

Who Do You Say That I Am?

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

53- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 33
True Judgment with the Log and the Speck- Part 2

Church May 21, 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 the Passage that Brother Vern just read to us- is actually a *continuation* of what Jesus taught about the “*Clear Eye*” back in Chapter 6. So, yes, I am saying that the Chapter and Verse Divisions in the Bible are NOT inspired. And even though they are mostly helpful in separating Thoughts- they sometimes get in the way. So, **Matthew 7:1-6** is connected to **Matthew 6:23&24**.

And back in Chapter 6- we saw how that when our Eye is NOT “Clear”- and we are NOT beholding Jesus in His Magnificence- we lean toward loving Money; and serving Wealth; rather than loving God and striving to obey Him. And now, here in Chapter 7- we see that when our Eye is “Evil” we also tend to be “*Self-righteous*”; and to judge each other much too quickly over some Trifle (Jesus called it a “Speck”); while *tolerating* our own much *worse* Wickedness (Jesus called it a “Log”) very easily. And this just illustrates how *easy* it is to see Sin in

somebody *else's* Life; while perhaps *hiding* a much more *grievous* Sin in our own Life.

But anytime we deal with what the Bible says about how to deal with Sin- we always should slow down and remember what Sin actually is- and just how the Bible teaches we should deal with it- and then to do that in connection to keeping our Eye singularly focused on a “clear” Revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As I speak with many people during the week- I am astonished at how little people understand about Sin. In my Travels- Sin is almost *universally* described as something obviously heinous like Mass-murder; or Child-rape; or Slavery; or selling Drugs to Children. In other words, Sin is usually described as something that even lost and unsaved people would agree with. And that is yet another Symptom of the Disease that I call, “*Man-centered Theology*”.

Now, on the surface- the phrase, “*Man-centered Theology*” may seem like a contradiction of terms- since the word, “*Theology*” means: “The “*Study of*”; or the “*Science of*”; or the “*Knowledge of*”- the “*Theos*”- which is God. So, if the word, “*Theology*” has to do with studying God- then how is the phrase, “*Man-centered Theology*” not a *fundamental* Contradiction?

A “*Man-centered Theology*” is the *purposeful* Replacement of God- with Man. It is *substituting* Man in place of God. So, it is not only a fundamental Contradiction- it is an Abomination; and the single most insidious Attack against Jesus Christ since Pelagianism back in the 5th Century. A “*Man-centered Theology*” teaches that ALL that God *is*; and ALL that God *does*- is about Man. That Man and Man's *Benefit* is the *greatest*; and the *highest*; and the most *important* Reality in the Universe- and is ALL that God thinks about; speaks about; and does.

So, in “*Alabama English*” a “*Man-centered Theology*” puts Man and whatever benefits Man- at the very Center of God and the entire Universe.

And so, a “*Man-centered Theology*” is NOT merely a different Way to understand the Bible. No! That false and perverse Belief- System- is at War with God and His Glory- which actually IS the *greatest*; and the *highest*; and the *best*; and the most *decisive*; and the most *important* Reality in the Universe. So, a “*God-centered Theology*” and a “*Man-centered Theology*” are *mutually* Exclusive; they are *fundamentally* Incompatible; they *cannot* co-exist with each other. One MUST give way to the other; and One MUST bow before the other.

In its ultimate Form- a “*Man-centered Theology*” MUST deny some of the most *common* and *clear* Teachings from the Bible- such as:

- The absolute Sovereignty of God
- Why God does what He does

- That we are Accountable to God
- Why God is Angry
- Why Jesus had to die
- The existence of Hell

... which is *why* these and other Issues are under attack in our day like never before.

For example, recently, the PCUSA (the largest Presbyterian Group) *sanitized* their Hymn Books to remove any Reference to Phrases and Concepts such as “*Jesus rescuing us from the Wrath of God*”; or to the “*Shed Blood of Jesus Christ.*” Now why would they do something like that? They said it was to “*Emphasize the Love of God toward Mankind.*”

Now there is absolutely NOTHING wrong with knowing about and celebrating God’s Love toward Mankind. But the Reason God’s Love toward us is so precious- is because we are NOT merely people. We are also guilty Sinners- who have *belittled* God’s Glory and *insulted* His Holiness with our Sins. And so, we need to understand that BOTH Statements are true.

