

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew** 60- The Kingdom of Heaven and Its Citizens- Part 40 Jesus Warns about False Teachers- Part 3

Church July 9, 2023

Matthew 7:15-23

15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?

17 "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits.

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

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

It is very fashionable today for someone to say, “*Well, I have MY Truth and you have YOUR Truth and MY Truth may be different from YOUR Truth*”. And, after being confronted with objective, propositional, absolute Truth- it is equally fashionable to hear those same people say, “*Well, that’s just your Opinion.*”

So, we live in an upside- down World- where personal Opinion has been *elevated* to be “*Truth*” and divine, absolute, Truth has been *devalued* to be nothing more than “*Your Opinion*”. And there are a lot of reasons for that- not the least of which is the almost *universal* acceptance of Einstein’s “*Theory of Relativity*”-

which teaches that there are NO fixed “Absolutes”; and the almost universal *rejection* of the Holy Bible as being anything other than a version of “*Aesop’s Fables*” that contain a six Day Creation; a young earth (6-10,000 years old); talking snakes; Resurrections; and an invisible, imaginary Friend named, “Jesus”.

But the Reality that we need to grasp is that without having and possessing and knowing and believing divine, absolute Truth- nothing else can be known; and nothing else can be true. And so, those who love Lies and promote them- as well as those who elevate personal Opinion to be on the same Level as Truth- will not know “Right” from “Wrong”; they will not understand “what pleases God” and “what dishonors Him”. They will even be confused about what a “Man” or a “Woman” is.

And so, we MUST understand that Truth is our best Friend. Truth is NEVER an Enemy; and Truth is ALWAYS the BEST thing we can ever embrace.

So, as Christians and as Believers- we need to *always* seek after Truth. And we must NEVER shy away from knowing and loving the Truth. Because in **John 1:14**, the Apostle infallibly wrote,

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

... and this Statement does NOT say that Jesus HAD Grace and Truth- but that He was FULL of Grace and Truth. And then just three verses later, John said,

John 1:17

For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

Now that doesn’t mean that Moses didn’t have any Truth or Grace at all. He did. Nobody ever does *anything* for God- that actually *honors* and *glorifies* God- except that he has God’s Grace and Truth. But Moses never knew Grace and Truth *to the extent* that can be realized through Jesus. So, the Way to understand this is to say that Moses HAD Grace and Truth while Jesus IS Grace and Truth. And that means that Jesus is infinitely GREATER than Moses.

Now the Passage that was just publicly read to us is about Truth and how valuable it is. But it is also about Lies and those who promote them. So, this Passage contains the great Distinction; the wide Gap; and the powerful Division between what is True and what is False- as well as the evil people, who have been personally *deceived* with what is False, and who *promote* it to others.

But it is also about how amazing; how miraculous it is to believe in Truth as opposed to being deceived by Lies. And after we analyze Belief and Faith from Scripture- we come to know that Belief in Jesus as the Savior- is a Gift from God. So, in order to have eternal Life- we MUST believe in WHO Jesus is and in WHAT Jesus alone has done. So, to possess everlasting Life- we MUST believe; embrace; trust in; and hope in- the Truth about Jesus.

But after we have analyzed all that God said about this in Scripture- we also come to the Conclusion that in order for any of us sinners to believe the Truth about Jesus- God has to *sovereignly* and *miraculously* give to us; *grant* to us- the GIFT of “*saving Faith*”. And God has to gift us with this kind of Faith because of how radically damaged we are- due to the Fall of Adam in the Garden.

So, believing the Truth about Jesus is a Requirement for Salvation. Now it is true that our Understanding and Comprehension about the Truth about Jesus grows over time- AFTER we have been born again; justified; and adopted into the Family of God. That’s true. So, *part* of WHY we need to be “*Holified*” or “*Sanctified*” AFTER the miracle of the New Birth; and AFTER we have been forgiven and made Righteous (Justification); and AFTER we have been adopted into God’s Family- is because we NEED to understand *more fully*; and embrace *more strongly*; and trust in more *severely*- the Truth about Jesus.

