

Who Do You Say That I Am?

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

52- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 32
True Judgment and the Log and the Speck- Part 1

Church May 14, 2023

Matthew 7:1-6

1 "Do not judge so that you will not be judged.

2 "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

3 "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?

5 "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

6 "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

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

Now verse 1 is probably one of the most well-known verses in the entire Bible next to **John 3:16**. But this verse is *normally* used by lost people to get saved people off their backs about some type of sinful Behavior that the lost person is engaged in. Saved people don't usually reference this verse or this Passage very often- it's too painful. And that is really a Shame- because this verse- as well as this entire Sermon, wasn't written to the Lost at all- it is part of the "*Sermon on the Mount*"- which is Jesus' perfect Exposition about what *true* Salvation looks like under the *superior* New Covenant; with the *new* people of God; who are going to inherit the *new* "*Kingdom of Heaven*"¹. And this

¹ To hear Jesus speak about the "*Kingdom of Heaven*" rather than the "*Kingdom of Israel*" would have seemed to be very odd to the average Jew of the 1st Century- who was waiting with great anticipation for the Messiah to come; vanquish the Roman occupiers; and return the "*Promised Land*" back to the Jew. Average, everyday Jews would NOT have understood why Jesus NEVER spoke anything negative about the Romans; or of conquering them militarily; and having a restored Kingdom of Israel with the Messiah ruling from the Throne in Jerusalem.

Passage that begins Chapter 7 is in *response* to what Jesus said back in **Matthew 5:20**:

For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

... so, what Jesus is teaching here about the correct way to Judge is *part* of that *surpassing* Righteousness.

Now as we go over this Passage; as well as the entire **Gospel of Matthew**- we need to always keep in mind the “*Jewishness*” of this Book. Matthew or “Levi” was a Jew, who had been a horrible Sinner. And Jesus wondrously forgave him; and rescued him from eternal Damnation. And so, Matthew was *determined* to reach his Jewish brethren with the Truth about several Issues:

- Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah
- Jesus is “*God with us*” (Immanuel)
- Jesus is *greater* than Moses
- Jesus is bringing an End to the Old Covenant
- Jesus is bringing forth the promised New Covenant

... and so, Jesus did things and He said things that **ONLY** the Messiah could say and do. Jesus did things and He said things that **ONLY** “*Immanuel*” (God with us) could say and do. Jesus did things and He said things that **ONLY** someone *greater* than Moses could say and do. Jesus said things and He did things that **ONLY** could be said and done- if the Old Covenant was completed. And Jesus said things and He did things that could **ONLY** be said and done- if the promised New Covenant was in place.

And *some* of the Jews believed; and so, they *rejoiced* at the things that Jesus said and did. And they worshipped Jesus as God. But there were many, many **MORE** Jews who did **NOT** believe. And so, they were **NOT** happy at all with the things that Jesus said and did- and they saw Jesus as being as someone *attacking* Moses; and of trying to “overthrow the Customs” that God had established through Moses for them to follow (**The Acts 6:14**). So, these circumcised, natural Jews were, in fact, “Unbelievers”. And they were also “spiritual Gentiles”. Because they didn’t see Jesus as being God Almighty in human Flesh. They saw Him as being a Usurper and Imposter at *best*; and as “Beelzebul”- the Prince of devils- at *worst*. And for them- there was **ONLY** one Recourse: Jesus had to be stopped- either by publicly *discrediting* Him or by *murdering* Him.

And this Hostility began right here in this Sermon- as Jesus is *categorially* condemning the religious Hypocrites- to their face- right in front of all the people who were there on that Mountain that day. And as Jesus preached each Section of this amazing Sermon- the people in general were fascinated with what He was saying. But the Jewish Rulers seethed in their Anger against every area of this Sermon.

And that is very strange. Because the “*Sermon on the Mount*” is almost *universally* recognized- even by the Lost- as one of the *highest* Portrayals of Morality that the world has ever known- with the possible exception of the “*10 Commandments*.” Yet the more Jesus heralded this perfect Sermon- the more the Jewish rulers hated Him. In fact, we will see, in the near Future, how that these religious Frauds despised Jesus even MORE than they did the Gentile Roman occupiers- and that is saying a lot!

