

# *Who Do You Say That I Am?*

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

56- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 36  
*The Uniqueness of Christian Prayer- Part 3*

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Church June 11, 2023

## **Matthew 7:6-14**

**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.**

**7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**

**8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

**9 "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone?**

**10 "Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?**

**11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!**

**12 "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.**

**13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.**

**14 "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.**

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

When you study the 6,000- year History of Mankind- it is breathtaking to see how, periodically, a single Passage or Verse or even a single Word in the Holy Bible has moved; and motivated; and inspired; the mind; and the heart; and the soul of very ordinary people- to do very extra-ordinary things- they would have never dreamed of doing. Some of the most important Events in Human History

have been engaged by just everyday people- because a single Passage; or a single Verse; or even a single Word- ignited their Faith and compelled them to act.

For example, on October 28, 1787, a young man named, William Wilberforce read **Matthew 7:12** that says,

**In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.**

... and his eye fixed on a single word, "**THEREFORE**".

Now the word, "*Therefore*" is an interesting word. It isn't something that can stand alone. And it really isn't a Commandment, either. "*Therefore*" is used, in the English Language, as something that leads the reader *from* a Truth that has already been proclaimed- to a Conclusion- that is *based* on that Truth. It is a word that leads to Action or Change- either a change of Belief; or a change of Behavior; or Both. But it doesn't stand by itself. There must *first* be a Truth that is proclaimed- BEFORE there can be a "Conclusion" or a "Summary" of what we are to do- *based* on that Truth.

One Way to understand how to apply the Word, "Therefore" is to back up to the Truth and say,

SINCE this is True... THEREFORE *this* should be my Response; or *this* is what I should Believe; or *this* is what I should Do- precisely *because* of that Truth.

**Matthew 7:12** tells us to treat other people the Way we would *like* for them to treat us. And it does that- in connection to what Jesus said earlier about Prayer, in verses 7-11:

**7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**

**8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

**9 "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone?**

**10 "Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?**

**11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!**

So, we are to treat others the Way we would LIKE for them to treat us- BECAUSE...

**If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!**

So, it is the Knowledge and the Belief that God will ALWAYS give us what is “Good” and will NEVER give us what is “Bad” that *empowers* us to treat others the Way we want to be treated.

But that also means that those “other people” are NOT already treating us the Way we would like to be treated. But instead of “reciprocating in kind” and treating them as badly as they are treating us- Jesus commands those, who are a part of this new Kingdom of Heaven, to *resist* the Temptation of giving to them what they are giving to us- and treating them with Kindness; and Love; and Mercy; and Grace- which is the Way we want others to treat us.

In other words, Jesus wants us to model the Life that the New Birth has given to us. He wants us to show or demonstrate or display or manifest or prove that our Experience with the Power of God in Regeneration is real and genuine and factual- even when mistreated.

So, instead of waiting until the “other people” treat us with Kindness and Love- Jesus wants us to treat them that Way- FIRST- BEFORE they begin to treat us the Way we would *like* for them to treat us.

Because the Reality is that those “other people” may NOT be saved. And they may never be saved. But we *are* saved. And so, we must glorify God- by demonstrating or proving that the Fact that our Salvation is genuine- has NOTHING to do with how the world acts; or what kind of Government we live under; or how people of other Religions treat us; or how lost and unsaved people treat us.

The Motivation; or the Impetus; the Genesis; the Cause; or the Origin of our Ability to demonstrate Love and Mercy and Kindness and Grace- to people who may NOT even deserve it- is based on one thing:

**My Faith and Hope and Trust in Who Jesus is; and in What Jesus has already done**

So, our Beliefs and our Behavior- *especially* as it pertains to how we treat other people- is based on what brings Glory to God and NOT on what is going on around us; or in how other people treat us.

Now when William Wilberforce’s eyes latched on to the word, “THEREFORE” in **Matthew 7:12**- he wrote this in his diary:

“God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the Slave Trade [in Great Britain] and the Reformation of [Morals].”<sup>1</sup>

... Wilberforce was smitten with two completely Impossible Objectives based on a single Word in a single Verse:

1. The Suppression of the Slave Trade
2. The Reformation of Morals

So, Wilberforce knew that Almighty God wanted him to bring an End to the inhuman and barbaric Slave Trade in Great Britain that had been going on for over 124 years- and- *as though that wasn't enough*- God also wanted Wilberforce to bring about a Reformation of the public Morals of his Nation.