Emphasizing God’s fierce Anger against us at the expense of His Love- is *ultimately* destructive to us- because it removes all Hope from us. But emphasizing God’s Love at the expense of His fierce Anger- is equally destructive- because it removes the Reason behind our NEED for His Love. And for 2,000 years- the Christian Church included BOTH in their Songs- that is, until the Leaders of the PCUSA vetoed that approach.

So, in just 20 years- an entire Generation of church-goers who belong to one of the oldest and largest Reformed Denominations on earth will never know that it is the *horror* of our own Sin that caused God’s Wrath to rise up in the first place- that was killed by the Love of God in Christ- NOT in merely dying for us- but in actually *satisfying* God’s Wrath against our Sins on the Cross.

So, this attempt at making a “*Man-centered Theology*” normal in the Church will also cause an entire Generation of Church- goers to not understand at least four Key biblical Truths- such as:

1. What Sin actually is
2. Why Sin insults God
3. Why God’s Wrath against our Sin is Correct
4. Why Jesus had to satisfy God’s Justice on the Cross in order for us to be saved

... but Time will only permit me to look at the *first* one.

So, let's look quickly at what Sin really is- and then tie it back into the Teaching here in **Matthew 7** about judging with a "Clear Eye".

What is Sin?

Now the *short* Answer to this Question is found in **1John 3:4** that says:

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

So, the Bible itself says here that "Sin" is "*Lawlessness*". So, Sin is operating in *opposition* to God's Law. So, Sin is "*doing what is Right in your own eyes*"- rather than gladly submitting to God's Law. It is conducting your normal, daily Life- as though God had not already given us His Law. And so, Sin involves us either *minimizing; over-ruling; or ignoring* God's Law. It is using our own human Logic; and our own human Reasoning; our own Thoughts and Ideas to determine for ourselves what is "Right" and what is "Wrong".

So, Sin is rebelling *against* God. Sin is making the Determination that God either doesn't understand your Situation or He doesn't care. And so, you must take things into your *own* hands; and do what you deem to be Correct- with little or no regard for what God has already revealed in sacred Writ. But that also means that Sin is committing Suicide- since God has promised to *destroy* those who Sin.

But the way this verse in **1John** is phrased *forces* us to try to get past the usual Answers about what Sin is- that the lost world would agree with- like "Mass-murder; Child-rape; Slavery; or selling Drugs to Children" that have to do with how "Bad" Sin is to Man; what negative things come from Sin to Man; how Man responds to Sin, etc. and get to more "God-centered" Answers like defining Sin as:

- The Glory of God not honored.
- The Holiness of God not revered.
- The Greatness of God not admired.
- The Power of God not praised.
- The truth of God not sought.
- The Wisdom of God not esteemed.
- The Beauty of God not treasured.
- The Goodness of God not savored.
- The Faithfulness of God not trusted.
- The Promises of God not believed.
- The Commandments of God not obeyed.
- The Justice of God not respected.

- The Wrath of God not feared.
- The Grace of God not cherished.
- The Presence of God not prized.
- The Person of God not loved.

... which are all decidedly MORE “God-centered” in Nature.

So, what we need to glean from this- is that a “*Man-centered Theology*” produces a “*Man-centered Judgment*”- that will ALWAYS judge Situations as well as other people with that which *benefits* Man the most- which will ALWAYS dishonor God. And it will ALWAYS pervert Judgment as well- precisely because it will NEVER solve the real Issue- our Sin. So, while that kind of Judgment may be much easier to hear- it will NEVER be what the Sinner actually Needs.

A “*God-centered Theology*” however- will always produce a “*God-centered Judgment*”- that will ALWAYS judge Situations as well as other people- perfectly- with that which benefits God the most. And that will ALWAYS produce a correct Judgment that will also benefit Man- but without dishonoring God in the process.

So, how do we judge like that? By basing ALL Judgment on God’s Glory and the Ability we have to Love that Glory. And that means that, *ultimately*, all the details found in God’s Law simply tell us what loving God and His Glory look like. And that is the Key to “*God-centered Judgment*”- loving God MORE than we love ourselves. Because the *highest*; and the *best*; and the most *important* Summation of all of the many details concerning God’s Law throughout the entire Old Testament- is found in what Jesus said in **Mark 12:30** when He said,

YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.

Okay- but what does that actually mean? Well, right off “*Jump Street*” loving God CANNOT be reduced to mere *physical* Acts of Compliance to the Law. And it CAN’T be reduced to Acts of humanly- engineered Willpower- contrary to the Heart’s true Desires, either. And we know that’s true- because in **Matthew 15:8&9**, Jesus quoted **Isaiah 29:13** to say,

THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.