But we will also see that Jesus NEVER minced words with the Jewish Leaders. In fact, they represent two very frightening Levels of Divine Condemnation:

1. They are the ONLY group of people that Jesus NEVER said anything Good about
2. Jesus issued the most- *fierce*; and the most *frightening* Diatribe against these people found anywhere in the Bible. And Matthew faithfully recorded this Divine Condemnation in great detail in **Matthew 23**.

Now *part* of what God does- as the Supreme Power in the Universe- is to judge human beings. If God did not Judge- He would cease to be God. So, Judgment for God is NOT some aberration. It isn't some small part of Who God is. Both God's Authority and His Ability to judge people is simply the “flip side” of the very SAME “coin” as His Authority and Ability to Bless them. And the Distinction as to *why* God blesses one and damns the other is called, “*Judgment*”. God makes a “*Determination*” and He comes to a “*Conclusion*” about individuals- based on certain Criteria. And the Process by which God makes that Determination is called, “*God's Judgment*”. So, it is correct to say that God judges those He blesses. And He judges those He condemns. So, in once sense God's “Judgment” is the Process that determines whether an Individual is “Blessed” or “Cursed”. For example, **Matthew 5:6** says,

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Now this is NOT a Character trait that we are to merely believe in. This is something that we are to experience- *personally*. God wants His people to *admire* Righteousness so much; God wants us to *desire* to be Righteous- to the degree that we “*hunger and thirst*” for it. But Righteousness is NOT something that we “put on” like a coat. And Righteousness is also NOT something that we can simply pray for- by itself. Righteousness is the automatic Result of something else: “Obedience”. Obedience *produces* Righteousness. Human beings cannot have Righteousness without Obedience. Now Jesus was Righteous too- because Jesus obeyed His Father- *perfectly*. Jesus NEVER failed to obey God- with the utmost in Joy and Delight. And that perfect Obedience to God’s Law- caused Jesus to EARN perfect Righteousness. Now God the Father is Righteous too. But God does NOT obey anything- God simply IS.

But with Humans- Obedience produces Righteousness and Disobedience produces Unrighteousness. So, Righteousness is the “Fruit” or the “Result” of our Obedience to God’s Commandments.

And here, God *commands* that we “hunger and thirst” for the Fruit of Obedience- which is Righteousness. So, we are told to “crave after” the Fruit or the Result of our Obedience. So, by default- that means that we must also see Obedience to God’s Commandments as being the Pathway to what Jesus called, “*Satisfaction*”. So, the promised Benefit of us obeying the Command to “hunger and thirst for Righteousness” (that is the Result of Obedience to God’s Commandments) is “*Divine Satisfaction*”!

And Satisfaction has to do with being Fulfilled; and being Happy; and having Delight; and experiencing great Joy. And who doesn’t want to be Happy? Yet Happiness- true Happiness doesn’t flow out from a Life where we do what is right in our own eyes. It comes through the disciplined Life of obeying God’s Commandments.

So, rather than see God as being Someone- who wants ONLY for us to obey. We should realize that because God loves us- He wants us to experience the *highest* degree of Happiness. But God knows that this Happiness ONLY comes by us continually killing Sin in ourselves and by us walking on the Path of Obedience- that will ALWAYS produce the highest measure of Joy! So, it is because God wants us to be Happier than we do- that He gives us the Commands that He does.

So, as God sees us pursuing a Life that kills Sin and that encourages Obedience- He “judges” us that we are now in Line for His Blessing- which in this case, is “Satisfaction”. But if God sees that we are pursuing a Life that leads to Self-centeredness- with no regard for Obedience to His Commandments- God “judges” us that we are in line to keep an empty heart that is NEVER satisfied.

So, God is constantly judging His people in that sense. But God is also “judging” people in the sense that He is actually issuing Divine Punishment for Sin and Rebellion.

Now some people have a real Problem with the Concept of a God- Who judges. These people have *manufactured* a “god” in their own mind who loves them and everything they do; a “god” who NEVER makes any Demands on them; and a “god” who never judges anyone for anything. But that “god” doesn’t exist. But the one, true, and living God- the Owner and Creator of the Universe *does* judge. And He judges precisely *because* He loves.