So, in *addition* to ending the ungodly Slave Trade- Wilberforce wanted to also bring an End to Prostitution; to stop the ever-escalating Divorce rate; bring about Justice for Orphans; Widows; the Blind; and Cripple people; overhaul the Foster-Care Industry that was notorious for molesting little Children; and put a stop to governmental Corruption. This is what God dealt with Wilberforce about when he read what Jesus said in **Matthew 7:12**:

**In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.**

Now most thinking people would call what Wilberforce received out of that single verse- a “*Pipe-Dream*”- a “*Fool's Errand*”; something so impossible; so improbable; so utterly beyond his Ability to do- that it was silly to even suggest it.

But William Wilberforce didn't look at the enormity of what God had called him to do. He simply read the inspired; inerrant; and infallible Word of the living God and said to himself: “*How can I possibly think that I am obeying what Jesus said here if I pretend that my fellow-human beings are NOT being so horribly mistreated. And how can I pretend that I don't know that those who are mistreating them- are encouraged and protected by Law?*”

It was at this point that William Wilberforce began to understand what was really going on with the Slave Trade and with the ever- descending Morals of the Nation he loved. It was what Jesus said back in **Matthew 6:24**:

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<sup>1</sup> John Pollock, *Wilberforce* (London: Constable and Company, 1977), p. 69.

**No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.**

So, Wilberforce understood that the Slave Trade as well as the declining Morals of his Nation was all about the inordinate Love of Money. Wilberforce said that Slavery happens when people serve Wealth instead of God. Prostitution and the mistreatment of the weakest people in the Country occurs when people have a “*Bad eye*” (**Matthew 6:23**)- when their Sight has slipped downward from the Glory of God to the dregs of this earth. These Sins, that have come to be called, “*Social Ills*” fill the City when God’s people grow accustomed to the Darkness around them and begin to think that the Darkness is normal.

And when that happens- when God’s people buy into the Lie that the Darkness around them is normal and the “*Way things are supposed to be*”- they lose sight of what Jesus taught in **Matthew 7: 7-11**:

**7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.**

**8 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.**

**9 "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone?**

**10 "Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?**

**11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!**

So, Wilberforce began to Pray. He asked God to move people’s hearts against Slavery. He sought God’s Will about the Matter from Scripture and read about how single men- like Moses; Elijah; David; Jeremiah; and the others preached and proclaimed and prayed and moved a Nation toward God. And he knocked at the Door of God’s Heart and begged God to bring His own people under Conviction that they simply CANNOT Worship God; and then go out and buy and sell human beings like cattle!

And as he moved into obeying God’s Call on his Life- Wilberforce found out the Reality that Sin is big Business! And so, people were engaged in buying and selling human beings for the SAME Reason they engaged in Prostitution and the Mistreatment of the Weak: Wealth!

So, it was the supposed “*Majesty of Money*” that *dulled* the Conviction of God’s people back in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. And the ease at which they could gain

Wealth had *deadened* the Heart of people who laid claim to be saved. Slavery, as well as Prostitution, were literal “Industries” in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Britain; and so, the members of the various Churches during that Time reasoned to themselves with a clever Syllogism that people use today:

1. God wants to bless His people
2. There is money to be made in Sin
3. I can prosper with the Sin without personally engaging in it
4. People are going to sin anyway
5. Therefore, Sin is okay

... but that Logic forgets what Jesus said in **Matthew 7:12**:

**In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.**

... which forces us to understand three things:

- Sin is NEVER okay with God
- It matters to God HOW we earn our Money
- The Slave and the Prostitute and the Weak are NOT there for us to use for our Profit. They exist to help us understand what kind of Heart we have.

So, like the Beggars who fill the alleys of the great and glittering Cities of the most prosperous Nation in the History of the world- the Slave; and the Prostitute; and the Weakest people among us – are Signs from God. They are Signs that measure what kind of people we are; Signs that illustrate whether our Salvation is only Good on Sunday mornings in Church; Signs that measure whether we believe that we are waiting on Jesus to come back; or He is waiting on us to get ready for His Return.