And so, the Issue before us- in this Passage- is *exactly* what divides between the Saved and the Lost; between the Sheep and the Goats; between the Fish on the right side versus the Fish on the left; between a child of God and children of the devil; between Light and Darkness; and between those who believe and those who are deceived. And that one single Issue is: the Truth about Jesus!

Now last Time, I told you that, in this Sermon, that has come to be called, the “*Sermon on the Mount*”- the incarnate God is teaching what the Characteristics and Attributes are- of the people who will be the true “sons and daughters of Abraham”. He is teaching what the people, who have their hearts circumcised rather than their flesh- look like. And He is showing how the people, who will make up the new “people of God”; and who will inherit the new Kingdom of Heaven- will live their daily Lives.

We must remember that, back in **Matthew 5:20**, Jesus said:

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, this entire Sermon is about what the people, who personally possess that *surpassing* Righteousness, look like.

So, in one of the greatest Ironies of all Time- the people, who believed that God wanted to use them to restore the Jews back into what God had given Moses,

were the very ones who fought against Jesus so forcefully. And by their waging War against Jesus and the New Covenant that He was bringing into Reality- these men were proving beyond any doubt that the Old Covenant was completely *incompatible* with the New.

Now it is true that without the Old Covenant laying the groundwork- there never would have been a New Covenant. So, the Old Covenant was OF God and FROM God. But it is also true that once the New Covenant appeared on the earth- for anyone to try to hold on to the Old- was to fight against what God was doing. The unknown writer put it this Way in **Hebrews 8:13**:

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

.. and those who, by God's Grace, could understand this- were blessed. But those, who could NOT fathom why God would ever do away with the Old Covenant- were found to be at odds with the Owner and Creator of the Universe and were severely judged by God! Because in order to keep holding on to the Old Covenant at the Time that Jesus was alive and fulfilling every part of God's Law right before them- these blind Unbelievers had to declare War against Jesus; and Who He was and What He was doing!

And so, we need to realize two very important Factors that the Jewish religious Leaders of the 1st Century simply ignored:

1. God had been faithful to clearly and repeatedly promise the New Covenant while the Old Covenant was in force.
2. Neither Moses nor Abraham would have responded to the Advent of the New Covenant the Way the Jewish religious Leaders did.

... and that meant that the biggest Factor as to why these men could *categorically* condemn the incarnate God; call him, "*Beelzebul*"; harden their hearts against Him; and finally have Him murdered- was because underneath all the outward trappings of Religiosity- these men were nothing but pagan Unbelievers- who really didn't believe in the Old Covenant either!

And that means that all their Effort to supposedly "restore Israel back to what God had given Moses" was actually a huge Self-centered Charade. Because as they *repeatedly* confronted Jesus to try to *discredit* Him- they were proving that they were NOT lovers of God at all; they were NOT children of Abraham at all- because Jesus said this in **John 8:39b-47**:

39 ..."If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham.

40 But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.

41 You are doing the deeds of your father." They said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father: God."

42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

43 Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.

44 You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

45 But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.

46 Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?

47 He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God."

Now we must realize that for Jesus to tell these natural born Jews (who could trace their own personal bloodlines back to Noah) that they were NOT “*of God*”- was infinitely *worse* than to say they were NOT saved- like we might tell somebody today. No, for Jesus to use that phrase with these people- even though they were Jews- was to say they were NOT “God’s chosen people”; that they weren’t true Jews; that they weren’t following the Teachings of Moses; and that they would NOT inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

So, what was the “Deeds of Abraham” that Jesus referred to back in verse 39? Every single true “child of Abraham”; every heir of the Abrahamic Covenant- would do what Abraham did as it pertained to Jesus. Well, what was that?

John 8:56

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.

So, every person, who does NOT rejoice to see Jesus; every person who is NOT glad to see Jesus; every person who does NOT embrace Jesus with Joy- is NOT a son or daughter of Abraham.

The *true* Jews; the *true* sons and daughters of Abraham; the *true* people of God; the *true* inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven are those who receive Jesus with overwhelming Gladness! And those who do NOT rejoice to see Jesus- are children of the devil.

But what is ironic about this- is that the children of the devil do not honor Moses either, but are, in fact, nothing but followers and promoters of their own Man-made religion- that cannot forgive a single Sin or save a single Soul. And that is why Jesus never said anything Good about these people!