You see, without allowing Himself to hate certain things- God’s amazing Love would be *diminished*. And the Distinction between why God *loves* certain things and why He *hates* others- is based on whether that “Thing” gives God Glory or robs God of His Glory. And the Process by which God makes that Determination is called, “*Judgment*”.

And that is true with us as well. So, in order for us to *love* what God loves- REQUIRES us to also *hate* what God hates. So, part of true genuine Love is to Hate that which contradicts what is Lovely and True and Beautiful and Righteous. So, it is the Opposites that help to illustrate the Reality. So, part of God Blessing some people - is for Him to Damn others.

But what we have to understand is the great Difference between the Way that God Judges and the Way we judge. And that is the gist of the Passage before us today. The Authority by which God is able to Bless individuals or to carry out Judgment against them- is “*Himself*” or “*Who He is*”. God does NOT use His Word as His Authority to judge. We use God’s Word to judge- but God derives His Authority to Bless; Curse; Heal; Strike Down; Save; Damn; and Judge people from His Own pristine Character and Nature.

For example, when we read **Leviticus 18**- we find what has been called, the “*Holiness Code*”. And this is the part of God’s inspired; inerrant; and infallible Word where God *condemns* ALL Expressions of “*Human Sexuality*” except one:

**Intimacy between one (naturally born) Man and one (naturally born) Female-
within the Marriage Covenant.**

Every other Expression of “*Human Sexuality*” (from Masturbation to Homosexuality to Adultery to Incest to Transgenderism to Pedophilia) is *categorically* condemned by God as being Sin. And as God gave this part of His Law to Moses and was clearly delineating in detail all of the many Perversions of Human Sexuality- periodically, God would stop and make this Statement: “**I am the Lord!**” And God did this to show us that the Authority by which God is able to Condemn and Judge and even Damn people- who either ignore what He said here

or who rebel against what He says here- is NOT His Word. It is “Who He is!” So, there is NO *higher* Authority by which God Speaks and Acts and holds the entire population of planet earth Accountable- other than Himself!

Now God judges people in different Ways. And with God there are at least six different “*Principles of Divine Judgment*”:

1. God judges on the Basis of whatever Knowledge of God and His Ways that the individual has
2. God judges on the Basis of God’s Own Divine Truth
3. God judges on the Basis of the degree of Guilt of the Individual
4. God judges on the Basis of the actual Deeds that have been done
5. God judges on the Basis of Impartiality- it makes no difference to God who the guilty individual is or what Position in Life he holds
6. God judges on the Basis of the Motive behind the Deeds

And there are different “*Kinds*” or “*Types*” of Divine Judgment. Among them are:

- ***Personal Judgment*** (We examine ourselves for hidden Sin)
- ***Cause and Effect Judgment*** (You [Man] do this and I [God] will do that)
- ***Cataclysmic Judgment*** (Sodom and Gomorrah)
- ***The Judgment of Abandonment (Romans 1-*** when sexual Perversion becomes *normalized and promoted- God “gave them over”*)

... and of course, the WORST Type or Kind of Judgment is “***Final Judgment***”- or the “***Judgment of Damnation***” forever in the Lake of Fire.

And God judges different groups. Sometimes God judges individuals. But throughout human History- God has also judged Groups of people; and Cities; Regions; Countries; Empires; and even entire Civilizations. And He judged them because they violated His Laws; they broke His Commandments; they ignored His Ways; and they did what was “Right” in their own eyes. And in their Wickedness- they *insulted* the Holiness of God; and they *belittled* His Glory. In other words, they took the “*Name*” or the “*Reputation*” of the Lord God- “in vain” or, in other words, for their *own* Vanity and Foolishness.

And by their Rebellion and Sin- these people *attacked*; and they *marginalized* the ONE THING that matters the MOST to God- His Glory! And the ONLY fitting Response from an ALL HOLY GOD- was to *defend* His Glory that sinful people “*trampled under their feet with disgust*”². And that “Defense of God’s Glory”- (that has been ignored; despised; or belittled)- is the terrible Fury; and the

² This is what **Romans 3:23** means when it says that Sin “*falls short*” of the Glory of God.

frightening Vengeance; and the certain Retribution; and the sure Damnation that we read about on the pages of Scripture- that causes us to tremble.