So, the Lips may sing Hymns and worship Songs. The Lips may even preach Truth. The Lips may advocate for Justice for the Poor and the Unborn. But these

are Acts of the Body and the Will that people can memorize and engage in them- without even thinking. Lost people can talk about these things- even with great Passion; and they can actually engage in them- and yet all the while- NOT love God. And if that is the case- ALL those Acts combined are a moral “zero”. And if that is the case- ALL those Acts combined are NOT examples of a Love for God. And without the Love of God as our Foundation- any Judgment we render will be hypocritical, at best.

But how could people outwardly worship God while not really worshipping Him at all? Because of the Fall- it is possible for people to be very “Religious” and yet NOT love God. It is possible to engage in amazingly Acts of Morality that would garner the praise of even the Lost- and NOT love God- at all!

But Dr. Luke’s version of the first Commandment (**Luke 10:27**) gives us a Clue as to the *Essence* of genuine Love for God. Because when Jesus answered the Lawyer and said,

... YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND...

... we MUST understand that this Translation is NOT exactly Correct.

Translating each of these prepositional phrases *identically* (“*WITH* all your Heart, *WITH* all your Soul, *WITH* all your Strength, and *WITH* all your Mind”) *overlooks* a crucial Difference. One of them is different- the *first* one. And so, I would tell you that, according to the actual Greek words, the *first* part of **Luke 10:27** *should* say,

“You shall love the Lord your God FROM all your heart.”

The Reality is that the *first* Greek Preposition means “*FROM*” or “*OUT OF*.” It does NOT mean, “*WITH*”. Never has. But the other three Prepositions DO mean “*IN*” or “*WITH*.” And that isn’t my Opinion, dear friends- it is a Fact of the Greek Language. So, that means that the *First* Commandment that Jesus quoted in **Luke 10:27** is actually,

You shall love the Lord your God FROM [*out of*, as a root or spring] all your heart and WITH all your soul and WITH all your strength and WITH all your Mind

Now here is something else that is very important. The Episode recorded for by the good Dr in **Luke 10**- is between Jesus and a religious Lawyer. And it is

irrelevant (as far as this Discussion is concerned) that the Lawyer may have, in fact, simply been trying to trap Jesus when he asked the Question. The fact that the Lawyer Jesus was talking to- *agreed* with Jesus' Answer (when Jesus said love God FROM the Heart and WITH the other three) tells me that this Statement is NOT merely what Jesus said *this* particular time- but is actually the correct Way we are supposed to understand the First Great Commandment- ALL the time!

In other words, while we were ALWAYS supposed to put the word, "WITH" with the other three parts of the Human Body (Soul; Strength; and Mind)- we were NEVER supposed to put that word with the Heart. We were ALWAYS supposed to make the Distinction between the Heart and the other three!

Now why does that matter? Am I just "splitting hairs here?" No! This matters because it is a Clue that the human Heart has a very *unique* Role to play in us both loving God and rendering Judgments that will glorify God as well as actually help people. But the Soul; the Strength; and even the human Mind are NOT peculiarly associated with our *Affections*. But the Heart is. So, Love for God comes *first* from the Human Heart and NOT from the Soul or the Strength or even the human Mind!

You shall love the Lord your God *FROM* all your heart,

... because Love's *Essence* is what the Heart *produces* — NOT the mere Motions of the Lips; and NOT the Acts of Willpower that are able to work *against* the Desires of the Heart. But the very Essence of a Love for God are- *first* – BEFORE THEY ARE ANYTHING ELSE- the "*Affections*" OF the human Heart!

Now while I am NOT promoting us all to simply be emotional- I AM recognizing that, as humans- we DO have Emotions; and our Emotions are real. They make up part of WHO we are; and how we live our Lives; and even in how we exercise Judgment. And so, we must always guard ourselves; and recognize that our Goal is NOT to become Stoics or Gnostics- who despised EVERYTHING associated with the human Heart and with human Emotions. That would NOT be "spiritual"- and it wouldn't be "biblical" either- so it wouldn't be pleasing to the Lord.

Some of the greatest biblical Exegetes in all of Church History were the Puritans. And Jonathan Edwards was perhaps the greatest Theologian that America has ever produced. And both the Puritans and Jonathan Edwards recognized that a full third of the Bible talks about Issues like Love and the human Heart. And what flows out from a genuine Love of God and a Heart that has been captured by that Love- is not only "*Right Living*" but also "*Right Judgments*". How could we ever hope to see clearly enough to help our Brother rid himself of the Speck in his eye- if we have not *already* been captured by a profound and

overwhelming Love for God? All that would accomplish would be to make us modern-day Scribes and Pharisees.