And this is why the Apostle Paul said this in **Romans 9:30-33**:

30 What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith;
31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law.
32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone,
33 just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

... and the “**Stumbling Stone**” and the “**Rock of Offense**” was Jesus.

We need to remember that the Jewish religious Leaders NEVER had a Problem about pursuing after God; or about obeying Moses; or about trying to bring the Jews back into alignment with what Moses received from God. No, their Problem was Jesus. Jesus presented a *serious* Dilemma to these men- because in order for them to *embrace* Jesus as their Messiah- they had to also *reject* what Moses taught about animal sacrifice; and the Temple in Jerusalem; and the Levitical Priesthood; and the Sanhedrin Court- which were but mere Shadows of the True.

But the Jewish Leaders considered any rejection of those things to be Sin. And that is the Issue- because God is the One, who gave Moses the Law. And Jesus is God! And so, the Truth about Jesus presents a horrible Problem for the Jew who had bought into the *perversion* of the Law that was being promoted by the four religious Groups of Pharisees; Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots- and the Scribes who wrote their false Teaching down.

And that’s why Jesus said,

So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

... and please notice that Jesus did NOT say that a Good Tree “*should not*” bear bad fruit. He also did NOT say a Good Tree “*ought not*” bear Bad Fruit. Jesus said it “*COULDN’T*”- a “Good Tree”- a Teacher of the Truth; a *true* Prophet; a *true* Teacher; doesn’t have the Ability or the Power to bear Bad Fruit.

Conversely a “Bad Tree”; a Bad Teacher; a Bad Prophet; a Teacher of what is False; a Prophet of what God did NOT say- CANNOT bear “Good Fruit”.

And the Context back in the 1st Century with those Jews was the “Bad Tree” in Jesus’ Illustration wanted to hold on to what the religious Leaders wrongly taught was what Moses had received from God. And in order to do that- they HAD to reject the Truth about Jesus. The “Good Tree” represented those who understood that Jesus was NOT at odds with Moses at all and those who could rejoice in the Truth about Jesus!

Now in our Day- we don’t have that same Problem. So, today- a “Bad Tree” are those who are deceived themselves; and who promote Lies about Jesus while embracing Sin. While the “Good Tree” are those who *embrace* the Truth about Jesus and who can reject their Sin. So, Good Trees are gifted by God to be able to behold the Glory of God in the “Face” (Person) of Jesus (**2Corinthians 4:6**) and who *energetically* reject Sin.

But back in the 1st Century- Jesus was calling Jews to come out from the *shadows* of the 1st Covenant- *as well as the perversion of the 1st Covenant by the religious Leaders*- and hope in the Truth about Jesus. While today- we call “every creature” to reject Sin- *and every false religious Belief*- and hope in the Truth about Jesus.

Now when Jesus said that a Good Tree CANNOT bear bad Fruit and a Bad Tree CANNOT bear good Fruit- He did NOT mean that a true man of God; or a “Good Tree”- never makes a mistake. ALL human beings make Mistakes. And *periodically*, a Good Tree- a true Herald of Divine Truth will say something that he shouldn’t say. He will say something that is not helpful; or something that could be said better; or something that is just flat out wrong.

But the Difference between a Good Tree and a Bad Tree- is that a Good Tree doesn’t want to *ever* be Wrong. At all. Ever. A Good Tree is trying with every fiber of his Being to “get the Gospel Right”. And when he discovers that he ah said something or taught something or even done something that wasn’t Right- that was at odds with the Truth- that Good Tree will be quick to repent and correct his mistake.

But a Bad Tree WANTS to deceive others. He is deceived himself- and that would be bad enough. But a genuine Bad Tree is never satisfied with being deceived himself- he ALWAYS seeks to deceive others as well. And that is what makes false Teachers and false Prophets so Evil. They do NOT love the Truth themselves- and they don’t want anyone else to love the Truth either. So, they put forth a lot of effort to teach falsely and to deceive others. And that is why Jesus said this in **Matthew 23:15**:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

... and then Jesus said,

Matthew 23:33

You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?