Now it is common today to hear people tout the great Accomplishments that western Governments made in finally bringing Slavery to an End. But that isn't true. It wasn't the Governments of the western Nations that ended Slavery. For example, members of Parliament (MPs) in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries *sanctioned* Slavery by Law and *personally* profited from it. Those highly educated and highly admired men passed Laws that favored the slave Owners rather than the Slaves; and that turned a blind eye to the Blight of Prostitution- even child Prostitution.

But the Judges didn't end Slavery either. The Judges enforced the Laws that Parliament passed *against* the human beings who were being bought and sold;

while they allowed those who used and abused the Poor and the Blind and the Cripple- to avoid Punishment.

Doctors, who took an oath to preserve Life and to “*Do no Harm*”- treated the wounds of the Slaves and the Prostitutes- NOT so they could become Healthy- but simply so they could work better and make more Money for those who owned them. And the Lawyers were very busy- articulating the finer points of the Law- so that this inhuman Business could continue. And the Business Owners became wealthier beyond their wildest dreams while Britain sank deeper and deeper into the Blackness of their Wickedness.

So, they gathered on the Lord’s Day in some of the most spectacular Cathedrals all across England and sang the praises of the Savior Who had supposedly bought and paid for their souls- but then all during the week- these men would pass laws; and adjudicate disputes; and treat Patients; and engage in their Businesses- that served to make 19<sup>th</sup> Century Britain a cesspool of Evil in God’s Eyes.

So, no! It was neither the Members of Parliament; nor the Lawyers; nor the Judges; nor the Doctors; nor the Business Owners who had any desire at all to slow down the Slave Trade; or the mistreatment of the Weak- much less stop it outright.

No, it was the people of the Church- who rose up as one -man- to cry out against an entire Industry that was as Evil and Wrong and sinful as any in human History. And in Great Britain- it was primarily the work of a single man- William Wilberforce- who transformed this once great Nation- with only two Weapons:

1. The Call of God on his Life
2. Prayer

... because in just twenty years from the Day he read **Matthew 7:12**- God made the Impossible- possible. And on February 24, 1807 at 4am- the decisive vote was cast and Slavery became illegal in Great Britain and in all the lands that England had around the world!

Now there were others who helped. On January 29, 1792, a Reformed Baptist preacher named, Abraham Booth, who was ablaze with the Fire of the Doctrines of Grace- preached a Sermon entitled, “*Commerce in the Human Species, and the Enslaving of Innocent Persons, Inimical to the Laws of Moses and the Gospel of Christ.*” And in that Sermon- Booth asked the Congregation what they would do- if ships arrived at Bristol and London and men went through the city taking men and women by force; putting them in chains; and dragging them into the ships- to never be seen by their loved ones again.

Friends, Jesus did NOT say that we are to treat other people the

*SAME* Way they treat us- but that we should treat them the Way we would *LIKE* for them to treat us. And for Wilberforce- this simple but profound Command of Jesus meant that he could no longer turn his head and pretend that the Evil; Wicked; Barbaric; and Violent Slave Trade that had been going on for Centuries in his Country- was none of his Business.

Human Beings- made in God's Image were being bought and sold and treated like cattle. Children were selling their bodies all along the streets that led to the Church. And the Blind and the Poor and the Widows and Orphans were being horribly used and abused every single day. But because Jesus gave us this Commandment- that has come to be called, the "*Golden Rule*"- Wilberforce simply couldn't tolerate it anymore- and so, he prayed; and he went to work; and God moved!

But we need to know that Christianity is the *ONLY* Religion that teaches that if you desire to do great things for God- then you must *FIRST* focus on your Faith- *BEFORE* you go to work! You must make sure that what you believe- is true- and *THEN* put that Belief into Action. Because *EVERYTHING* we do- is based on what we Believe!

Every other Religion and human Philosophy teach that we must focus on the Works we intend to do. But the Bible doesn't teach that. It teaches that godly Works will *automatically* flow out from a person who concentrates on What he is supposed to believe. And that drives lost and unsaved people crazy- as they see this as being hopelessly naive and a complete waste of Time.