And so, to be “biblical” in our Love for God and in our Judgments of one another- *requires* that we include the “Art” side of Christianity and blend it with the “Science” side and that we are to work hard to develop a “Faith” that contains both unarguable Truths that we are to firmly believe; as well as Commandments that we are to personally *experience*. And that BOTH of these are true; BOTH of them are Right; and Biblical; and Godly.

So, in their Teachings- both the Puritans and Johnathan Edwards made a clear Distinction between “*Human Loves*” that had to do with the fallen Nature; and the “*Affections of the Heart*”- that the Bible illustrates and commands. Now to an untrained eye- they look the same. But they aren’t. What the Soul; and the Strength; and the Mind *produce* are different Ways of *expressing* a Love for God. They are different Ways of *feeding* that Love for God. But their Work- *while absolutely necessary*- is NOT the *Essence* of that Love. “*Heart-work*” is the *Essence*. And this is *why* Jesus said this in **Matthew 15:8&9**:

THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.

... because even when the Lips, Voice, Mind, Strength, and Soul are *fully* engaged in worshipping God- it can ALL be in Vain- if one thing is true:

... THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

... and that is what “Sin” is- having our Hearts *away* from God. And this is true- even when we are engaged in religious Activities. But it is *especially* true- when we are conducting the spiritual Surgery needed to remove the Speck from our Brother’s eye.

So, people can go to Church; and they can lift their hands in the Song Service; and they can testify as to the great things God is doing in their lives; they can see the Speck in their Brother’s eye; and they can engage in all sorts of Acts of human Strength- using the human Mind; and the human Soul. And they can do all of these Acts *energetically* and *passionately* and *continually*. But if they do not love God- it is ALL in vain! And the frightening part is that, because of the Fall- human beings can and they do- all of these things all the time. Yet if what Jesus said is true and ...

... THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

... they are NOT glorifying God; and they are, in fact, sinning.

So, genuinely *loving* God; and *treasuring* Him above all that is in the Universe- is the BEST Way to keep God's Law; it is the very BEST Way to NOT Sin; and it is the ONLY Way to remove the Speck out of our Brother's eye.

But this brings us to a very important Place. Because our Hearts are not always Reliable. In fact, many times- our Hearts are completely Unreliable. And that is what God meant when He told the Prophet Samuel this in **1Samuel 16:7:**

... God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart

Our Hearts are *terrible* Barometers about our own spiritual Condition. Why is that? Because of the Fall- our Hearts are swayed by all sorts of Issues and Conditions- many of which we can't control. And that is *why* the Prophet said this in **Jeremiah 17:9:**

The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?

... yet the Bible teaches that without our Hearts being fully engaged in loving and worshipping God; as well as exercising godly Judgments- our spiritual Acts are all "in Vain". So, what do we do? How do we tame this "**deceitful above all else**" *part* of ourselves and try to understand that which God said can't be understood?

The first thing out of the blocks is to cry out to God. We must remember what the Apostle said in **1John 4:19:**

We love, because He first loved us.

Because of the Fall- lost sinners CANNOT love God. No lost sinner loves God. That is the great Distinction between the Saved and the Lost. We would like to think that the great Distinction between the Saved and the Lost- is that saved people don't sin against God while lost people do. But sadly, regretfully, that isn't true. Saved people periodically still sin against God.

The great Distinction between those who are genuinely saved and those who aren't- is that ALL of the Saved love God- while NONE of the Lost love Him. So, part of what it means to be saved- is that we now love God. And ALL of our Actions- including going to Church; praying; fasting; giving;

forgiving our enemies; and judging Sin- flow out from this Love that we now have for God.

Yet when we were Lost- we did NOT love God. And that is because we lost that Ability in the Fall. So, ever since Adam rebelled and sinned- human beings loving God is NOT *normal*. Love for God does NOT flow out from us- *naturally*. We are entirely *incapable* of loving God- on our own. And the biggest Reason Why lost people do NOT love God- is simply because they don't *want* to.