You see, God has *already* made a crystal- clear Distinction between what is *objectively* “Good” and what is *objectively* “Evil”. He has *already* created a Division between that which is *objectively* “Holy” and that which is *objectively* “Profane”. God has *clearly delineated* what is *eternally* “Right” from that which is *eternally* “Wrong”. God has defined for us what is “Sin” and what is “Righteousness”. And God has *already* drawn a Line between that which *always* brings Him Glory and Honor and that which *always* insults His Glory.

And those Distinctions and Definitions have ALREADY been created and delineated and spelled- out- clearly. And they were established *before* God made the Universe- so they are ageless; eternal; and permanent. And all of these Divisions have been faithfully and clearly recorded for us- infallibly- on the pages of sacred Writ- in a language that we can understand.

And the Reason God did this- the Reason God CAN do this- is because there is such a Thing as “*Absolute Truth.*” “*Objective; Eternal; Divine; Absolute: Truth*” exists. And by definition- it exists- because God is a God of Truth. In fact- there is NO higher Standard of “*Morality*”; or of what is “*Good*”; “*Right*”; and “*Holy*”- then God *Himself!* And the Absolute Truth that exists- flows out from God’s Own pristine and perfect Nature and Character.

And acting as the Supreme Authority in the Universe- God blesses and rewards those who gladly and humbly submit to the Authority of what God has already created. And God judges and damns those who rebel and who transgress against those Commandments. So, “*Wisdom*”- in its *purest* Form- is found in those who bow before the Sovereignty of Almighty God in striving to obey what God enjoys. And “*Foolishness*”- in its *ultimate* Form- despises God’s Commandments (as well as God Himself) and seeks every Opportunity to live in Rebellion to what pleases God.

But our Effort to obey God’s Commandments should *always* flow out from a genuine Love and a real Enjoyment of God. Our Struggle to obey God should NEVER come from abject Terror (of God’s Judgment) or from some sense of “*Duty*” or “*Obligation*”. That does NOT please God- the *most*.³ God is BEST worshipped when our Obedience to Him flows out from us *enjoying* God; *and when we delight* ourselves in Him!

But Sin destroys all of that. You see, as a human being born of Woman- we are shaped in Iniquity and the “*Original Sin*” of Adam’s Rebellion in our Mother’s womb. So, we are Rebels “*by Nature*”. And that means that we *naturally* and *normally* find NO Joy in God Himself nor in His Commandments.

³ Certainly, it is better to obey God out of Fear; or Duty; or Obligation; than to NOT obey Him at all. But there is a *better* and *higher* Way to obey God- by *delighting* ourselves in Him.

Before Salvation- we see God's Commandments as being *unnecessarily* Oppressive. And we see God Himself as being a harsh, mean, and cruel "Kill-joy" who robs us of any Happiness we might have- with all His Rules and Regulations. And that is what it means to be a "Lost Sinner". So, lost Sinners are not merely the Mass Murderers and the Pedophiles.

"Lost Sinners"- by definition- do NOT love God. And they find no Joy in God. And so, lost Sinners- Sin against God. How? They seek Love; Enjoyment; and Pleasure in what has been made; and in what is "passing away"- but NOT in God. And in doing that- they testify loudly that those Things bring them MORE Joy; MORE Happiness; and MORE Satisfaction than God does. And you simply cannot insult God any more than that.

So, in *true* Salvation- God changes all that- by FIRST- giving us "new, spiritual Life" in the Miracle of the "New Birth". And inherent in that new, spiritual Life- our eyes are opened; our ears are unstopped; and our hearts are made soft and believing. And with those new eyes- we see the Glory of God in the "Face" (Person) of Jesus Christ (**2Corinthians 4:6**).

And being empowered to "see" or "comprehend" or "understand" the Beauty; and the Majesty; and the Importance; and the Magnificence of Jesus Christ causes *irresistible* Conviction to overwhelm us- to the Point we are literally *destroyed* with Guilt and Remorse for all the wicked Acts and Thoughts we have engaged in.

