus was transfigured? Where were you when Elijah, and Moses showed up?*" And these men heard Jesus talk about rising from the Dead and they seized on that Statement in verse 10 and they began to talk about that.

Now there was lot to talk about. They *could* have talked about Moses, or they *could* have talked about Elijah, or they *could* have talked about the Glory of God shining through the veil of Jesus' Flesh; or they *could* have talked about the Resurrection or the coming Kingdom.

So, they must have been very excited because they saw things that never could be seen or known by anybody! So, no doubt- these three

men told the rest of the Group- *“Look, this is where we're heading guys- this is some Foretaste of the Glory that's coming!”*

Now please go a little further in the chapter- down to verse 33 and read with me:

They came to Capernaum; and when He was in the house, He began to question them, "What were you discussing on the way?"

Now remember anytime Jesus asks a Question- it isn't because He doesn't already know the Answer. Jesus is God and as God- Jesus is fully “Omniscient” and so Jesus knows *everything* about *everything*- so Jesus is never asking a Question because He wants somebody to give Him Information that He doesn't already have in fullness.

Jesus wasn't looking for Information- He was giving these men an Opportunity here for Confession of their Sin. He was granting them “Space to repent”. Now read verse 34:

But they kept silent, for on the way they had discussed with one another which of them was the greatest.

Now why did these men keep silent? Because they were ashamed; because they knew that Jesus knew what they had talked about as they walked by the way.

So, this is a great Example of their own human, sinful, Ambition. And the Lord had to do a lot of work with that Ambition. So, they were so embarrassed and ashamed that they didn't even say a word. Busted! Now look at verses 35-37:

35 Sitting down, He called the twelve and said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

36 Taking a child, He set him before them, and taking him in His arms, He said to them,

37 "Whoever receives one child like this in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me does not receive Me, but Him who sent Me."

Jesus taught these men and said, *“Look guys- you've got to learn something about the Basics of not only true Faith in Me but also what it means to lead in My Church. If anyone in all of Christianity wants to be First- he must strive very hard and work very hard and pray very hard*

to be both Last and the Servant of all. You guys have this thing backward. If you want to be First- if you want to be Great in My Kingdom- then be like a Child; be like a Slave.”

Jesus told them, “Instead of arguing and fighting with each other, instead of putting each other down, instead of rejecting each other, why don't you learn that receiving each other as a Child is what I require. Because when you receive one another you receive Me because I live in that person. So instead of fighting each other; instead of Conflict with each other; instead of trying to jump over each other on the Way to Recognition and Greatness- you need to embrace each other as if I were coming to you. And instead of desiring to be First- you need to learn to begin to love being Last.”

And this cut them to the Heart. This was a serious Rebuke and in particular- John got the Message. And here we have the only time John actually speaks by himself in these three opening Gospels. Look at verse 38:

John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us."

Now this is an example of human Nature. Right after a stinging Rebuke by Jesus Himself- it *seems* that John tries his best to change the Subject and talk about something that has absolutely nothing to do with what Jesus just said. And people do this all the time. Over in **John 11**- Jesus confronts Martha with a personal Confrontation about her own Unbelief. But she responds by just walking off and leaving Jesus standing right in the middle of the road. And she went into the house and told Mary- *“Jesus wants you”*.

Now Jesus never told Martha to go get Mary. And how rude is it to just walk off and leave Jesus standing in the road? But it was getting far too Uncomfortable with Martha about how Jesus was pinning her down about her own Unbelief. And so, she told Mary- *“Jesus wants you because I know He’s not talking to me”*

And here at first- it appears that John is doing the very same thing. Jesus just got through telling them one of the deepest and most profound and basic Elements in all of Creation- that if anybody wants to be Great in God- then you have to be like a Child. And if anyone wants to be First in God- then he MUST be Last- or in other words- *“You guys*

just worry about following Me and let Me raise up who I will raise up!"

But instead of even commenting on what Jesus just said- it seems that John tries to change the Subject and talk about something that has nothing to do with what Jesus just said.

But is this what is really happening here? Is John doing what Martha did- or is John doing something else here? Now listen to this. I think John absolutely DID hear what Jesus said. And I think that John was *not* doing what Martha was doing.

You see, it isn't because John *didn't* hear Jesus that he said this. No, it is because John *DID* hear; and it is because He was *ashamed* of himself; and it was because he was deeply and profoundly *convicted* that he tried to change the Subject.

And John said, **"Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us."** Now this is the Sin of "*Sectarianism*". This man didn't belong to our particular Group- so he has no right to do anything in Jesus' Name. This reveals to us the great Intolerance and Prejudice that was part of John's makeup. So, this is what it means to be a "son of Thunder". This is Sectarianism and the Narrowness and the Ambition that desires to have it all for yourself and not share it with anybody else- *especially* some Pagans outside the Camp. So, this is who John really is.

But thanks be to God that something's changing in John because as Jesus spoke- John began to see what he did as something Undesirable and Sinful. And the Result is this Statement by John which is really a Confession of His Sin. John is saying in response to what Jesus said, *"Teacher, we saw this guy casting out demons in Your Name and we tried to stop him."*

So what John *did back then to that guy*- that was the *old* John... *"Stop, you can't do that- you're not in our Group!"* But what John *says* here- that is the *new* John- the one that Jesus is changing. You see, John was not Passive- He's very, very Aggressive. He was a very Competitive and a mean and a condemning a man- who was trying to minister in the Name of Jesus.

Now it doesn't tell us anything about the nature of the man that John was talking about- but at least this guy was trying to cast out demons in the Name of Jesus. And all John could do was shut him down. And so, John is saying here, *"I confess, we did that."*

In other words- as John was admitting that what Jesus had said

back in verses 35-37 was true about himself. And so, he was confessing an Example of how he had been Sinful in stopping this man. Because now John is beginning to feel that what he did was Wrong because of what Jesus had just said. So, Jesus is confronting them and saying- "*You've got to get rid of this sectarian, narrow Spirit.*" And John is the only one among all the Apostles- who actually *verbalizes* that he had done this and said this to that other man.

But the fact that he's making this Confession is indicative of the Transformation that is going on inside of John. And so, even as Martha later changed and became a great woman in God- so too, John is changing and his Conscience is bothering him.

So, John's is being *tenderized* by Jesus. He's always been strong for the Truth; he's always been *zealous and passionate*- but now the Lord is teaching John about Mercy and Love. And so, here we see the *old John* as to what the *old John* did- *forbidding* this man. But here we also see the *new John*- the man who even though he did Wrong- is *confessing* his Sin; and *admitting* his Error; and being changed; so he can be a Man of Love and a Man of Mercy- as well as a Man of Truth. And in *doing* that- in *changing* like that- John became a Man of God!

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your Pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