... no wonder why those religious Hypocrites hated Jesus!

Jesus issued the most frightening Diatribe against those Jewish religious Leaders in **Matthew 23** that can be found anywhere in the Bible. Jesus spoke more harshly against those false Teachers and false Prophets that had deceived the 1st Century Jews than He did against the pagan Roman occupiers! And then in **Matthew 23:36** and again in **Matthew 24:34** Jesus promised that the Damnation; and the Destruction; and the Ruination; and the End of the Jewish Way of Life that He promised those Hypocrites- would come to pass before the Generation, that was alive to hear Him speak those words, would all die out.

Now that is the correct Context as to what Jesus meant by what He said in this Passage. His immediate Concern was for what was going to happen to the Apostles and what they taught- as His Divine Judgment against unbelieving Israel was unfolded in the decades immediately after His Resurrection.

But having said all of that about the Correct Context of what Jesus said here- we must now APPLY this Truth to our Day as well. And it is correct to APPLY what Jesus said here to our Condition today. Because the very SAME internal, demonic Forces that were at work back then- are at work today as well.

Now keep in mind that the ongoing Effort to teach the Apostles' Doctrine; to reject all false Teaching; to find our Lives to be in accord with Scripture; and to walk this world in White- is NOT a Battle- it is a War. It is a long, *protracted* War that will have many, many Battles. This morning- we are in the second Lord's Day of the seventh Month of the first 23 years of the *third* Millennia of the "*Church Militant*"- waging War against Lies and false Teachers. And we have already seen that *some* of those Battles will involve the *entire* Church while other Battles will be fought as individual Believers.

But this is NOT a "*War on Terror*" like the one this Nation is involved in right now- but rather it is a "*War on ERROR*". But this War will NOT be fought with swords or shields or tanks or bombs. This is a War against Ideologies and Doctrines; and Teachings; and Words and Beliefs. Jesus said,

Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

... so, this is about Deception; and being led astray; and believing a Lie; and being tricked; and deluded; and seduced; about what to believe; and what to trust in; what to embrace; what to hold tightly to; and what to love.

And this is why this is so important: We “Do” what we “Believe”. In other words, how we live our normal daily Lives- is a reflection of what we believe to be true. Another Way of saying this is to say, “What we Believe is proven by how we live our Lives. And I’m not talking about sinless Perfection- I’m talking about Honesty.

So, for example, the Reason people do what they do- is because they think; they believe it is okay to do it. They think it’s correct and right. So, what a person believes- *translates* into how a person talks; how he votes; how he handles money; how he raises his children; how he sees other nations; and what he thinks about God and Eternity and Marriage and Purity and Heaven and Hell. So, “Right Believing” (*Orthodoxy*) leads to “Right Living” (*Orthopraxy*).

So, what Jesus is talking about here is the Absolute Divine Truth from Heaven and those people who faithfully and fully herald that; against ALL of the many, many Errors and Teachings and Doctrines from this Earth that pervert; and twist; and disguise; and change; and alter; and hide; and warp that Truth- along with those who promote that.

So, as I told you last week- the Issue that we must deal with- is the very SAME Issue that Adam and Eve dealt with back in the Garden- which is:

WHAT DID GOD SAY?

... because EVERYTHING else flows out from what God said.

Everybody has an Opinion. And Opinions are like arm-pits- everybody has two of them- and they both stink. But everybody feels free to say what they think; or what they believe; or what they feel is best. But we can’t be satisfied with that. Because to embrace the Opinions and Philosophies of Man is to embrace the confusing, contradictory, and unworkable NONSENSE of Babel. It’s just NOISE!

We MUST press further into Divine Truth. We MUST go further than Opinion and reach the Absolute Truth that came from Heaven- and we MUST have and know and understand and love and obey...

WHAT GOD SAID!

... and we MUST believe that What God said is True; it is RIGHT; and it WORKS! What God said is ALWAYS appropriate; it is ALWAYS correct; and it ALWAYS is what is the very BEST!

But we can't wage this "War on Error" with the Weapons of the Flesh. God the Holy Spirit "moved" on the Apostle Paul to say this in **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.