And our *first* Response; our ONLY Response to all that God has already done for us- is to "*Repent*"; to *turn away from* our former Life of Sin and Rebellion. And with that *new* Heart- we believe in Jesus. And we trust that Who Jesus is; and What Jesus has already done for us in living a sinless Life; Dying in our Place on the Cross; and rising from the Dead on the third Day- is enough for God to forgive ALL of our Sins (Past; Present; and Future) and to drape over us the spotless Righteousness of Jesus (that He earned by living a sinless Life and fulfilling the Law).⁴

And at that moment- we are *adopted* into the Family of God⁵; and we, who were born as *natural* Gentiles, become *true* Jews (**Romans 2:28&29**)- who worship God in Spirit and in Truth- which allows us to be a *genuine* son or daughter of Abraham- who *rejoices* at Jesus (**John 8:38-59**). And now as a member of "God's Family"- God the Holy Spirit sets up His Abode in our bodies- as we are now the *true* Temple of God (**2Corinthians 6:14-18**). And as the third Person of the Trinity dwells *continually* in us- He CAUSES us:

⁴ This is the Part of Salvation called, "*Justification*"

⁵ The Reason we MUST be "adopted" into the Family of God is because we are NOT already a Jew by *natural* Birth. We have become a *true* Jew by virtue of the New Birth.

.... to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. (Ezekiel 36:27)

... which is simply another Way of saying that God the Holy Spirit will produce a deep and ever-growing Love for the God that we now “see”.

And the Helper will also *empower* us to be *progressively* changed into the SAME Image that we “see” more and more clearly- as we read and study God’s Word.⁶

Now the Reason God can do all of this Blessing and Judging- PERFECTLY- is because God Himself is Perfect. God NEVER accuses anyone falsely. God NEVER jumps to Conclusions. God NEVER acts on false or partial Information. God ALWAYS sees EVERYTHING- perfectly! And so, God’s Response to what He sees- His Judgment- is ALWAYS Pure and Holy and Right!

But we are NOT that way. We DO accuse people- falsely. We DO jump to Conclusions. We DO act on partial or even false Information. And we NEVER see ANYTHING- perfectly! But, many times, we DO NOT even see things as well as we should.

And all of that leads us to judge people- *wrongly*. It leads to “hypocritical” or “false” Judgment. And that kind of Judgment is Sin. And if you have been in the Church for any length of time- you have probably been the victim of hypocritical or false Judgment on behalf of wayward or even well-meaning people. And if the Truth is known- you may have even been guilty of this Sin yourself.

In the face of others’ Aggravations and Sins — their thoughtless Comments and annoying Tones; their insensitive Laughter and Failures to follow through on Promises- how natural it feels to convict them in the “Court of our Imagination”. How gratifying to hear our “inner Prosecutor” give their Words or Actions the *worst* Spin possible, and then to close the Case even before the Defense can speak a Word.

But we need to remember the Words of Jesus in this Passage where our Lord has promised that, one day, the Judgments we laid on others will be laid on *us*. And it is sobering to realize that the Measures we used to assess others- will be used to assess *us*. Jesus has promised this- so it is certain and guaranteed. One day, you and me will enter the Courtroom of Almighty God- only this time we will enter as a Defendant and not as a Judge.

How many emails would be abandoned; how many text messages unsent; how many thoughts would be discarded; and words unsaid; how many conversations would be redirected; and posts unread; if only we heard our Savior say, with eternal Sobriety in His Voice, “*Judge not!*”

⁶ This is the Part of Salvation called, “*Sanctification*”.

This Passage has to do with that Kind of Judgment. It is NOT a blanket Condemnation of ALL human Judgment. But it is a continuation from the last Chapter of how important it is to have a “Clear Eye”.

And so, we need to know that making Judgments about Things and Events and even People is necessary in order to live in this world. So, Jesus is NOT condemning that Kind of Judgment. He’s not even condemning us rebuking Sinners nor is He telling us that He is the ONLY ONE who has the Right to Judge. God has told us to exercise Judgment in this World. But He absolutely *is* condemning hypocritical and false Judgment.

But the people who try to beat verse 1 over our head to use as a muffler to silence us- should read the rest of this Chapter where Jesus *commanded* us to “judge” the bad Fruit of the “spiritual dogs,” “pigs,” and “false prophets”. And it is almost certain that they won’t read **Matthew 7** alongside of **John 7**- where Jesus said,

Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.

... which does NOT condemn ALL Judgment- only the “Bad” kind.