Now in Salvation- God *restores* the Love for Himself that Adam had before he sinned and fell. So, in His Mercy- God gives ALL of His Elect- the Gift of Love for Himself. Now keep in mind- this Love for God is real. It is true. It isn't made up; it isn't worked up. And even though this Love for God DOES grow progressively stronger- as our Knowledge of God's Word gets stronger- it is there in ALL of the Redeemed. So, there is no such thing as somebody being saved and yet not loving God. Part of what it means to be saved- is that we now "normally and naturally" love God!

But please notice how the Apostle John phrased this:

We love, because He first loved us.

So, first of all, John said, "**WE**". Who are the "**WE**" in this verse? The saved. So, the saved- Love. And we love God; and we love each other (and we even love our enemies) as a function of being part of the "**WE**"- the saved. And ALL of the "**WE**"- ALL of the saved love God and love each other and love our Enemies.

But then John said- we love- "**BECAUSE**". So, there is a Reason WHY we love. Something happened to the "**WE**"; to the saved that did NOT happen to the Lost- that changed the Fact that we didn't used to love God- but now we do. Because the Lost do NOT love God. And the word, "**BECAUSE**" tells us that God did something for, to with and in the Elect- that CAUSED them; that ALLOWED them; that ENABLED them to love. So, the saved did NOT create this Love themselves. This Love did NOT originate from themselves. God gave it. God did it. Well, what did God do? The next part of this verse says,
... **BECAUSE He FIRST loved us.**

There it is! We love! Saved people love! And ALL saved people love! And we love God and we love each other; and we even love our Enemies. But the Reason WHY We love God and the others- is BECAUSE GOD (He) FIRST loved us! So, the Catalyst; the Origination; the Cause; the Beginning; the Genesis of our Love for God (and each other; and our Enemies) is God's Love for us- FIRST! And that means that:

Our Love FOR God (and everybody else) is a Gift FROM God.

So, we must always FIRST recognize that the Love we have for God (however weak or frail or tried it may be)- came from God in the *first* place. We didn't always have this Love- and we didn't *originate* it. This Love is a Gift of God's Grace.

And that means that God would have NEVER given us this Gift of Love in the first place- if He wouldn't also *increase* it; and *deepen* it; and *enrich* it. So, if we desire for our Love to *increase* and get *stronger* and become more *evident*- we should ask God to do that. And then we need to remember what the Apostle said in **1John 3:20:**

in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.

So, God is *greater* than our own Hearts! And that is true- whether we are face with a serious, life-threatening Trial; and it is true when we are endeavoring to rid our Brother of the Speck in his eye. So, God will tame our wild and desperately sick Hearts. And God will allow our Hearts to love Him- genuinely; and truthfully.

Now with all of this in mind- let us approach the infallible Words of Jesus in **Matthew 7**. And as we live out our Christian Lives- we may come across an opportunity to say to another Brother what Jesus said in verse 4,

Let me take the speck out of your eye

... which are words of Judgment.

But those words, whether they are actually *spoken* or merely *thought*- may seem totally "unobjectionable" at the moment. They may appear to us to be even Kind and Loving. I mean I really DO love this Brother; and I really DO notice a Speck in his eye. And so, we reason to ourselves that we would appreciate somebody telling us that some of that really good spinach dip is sticking in our teeth; or the shirt tag is climbing our neck- and so, we tell him about his Speck.

But wait! As is true with MOST things about the Lord and His Work- there's a whole lot MORE here than what is obvious. And so, Jesus says to us,

"There's a real big Log in your own eye!"

... which is just another Way of our Lord saying to us, “**You hypocrite!**” (Matthew 7:5).

But last time- we saw that this stinging Rebuke by Jesus is NOT His *final* Word to us. The SAME Lord, who just called us a Hypocrite also said,

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.

So, the Goal is not only to help your Brother get rid of his “Speck” which you *clearly* saw- but also to help you remove the Log that is in your *own* eye- which you did NOT see at all- so that BOTH you and your Brother can love God- with a “clear eye”. So, we saw last time that this is NOT a Command to be silent about your Brother’s Speck (because of the Log in your eye)- but a Command of *Priorities*: You get rid of the Log in your eye- FIRST- and THEN you go to your Brother about the Speck in his eye.

So, the one, single Step that you planned to take about going to your Brother and helping him get rid of his Speck- has now grown to become several, very important Steps- such as:

Step 1: Recognize that God’s Goal in you having a Log in your eye- is for you to see the Importance of having a “Clear Eye”- so you can behold Jesus in His Magnificence

Step 2: Recognize that without the Heart being fully engaged with an over-flow of God’s Love- EVERYTHING about either the Speck or the Log- is in Vain.