Now even though there are literally *thousands* of false Teachings in the world today- there are really only seven major "Roots" from which ALL of the many individual false Teachings come from. And they ALL have to do with either trying to bring Doubt about what God said or by outright contradicting it. So, MOST false Teaching in our Day has to do with the area of what God said- that the half-brother of Jesus (Jude)- wrote about in the fourth verse of the Epistle that bears his name:

For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

... so, ALL false Teaching has to do with portraying what God said about the Grace of God *wrongly* or of outright *denying* what God said about Jesus in some Way- which includes a *warping* or a *twisting* of the biblical Gospel. And those seven major Roots are:

1. Legalism (the Heresy of the Judaizers)
2. Lawlessness- (Antinomianism)
3. Gnosticism
4. Modalism
5. Arianism
6. Pelagianism
7. Socinianism

The first three Heresies were created and began their Attack against the Church while the New Testament Books were being received from God; while the next three began at some point during the first 400 years of the Christian Church being on the earth; while the last one was not active until the 16th Century.

Now I want to look closely at what the half-brother of Jesus (Jude) said here in verse 4. Jude said there were,

“certain persons”

... so, this is NOT prevalent. And that means that everybody who is wrong or incomplete or contradictory about some area of Truth is NOT a false Teacher. They're just wrong. And they need to repent and get it right.

But there are **“certain persons”** who are real, sure-nuff Heretics; false Teachers; and false Prophets- who are deceived themselves and who want to deceive others as well. Now look at what Jude said next,

... those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation ...

Now the fact that they were, **“long beforehand marked out for this Condemnation”** means that they have been chosen to fill the Role of a Heretic. So, a *real* Heretic; a *real* false Teacher; a *genuine* false Prophet CANNOT be saved. He can't repent and be forgiven. He has been **“long beforehand marked out for this condemnation”** by Almighty God- and that is that.

Now this is why the Bible teaches that EVERYONE who is saved by Jesus should belong to a local Church. And EVERYBODY who is saved by Jesus is to submit to the Authority of the Elders of that local Church. The unknown writer said this in **Hebrews 13:17:**

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

So, when a person is judged to be preaching or teaching wrongly about ANY Issue- those Elders will lovingly “shepherd” or “correct”; or “guide” or “teach” or “instruct” or “direct” that person into a right understanding- so he may teach correctly.

But if a genuine Heretic rises up to deceive the Sheep- those loving and kind and merciful Elders become that false Teacher's worse Nightmare. And they will confront him; and rebuke him. And if he is willing to repent and

recant- he is proving that he is NOT one of the “**certain persons**” that Jude was talking about; and that there is Hope that he CAN be helped.

But if he *refuses* to repent and recant- *after repeated attempts*- he is to be cast out of the Congregation; and “**handed over to satan**”- so he may be “**taught not to blaspheme**” (teach falsely).

1 Timothy 1:18-20

18 This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you fight the good fight,

19 keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.

20 Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.

Now the Problem that we face in our Day- is that there are scant few Churches in our Area that even have Elders to begin with. And even among the few Church that actually have Elders- those Elders are NOT prepared or qualified to even know if somebody is teaching false Doctrine or not. And among the very few that have Elders who ARE qualified to judge- the majority of them simply refuse to obey the Bible about this Serious Issue- thinking that what the Holy Bible infallibly teaches is too harsh- putting themselves as judges of WHAT God said!

Another Problem that we face today that the Believers of the 1st Century did NOT face- is that we can hear from; and believe; and be a disciple; of a Teacher or Preacher that we may never personally meet. Today, with the advent of the Internet- people can hear and watch Sermons by people who live in different States or even different Countries! We can even watch somebody preach and read the Books of somebody who has been dead for 30 years!

And so, what do we do about holding them Accountable to the Authority of God’s Word? How do we know if that person is a false Teacher and is twisting the Word of God?

First, we must realize that there are NO individuals acting as individuals under the New Covenant. And what I mean by that- is that EVERYBODY who is saved by Jesus- is to belong to a local Church and is to be under Subjection to that local Church’s Board of Elders. NOBODY operates today as individuals- with NO Accountability- because EVERYTHING that God is doing in the earth today- He is doing through His Church! So, ANYONE who operates outside of that Parameter- anyone who is NOT submitted to the Board of Elders of a local Church- is a Rebel- and should NOT be listened to!