Many times, in my own Life- when I am confronting my own tendency to Sin- it helps me to use Synonyms in place of the sinful Word that is used in the Bible. So, for example, instead of the words, “Judge” or “Judgment” or “Judging” we could use other words like:

- Critical Thinking
- Making a Determination
- Using Discernment

... which mean the same thing and which EVERY mature bond-slave of Jesus should be involved in.

But we should ALWAYS be mindful of the “other kind” of Judgment- the Kind that is manufactured in our unredeemed Flesh- that is marked by a Tendency to do very Evil and sinful things like:

1. Indulge in Hypocrisy
2. Withhold Mercy

I have found, in my own Life, that it is much easier to see the Sin in someone else’s Life than it is to see it in myself. Maybe you can relate. And it seems at times that God may have even given me a Gift to be able to even know the unseen

Motives of other people- even those I don't personally know. I have caught myself being angry at people- *especially* Politicians and other Leaders- as to *why* they do what they do (or why they don't do what they don't do). Of course- it is all so easy from the chair in my room at home.

But I became convicted of that Anger- as I would watch political talk-shows at Night that were designed by Writers to make me angry on purpose- NOT so that I could fix a Problem- but so I would simply *continue* to watch; and *continue* to make them money- while NEVER coming to a Solution to a single Problem.

So, now I'm angry with the "talking heads" who want to *manipulate* me as to what they want me to think is important- as some unseen Producer behind the camera tries to guide me into what I should be outraged at on this day. Beloved- at best- that isn't NEWS- it is Propaganda- even if it is coming from the "Right".

But the Captain of my Salvation tells me here what is *eternally* Important and what I should not only be *outraged* about- but what I should tremble over in Fear: that I may be *indulging* in Hypocrisy and that I may be *withholding* Mercy.

It is truly very easy for me to go to another Brother (always in Love of course) to point out some small Pattern of Sin or Folly that he has failed to see. It is even easier to see Nancy Pelosi's large and prevailing Sins and to ponder how wonderful the Country would be if only I were in charge. Beloved, if that isn't the height of Arrogance- I don't know what is.

Now look- Politicians SHOULD do what is right. But Christianity and Salvation and the Church were given to this earth by a God- who desires that His people love Mercy; and that we forgive our Enemies; and that we exhaust ourselves in making sure as many people as possible hear the Gospel every day. Jesus didn't scream in Agony on the Cross to make the world a better place for Conservatives- but to rescue guilty Sinners from the Damnation that is coming to EVERYONE who does NOT repent and trust in Jesus. And THAT should be our Focus.

But recently, as I struggle with my own Sin- my Mind has gone to a great Tool that is *woefully* underused- that God mercifully gave to His Church that is found in **James 5:16** that says that God's people are to:

... confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

... yet even though I have been in Church for almost 52 years- I can count on both hands the number of times a Prayer Group has actually done this. But even when they do- their Confession sounds more like, "*Brother, please pray for me that I can be drawn closer to the Lord*"- which is a great Request but which has NOTHING to do with what James had in mind. The Half-brother of Jesus told us to confess

our SINS- not our *Desires*. So, in Context with **Matthew 7**- our Confession should be about us indulging in Hypocrisy about our own Sins and withholding Mercy from others.

But you would be hard-pressed to ever hear such Confessions among the Redeemed- NOT because we have overcome our Sins- but precisely because we are guilty of indulging in Hypocrisy; and we are guilty of withholding Mercy to others.

Yet I would suggest that Church is NOT the Place to display all of our Strengths- but a Place where those who are genuinely struggling to obey Jesus with Joy- can honestly and truthfully and fully- be able to confide in the people we are supposedly going to spend all of Eternity with- about the Issues that trouble us; the Concepts that allude us; and the secret Evils that frustrate us. And as far as I can see- there are really only two Reasons why we don't seem eager to do that:

1. Pride
2. Gossip

Our sinful Pride causes us to be infinitely MORE afraid that some people might not think highly of us (if we confessed our Sins) than we fear standing before God being guilty of indulging in Hypocrisy. And we are infinitely more afraid that someone may gossip about us (if we confessed our Sins)- than we are to stand before God- guilty of withholding Mercy. Truly we have our Priorities mixed up.