Step 3: Realize that the Log in your Eye is keeping you from seeing Jesus as He actually is- so it NEEDS to be removed. But the Log is NOT Sovereign. It isn’t Invincible. It CAN be defeated.

Step 4: Cry out to God for Him to give you more Love for Himself (since He gave you the Gift of Love for Himself to begin with)

Step 5: WITH that Love; and IN that Love; and TO the Glory of God- fight against the Log in your own eye- by asking God to help you; and by confessing the Log to other Believers- to help you overcome it.

Step 6: Even though there may be remnants of that Log remaining- go to your Brother to *discuss* the Speck in his eye

Step 7: Help your Brother even as you are being helped

Step 8: Worship God FROM all your Heart and WITH all your Soul; Mind; and Strength

Dear friends, we must always understand that Hypocrisy is NEVER the Friend of Mercy. When we spend more time noticing others’ Sins than our *own*- we

are testifying loudly that we think we have risen above all of that. And that Evidence of Hypocrisy and Self-righteousness causes us to struggle to wear the “**Spirit of Gentleness**” that is an Apostolic Command to ALL who correct others (**Galatians 6:1**).

We must always remember that God doesn’t NEED us in order for that Brother to go free. God can bring Conviction and Victory to him- *sovereignly*- without using you. So, more than anything else- helping your Brother get rid of the Speck in his eye- is an Opportunity for you to use the “**Spirit of Gentleness**” and NOT to “lord it over” another Bond-slave of Jesus.

And so, the key word here is Mercy. Because Jesus gave us a severe Warning in verse 2 that says,

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

... which is why John Stott said,

“The command to *judge not* is not a requirement to be blind, but rather a plea to be generous”¹

But generous, merciful Judgment takes both Energy and Time. It requires an eye for Complexity; a willingness to give the Benefit of the Doubt; a Self-distrusting Posture; a prayerful Heart; and a clear Eye.

So, just how do we shut the Mouth of our hypocritical Judgments? How do we lay down our merciless Measures and “judge not,” *especially* when faced with *real* Offenses? We begin where Jesus begins in this Passage and remember that we are NOT *first*, the *Judge*, but rather- those who will be *judged*. And to that End, we live today in Light of two great Judgment Days: one Past and one Future.

Our “*Past Judgment Day*” has to do with the Reality that every Christian knows: The Experience Paul describes in **Romans 3:19** that says,

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

So, at one point or another, we have all stood- mouth closed- before the Judgment Seat of God. And we trembled as every Excuse was stripped away and

¹John Stott; *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, 177

every Defense silenced. And we faced the holy, holy, holy God- and we could plead only one thing: *Guilty!* As Sinclair Ferguson writes,

“To be silenced before the throne of God is an unforgettable experience! It shows every time we speak with and to others”²

But we were not only *silenced* before the Throne of God- we were also *forgiven* there. God’s stinging, burning Coal of Grace touched our lips, saying, **“Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.” (Isaiah 6:7)**. So, Mercy met us at the Judgment Seat of God- bidding us to go and speak a *better* word than Judgment.

And when we remember our *“Judgment Past”*- unrighteous Judgments no longer rest upon our lips so easily. The pardoned Criminal *cannot* condemn his fellows as he did before. Mercy has touched him- and Mercy cannot help but beget more Mercy.

But then Jesus lifts our gaze to the Judgment that is yet to come:
Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

So, the Day is coming soon when **“we will all stand before the judgment seat of God” (Romans 14:10)**- which is the great Equalizer of all Mankind- great and small; rich and poor; well-known and unknown. And what will happen when we stand there? The Rubric we raised against others- will be raised against us.

The Promise for those who have judged without Mercy, consistently and unrepentantly, is that their own Judgment, **“will be merciless” (James 2:13)**. Their merciless Judgments will become Evidence in that heavenly Courtroom- that they never received; and they never treasured- the Mercy of God in Christ themselves. And so, they will reap the very same Judgments they sowed- and to the very same extent.

Yet those who have learned, by Grace and through much Repentance, that **“Mercy triumphs over Judgment” (James 2:13)**- will, be, *amazingly*, “not judged”. These merciful ones will NOT be judged on that Future Judgment Day! What a precious Thought! Only the Grace of a Cross-bearing Christ could craft such a wondrous Result! O, Lord Christ- have Mercy on me- the Sinner!

Amen. Let’s pray.

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² *The Christian Life*, 41

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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.