Now there are many Evils today in the Culture of 21<sup>st</sup> Century America. And *ALL* of them are Evil; and *ALL* of them need to be stopped. And there is tremendous Pressure being placed on God's people to join this Group or that Group; and get involved with this Issue; or that Issue. But please allow me to remind *ALL* of us- that *THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT AND PRESSING ISSUE FOR US TODAY IS* what Jesus Himself said in **Matthew 28:18b-20**:

**18 ... All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.**  
**19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,**  
**20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**

*THIS* is the *ONE GREAT COMMISSION* of the Christian Church! And *EVERYTHING* else we do- is *subservient* to this. This is what should *dominate* our Time; and our Prayers; and our Money; and our Efforts. And that means that if we engage in anything else- if we fight against any Evil; if we war



against any Foe; if we wrestle against any Enemy- it MUST NOT detract from this ONE SINGLE COMMISSION!

But, in my own personal Experience, MOST of the Time a group desires to bring an End to a particular Evil- whether that is Abortion or Sexual Immorality; or Civil Rights; or Constitutional Liberties- those who wage war in these areas- go about their Fight- using Weapons and Ideas and Tactics and Strategy and Effort that are typical with those

who are out in the lost world. In other words, Believers use the Weapons; and the Strategies; and the Tools; and the Ideas; and the Tactics of “Flesh”. But here is what the inspired; infallible; and inerrant Word of the living God instructs us about this Issue from **2Corinthians 10:3-6:**

**3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,  
4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.**

**5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,**

**6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.**

So, if we would simply dare to do God’s Work in God’s Way- I think we would see, NOT ONLY that the Evil is stopped- but that God is glorified along the Way. Because I truly believe that if we concentrated on preaching the Gospel and baptizing Believers; and Disciplining those who say they are saved- we would get everything we say we want!

But as for me- I would MUCH rather see those who promote sexual Immorality be saved- than be merely defeated. I would MUCH rather see those who promote and engage in Abortion come to Jesus and become our Brothers and Sisters in Christ- then to merely see Abortion made to be illegal. You will travel many miles before you find anyone who hates Abortion; and who has personally put his money where his mouth is concerning Abortion- more than me. But we need to realize that even if they make Abortion illegal- that, in and of itself, will not save a single soul. So, let us work to end all Evil in our land- yes! But let us NEVER dilute our main Mission; our primary Focus- to preach the Gospel to every creature!

Dear friends, I want those on the “other side of the aisle” on the various political Issues to experience the Miracle of the New Birth; and to love and strive to obey Jesus. I want them to look forward to spend all of Eternity in Heaven.

And so did Jesus. And because He wanted the Jews of the 1<sup>st</sup>

Century to be saved- Jesus went to them- FIRST! And He preached the Gospel to them; and He healed them; and He cast out devils; and walked on water; and raised the dead; and forgave Sin. But Jesus didn't do that because of ANY Social Issue. The Motivation behind ALL that Jesus did was to give Divine Credibility to Who He was- so that lost sinners- Jews and Gentiles- could be delivered from the Wrath of God and come into a Right Standing with God!

So, Jesus did what He did; and He said what He said; because Jesus knew that, *ultimately*, Salvation is the Way; the ONLY Way to see a Change of Behavior that will glorify God and that will alter the Behavior of sinful people- forever! And THAT was Jesus' Goal- NOT to merely "*Transform the Culture*". Because if people are not born again- ALL that is ever accomplished is re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic before it hits the iceberg.

Look, I agree that it is BETTER to have a "moral Culture" than it is to have an "Immoral" one. It is BETTER that they don't murder babies than that they do. And it is BETTER that sexual Immorality is NOT promoted and imposed on the people. But we are NOT the people of what is BETTER. We are the people of the invincible God- whose Will is for...

**... the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, As the waters cover the sea. (Habakkuk 2:14)**

... and we are the people of the new "Kingdom of Heaven"- which began in Israel back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century as a small mustard seed...

**... but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES. (Matthew 13:32)**

... and we are the people of the "Christian Church" of which Jesus said...

**... I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. (Matthew 16:18)**

... so, we are NOT trying to accomplish what is BETTER.

We are wanting to obey our King- with Joy- so that when He comes back- He will find us faithful. And so, we MUST be about the Father's Business- and THAT is what will transform the Culture.

Look, we can pass laws; and elect certain people into Positions of Power. And that is fine- and we SHOULD do that. But here is a blueprint that will actually accomplish that:

Men MUST rise up. Men. Strong, Godly, and Loving Fathers; Husbands; Brothers; and Sons. And these men MUST lead in their Homes. And these Men MUST *sacrificially* love and lead their Wives; Daughters; Sisters; and Mothers. And these Men MUST teach their Children and train them up in the Way they should go. And that will cause the Family to be Right with God.