In over half- a Century- I have NEVER heard a single Believer tell me that they think they are guilty of either indulging in Hypocrisy or of withholding Mercy. So, please allow me the Blessing of breaking the Ice for the people of the Covenant of Peace Church as I tell you- I KNOW I am guilty of this Sin. And I confess this horrible Sin *publicly*- in the Hope that God will forgive me; and that you will all pray for me- that God will be Good to me to give me the Power to overcome this Evil.

And I KNOW that not only have I withheld Mercy from other Believers- but I have committed this Horror with my own Children and with my own Wife. Here is what Jesus said:

3 "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"

4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?"

5 "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

Notice that the Sin is much GREATER in My eye than it is in my Brother's eye. And so, in my Case- the Label, "*Hypocrite*" from my Savior is accurate. And notice that verses 3& 4 are Questions that lead to the Statement of verse 5.

But also please notice that Jesus does NOT say that we should just forget about the Speck in our Brother's eye because we have a Log in ours. That is what the lost World teaches. But that is NOT what Jesus teaches at all. Instead, what Jesus taught is much harder. Jesus taught us to:

... first take the log out of your own eye

... which is a Commandment!

But that Command tells me that, first of all, my Log CAN be removed! So, this Log is NOT an insurmountable Problem! There is an Answer to this Log! And I CAN defeat it- in the Power of the Holy Spirit! But it will NEVER be removed from my eye by me using humanly engineered Discipline or by exercising will-power. That would ONLY bring *me* glory and allow me to boast. In order for God to be glorified as the Log is removed from my eye- it MUST be removed with the Power that comes from a dead and risen Savior. Other than that- I will be guilty of what God gave the Apostle Paul in **Galatians 3:3**:

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?

It took a sovereign Miracle of Grace and Mercy to save me in the *first* place. So, why would I expect that I can remove this Log in my eye by resorting to carnal means- now that I am already saved? Should I not beg God for the SAME sovereign Miracle of Grace and Mercy to help me now? Dear friends, I would suggest that the SAME Power that saved us will also sanctify us completely!

But here is another Issue we need to keep in mind about this Issue. That because Jesus categorized my Brother's Problem as being a "Speck" rather than a "Log"- I may make the serious Mistake to *assume* that his Speck is insignificant. It isn't. He will be judged by God for the Speck he has. Because the Speck in his eye- is sinful. And it is Evil and is of the devil. So, his Speck *dishonors* God and it hurts him- while also robbing God of His Glory.

So, as a Brother in Christ- I have a Duty; and an Obligation; and a Ministry; and a Responsibility to love my Brother enough to help him get the Speck out of his eye. So, I can't take the easy route and say, "*Well, I can't say anything about my Brother's Speck- because I have a Log in my own eye.*" That isn't what Jesus teaches here at all.

Jesus simply commanded me to get the Log out of my eye FIRST.

But then He tells me why,

... and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

So, the Goal is helping my Brother. But by ridding myself of the huge Log that is already in my own eye- FIRST- God is glorified AND my Brother is helped. And my Brother NEEDS that Help- because the Sin of my Brother's Speck is hurting the Cause of Jesus Christ. And as a Lover of both Jesus and my Brother- I have been bought and paid for- precisely so that I may contribute to, not only *myself* being able to glorify God- but that I help my Brother also. So, it is out of Love for Jesus AND Love for my Brother that I cry out to God to rid my eye of that wicked Log. Because if I don't- if I simply settle back and allow the Log in my own eye as well as the speck in my Brothers to continue- I am NOT obeying Jesus. I am a coward; and I am trying to excuse my own Sin as well as my Brother's.

So, Jesus is teaching here a Lesson about Priorities- NOT a Lesson about Silence. If I love Jesus- then I should NOT be deceived that I must now sit in Silence- because the Log in my own eye has rendered me a Hypocrite. That is NOT what Jesus taught here. He told me to get rid of the Log in my eye FIRST- so I WON'T be a Hypocrite when I then go to help my Brother with the Speck in his.

So, if I truly love my Brother- I must NOT bear this Sin in myself. Because my Brother needs me to see clearly- so I can help him with the Speck in his eye. O Lord Christ- have Mercy on me- the Sinner!

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.