And the Claim that some of those people make like, “*I’m NOT going to allow Man to govern me- because I am being led by the Spirit of God!*” simply proves how deceived they are- because the Spirit of God authored the Scriptures which commands EVERYONE to submit to the Authority of Elders! So, the Fact that they are at odds with the “Product” of the Spirit (The Bible) proves that they are NOT being led by God’s Spirit at all.

So, even though Claims like that may sound “super-spiritual” they are actually nothing more than a manifestation of the Rebellion of the people who make them.

So, when an Internet Preacher begins to go “off base”- you should contact the Elders of the Church that he belongs to- and allow them to shepherd him back into “right Standing”.

Now because of a number of Reasons- it is very difficult for some people to submit to *any* Authority that is over them. Today we have Women, who lay claim to be saved- who operate completely *outside* of any Accountability- either their Father’s or their Husband’s. Again, these Women are NOT “free”- they are NOT being led by God’s Spirit- they are simply sinful Rebels- who evidently despise the Word of God. Why would any thinking human being listen to anything they have to say?

We have Men, who say they are saved, who, for some reason, have no problem with divorcing the “**Wife of their Youth**” (**Malachi 2:14&15**) and then entering into another Marriage- while their Wife is still living! And some Men do this 2,3, or even 4 times! And for some reason, NOBODY ever calls them into Account for this blatant Sin! Some of the largest mega-church Pastors in this Country are guilty of this Sin. So, they hold themselves out as being Teachers of the Bible and yet they evidently have never read what the Lord Christ said in **Mark 10:11b&12:**

**11 ...Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her;
12 and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.**

Now I realize that Divorce is horrible and divorced people are some of the most hurting people on earth. And they deserve our Love and our Compassion- *especially* those who have been led astray by some Teacher, who told them that it was okay for them to Divorce.

But if the Church of Jesus is NOT going to uphold the Institution of Marriage- who will? And if Christians are NOT going to be faithful in Marriage

and chaste outside of Marriage- who will? And if Christian Leaders will not tell the people the Truth about Marriage and Divorce and Re-Marriage, who will?

Beloved, it isn't as though we don't already have 66 inerrant and infallible Books to read and learn from about how to live our Lives. And so, for anyone to Live, or even worse, to conduct a Ministry- in direct Opposition to the inspired Scriptures- is the very height of Deception and Arrogance and Sin.

Of course, Christians, who sin can be forgiven! Of course, they can! We are the people of Forgiveness! Without Forgiveness where would any of us be! But the Bible is crystal clear about those who rise up to teach and preach and lead in the Church. And those Qualifications are set in stone. And they apply to EVERYONE who leads and teaches. And so, they MUST take heed to themselves; and guard their hearts; and walk circumspectly; and fear God; and be humble; and cry out to God; and run from Sin!

There are Sins that a Leader can overcome and still operate as a Leader in the House of God. But there are other Sins that are so grievous- that they disqualify him from being a Leader in Christ's Church. Now he can be forgiven and go to Heaven- but he CANNOT lead and he CANNOT stand before the people and Teach!

But the Issue of Qualification has NOTHING to do with ANYTHING he did before he was saved. Because EVERY Sin that man committed before he was saved- is not under the Blood and forgiven and cast into the depth of the Sea! But when that saved man steps into the Place of a Leader- there are some Sins that will *disqualify* him from remaining as a Leader. Because the Issue at that point is "Credibility". And if his Sin compromises his Credibility- he MUST step down! Here is what God (through James) said about this Issue in **James 3:1**:

Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.

But WHY do Teachers incur a "**stricter Judgment**"? Because they speak for God! Because they tell the people what to believe; and what to embrace; and what is Right and What is Godly. In other words, these men tell the people- "WHAT GOD SAID!" So, they MUST be men of Integrity and Truth. And the Jewish religious Leaders of the 1st Century were NOT men of Integrity and Truth. And the people who preach and teach falsely today are NOT people of Integrity and Truth either. And we will get into that in more detail next time.

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.