Then those Families that are led by Strong, Godly, and Loving Men become active and vibrant members of a local Church and they help to lead and guide that church so that each member is Right with God.

And as the people of those godly churches live their daily Lives in their Communities- on the Job and with their neighbors- they will influence their Neighborhoods.

And some of those godly people will rise into “Positions of Power” (Political; Economic; Business, etc.) and will conduct those Efforts in a Way that glorifies God and helps people

And those godly Communities will influence an ever- widening swath- like concentric Circles on the Water- which will eventually influence the entire Nation.

Now this will take much MORE Time and Effort than too simply elect certain people into Office. But this Blueprint will work- because it is biblical.

We must remember that, in addition to wanting to see the Jews saved- Jesus also wanted the pagan Roman soldiers, who violently and brutally kept their boot on the Jews neck, saved too. So, He NEVER said a single derogatory thing about the pagan Romans! But He practiced what He preached; and Jesus treated the Evil Roman Soldiers the WAY He *wanted* them to treat Him- NOT the Way they were already treating the Jews! And He did this- even when it infuriated the Jews!

Loving sinners enough to pray for them and giving them the ONLY means of Salvation (the Gospel) is NEVER wrong. But one of the main reasons that the Jews did NOT accept Jesus as the Messiah- was because he treated the Romans kindly and did NOT merely rail out against them.

We MUST understand that the people who engage in Wickedness are NOT our Enemies. Satan is our Enemy; and those people are slaves of Sin- who are blind to the Glory of God. But so were we. And the ONLY reason we see the Truth now; and understand the Truth now; and love the Truth now- is NOT because

we are better people than they are. It is NOT because we are smarter than they are. And it is NOT because we study the Bible and go to Church, either. No!

We see; and we understand; and we love the Truth because we have been PERMITTED to do so! We have been blessed by God with the Gift of being able to see and understand and love what is true. But other than God- graciously opening our eyes and allowing us to see- we would be just like the people who hate God. And that is WHY it is NOT enough for us to know that the enemy is Wrong. Jesus said we must love them and treat them the Way we WANT them to treat us. And we are to do this- if they NEVER change or treat us good. And that is why the Apostle Paul said this in **Romans 12:15-21**:

**15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.**

**16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.**

**17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.**

**18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.**

**19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.**

**20 "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD."**

**21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

My Beloved, it is NEVER Wrong to love. It is NEVER Wrong to be nice; and to show Kindness; and to forgive; and to be merciful. And that is true- even with our Enemies. Because the Bible teaches that if we have Enemies- they are ONLY Enemies from THEIR Perspective. We do NOT see them as our Enemies- even if they do see us that Way.

And that is why I do NOT believe that Divorce is EVER Right. Divorce- by definition- is the unwillingness to forgive. But we are commanded by Jesus to forgive even our Enemies. And the Power to do that- is based on the realization that God has forgiven us! But if we are going to forgive people who genuinely want to hurt us- why can't we forgive our Spouse- with whom we have made Covenant with- to love?

But as it pertains to all of the Evils going on in our Nation today- I do NOT believe that we have to *become* Evil in order to stop Evil. I do NOT accept the Concept that the only Way I can win- is to become what I am trying to defeat. Because if that is true- then whatever I win- wouldn't be worth having. So, I

*categorically* reject the Notion that, in order to defeat satan- I must think and act and operate like satan. I don't believe that- in fact I condemn that. Paul wrote infallibly and said,

**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

... and we Christians, are the ONLY people on earth that possess the ultimate Good- Jesus Christ!

So, I believe that, in order to stop an Evil- we must do what Jesus did; and do what the Apostles did; and do what is taught in the Bible. And NEVER stray from that. So, it is good and right to see an Evil; and then try to stop it. Yes! Yes! Yes! But we must make sure that we do NOT lose our own soul in the Fight against Evil.

But why do I think this Way? Because I know the Bible. And I know how Jesus operated while He was here. And I know Church History and I know how the Leaders of the early Church operated when Christianity was an illegal and persecuted Religion. But I also know what the Passages from **Romans 12** and **2Corinthians 10** say. And **2Corinthians 10:4** says that while our Weapons (and Strategies and Tactics and Tools and Methods) are decidedly NOT of the fallen Flesh of Man- they ARE ...

**... divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.**

So, NO! Jesus was NOT a Pacifist. He fought against Evil all the Time. And the Apostles were NOT Pacifists- they fought too. And I am NOT a Pacifist either- I fight nearly every day against Evil. And more than most- I have taught you that the language in the Bible- as it pertains to Sin; and satan; and fighting against Evil in this Country- is the language of War! So, it is Right to fight and not to roll over and allow Evil to triumph.

But I have also taught you that if we lose what we have in Jesus in order to win against Evil- then whatever we win would be no better than what we fought against. It would ONLY be different. So, I do not believe that we have to use the Strategies of the pagan world in order to expand the Kingdom of Heaven. I believe in Jesus and in the Bible- but I do NOT believe in the pagan world. Now, of course, I believe that the pagan world *exists*. But what I mean by that is that I don't think the lost world is correct about ANY moral Issue.

And if the Bible didn't say what it says right here- then I might agree with those who say that since we are at war with the "other side" – we have to fight like they do- or we will lose. But the Bible DOES say what it says here. So, I don't

believe for a second that the Church of Jesus is going to lose- at all! I believe we win!

*“But Brother Blair- you began this Sermon by telling us about William Wilberforce. And while he loved Jesus- but he also fought against a Social Evil and God blessed him and he won! So, what are you trying to say?”* Yes, Wilberforce saw an Evil and was moved to do something about it. But his Motivation was NOT Slavery, per se. It was what Jesus said in **Matthew 7:12:**

**In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.**

So, when young William read this- he was convicted in his own heart about his own personal Sin in NOT treating the Slaves in a Way that he would want them to treat him. So, it was his own personal Conviction about his own personal walk with God that motivated Wilberforce to act- NOT merely the Injustice of Slavery. But even if he was moved by this Injustice- History tells us that that is NOT all Wilberforce did.

In February 1785, two years BEFORE his encounter with **Matthew 7:12-** Wilberforce returned to London and on the journey he read "*The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*" by Phillip Doddridge, a leading early 18th-century English nonconformist. And Wilberforce's spiritual Journey is thought to have changed course at this Time. He started to rise early to read the Bible and pray; and he kept a private Journal of his Thoughts. He underwent a powerful evangelical Conversion- similar, according to witnesses, to what was happening in foreign countries when first presented with the Gospel. Wilberforce publicly and repeatedly regretted his past Life and resolved to commit his future Life and Work to the Service and Glory of God alone.

And his Conversion was obvious to all. Wilberforce was outwardly cheerful, interested and respectful, tactfully urging others towards his new Faith. Inwardly, he underwent an agonizing Struggle and became relentlessly self-critical, harshly judging his own spirituality, use of time, Vanity; lack of Self-control and relationships with others.

Now at that time in Great Britain, Religious Enthusiasm was generally regarded as a social Transgression and was stigmatized in “polite society”. Evangelicals in the upper classes, such as Sir Richard Hill, the Methodist MP for Shropshire and Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon were exposed to continual Contempt and Ridicule, and Wilberforce's Conversion led him to question whether he should remain in public life. So, he sought Guidance from John Newton, a leading Evangelical Anglican clergyman of the day and

Rector of St. Mary in the City of London<sup>2</sup>. Both Newton and Pitt counselled him to remain in Politics, and he resolved to do so "*with increased Diligence and Conscientiousness*".

Thereafter, his political views were informed solely by his Faith; and by his desire to promote Christianity; and Christian Ethics in both private and public Life. His views were often deeply Conservative, opposed to radical changes in a God-given political and social Order, and focused on Issues such as the Observance of the Sabbath and the eradication of sexual Immorality through Christian education and Reform brought about through Conversion.

The Point here is that, while most people ONLY know Wilberforce because of his Efforts at abolishing Slavery- we should understand that ALL that he did publicly was brought about through personal Conviction; and was carried out to God's Glory alone; and was NOT merely political or Social in Nature.

And so, as we struggle together with how *much* or how *little* we should enter into various Fights against the Evils of our Day- let us too, like William Wilberforce- be motivated solely by personal Conviction and let us do all that we do- to God's Glory. And let us remember the words of our Lord Jesus how that He said,

**In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.**

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.

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<sup>2</sup> ... and the man who wrote *Amazing Grace*

