



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Special Study:

TRANSPARENT HOLINESS BEFORE PROFITABLE MINISTRY Matthew 7:3-5

If there was any time to “**study to shew** [ourselves] **approved unto God**, [workmen] **that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth**” that time is now, the present day. And if any passage of Scripture demands careful study, Matthew 7:1-5 is one of such passages. Knowing the truth sets free from error and from the consequences of falsehood. To know the truth requires diligent study. Only such diligent study can set us apart and distinguish us from many who corrupt the word of God. Then in sincerity, as faithful children and servants of God, in the sight of God we shall speak in Christ (2 Corinthians 2:17).

These verses are often abused and misused by those who think that it is wrong, under any circumstances, to ever pass an unfavourable judgment on the sinful conduct or evil character of others. The Scriptures teach us to “**prove all things**”, “**try the spirits**.” In our relationship with the brethren, the Lord commands, “**If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault**.” “**If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him**” (Matthew 18:15; Luke 17:3). The Scriptures further declare, “**shew my people their transgression**” (Isaiah 58:1). “**Warn the wicked**” (Ezekiel 3:17-21), “**Warn them that are unruly**” (1 Thessalonians 5:14), “**them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear**” (1 Timothy 5:20). “**Put away from among yourselves that wicked person**” (1 Corinthians 5:12,13). Our Lord did not mean that it is wrong to reprove the sins and faults of others. Such an interpretation would contradict other statements of Christ and many other parts of Scripture. Following such misinterpretation would make sin and lawlessness to increase without any restraint and the earth would be “**given into the hand of the wicked**” (Job 9:24).

PRESUMPTUOUS REFORMERS THOUGHTLESS OF THEIR OWN BEHAVIOUR

Matthew 7:3,4; Luke 6:41,42; Numbers 12:1-9; Psalm 50:16-21; John 8:3-9; 12:3-6; Mark 2:14-17; Matthew 23:24-33; Romans 2:1-3,21-24; Acts 11:2-18.

“**And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the BEAM that is in thine own eye?**” (“**but perceivest not the BEAM that is in thine own eye?**” Luke 6:41). A “**mote**” signifies a light substance, a particle, a splinter of wood, here a little fault in comparison with the beam. The beam signifies a large piece of squared timber. The mote signifies a small offence while the BEAM signifies much larger offence, a great sin. Presumptuous, religious people are inconsistent in their judgment. They concentrate on others’ minor offences while they overlook their own great, soul-damning sins. They seem to see motes of shortcoming in other people’s lives yet they do not even perceive, they seem not to be conscious of their own glaring sins. Everybody sees their beams of great sins but they fail to consider or perceive. The self-appointed reformer whose vision has been impaired and who cannot see clearly because of the beam in his eye, will not be able to help anyone. He who is blind to the reality of his own sinful state cannot help others to become more spiritual. Our Lord condemns the habit of rashly and thoughtlessly judging and criticizing other people. He forbids the attitude of magnifying the minor faults of others, making the worst of others while we excuse our own faults and infirmities. Those who carry beams of sin in their eyes, who are under the guilt and dominion of great sins, though they are not aware of the seriousness of their case are disqualified and cannot lead others to repentance or righteousness. It is strange that a person can be in such a sinful, miserable condition and not be aware of it. Still more strange is it that a man with a beam in the eye, a man whose spiritual perception and understanding is almost totally gone, will be passionately concerned about others’ spiritual sight and vision. Personal restoration to righteousness and holiness is necessary before we can engage ourselves in the ministry of perfecting the saints.

PERSONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE TEACHING THE BRETHREN

Matthew 7:5; Psalm 51:7-13; Isaiah 6:1-8; Ezra 7:10; Zechariah 3:1-7; Isaiah 52:7-11; Luke 22:31,32; James 5:19,20; 2 Timothy 2:21-26; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20.

To remove a mote from our brother’s eye demands care; we must see clearly before this can be done properly, without hurting our brother. Removing motes from the eyes of brethren is a ministry that requires that our hands be clean and our hearts be pure. Can a person be a good optician if he himself has very poor sight or vision? To help improve the spiritual sight of others, we must “**first cast the beam out of [our] own eye**.” No one is qualified to counsel or correct others while he, himself, is indulging in sins that are known to

God. His preaching, teaching, counselling or ministry will be in the flesh. God will not give him the necessary insight or understanding. His messages will be mere letters that kill. His so-called ministry will not lead the brethren to see more of Christ, neither will he be able to lead sinners to see Christ as their Saviour. With a critical spirit, he criticizes and condemns and will not be able to convert sinners or comfort the saints. Let us stop and consider our spiritual state. The urgent need of each of us is self-examination. Are there beams of habitual sin to be removed first? Are there beams of besetting sin to be cast out? Is there a root of bitterness to be removed before it spreads tentacles that could destroy us? Are there beams of offences, visible to all around us which make others resist or reject our ministry? Upon what ground do you set up yourself as a teacher of the brethren when you are even worse than those you are trying to teach or admonish? The wisest thing to do is to first seek total restoration from God, be righteous and right with God before attempting to lead others to righteousness.

PROPER REMEDY FOR TRANSFORMING THE BELIEVERS

Matthew 7:5; Luke 1:15-17; Deuteronomy 6:5-7; Malachi 2:5-7; Jeremiah 23:21,22; Galatians 6:1-4; Philippians 2:3-16; Colossians 3:12-16; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 4:12,15,16; Titus 2:7,8.

The Lord does not permit us to be complacent, to retain the beams in our eyes and use that as an excuse for not helping others to be free of motes in their eyes. He commands that we quickly and urgently, as a matter of priority, cast the beams out of our eyes. As soon as we are cleansed from our secret faults (Psalm 19:12,13), having laid aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us (Hebrews 12:1), made free from sin and made righteous (Romans 6:18,22) by faith in Christ's cleansing blood, we are now ready and willing to help improve the spiritual life of the brethren. Those who desire the office of a bishop must be blameless. Ministers who desire to "**perfect that which is lacking in [the] faith**" of their congregations (1 Thessalonians 3:10) must not tolerate or excuse imperfection in their own lives. Indeed, all of us, the sons of God, are encouraged to "**be blameless and harmless, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world**" (Philippians 2:15). Only then can we "[hold] **forth the word of life**," bringing sinners to Christ and leading believers to greater experiences in Christ.

Holiness of heart, practical righteousness and purity of intention make us awesome, useful, profitable instruments in God's Hands. However, we must always remember that removing a mote, a tiny particle from another person's eye is not a task which any careless hand can successfully undertake. We need training and skill if we would not make bad matters worse. The eye is the most sensitive organ of the body and the most easily damaged. A gentle and well-guided hand is required to extract a foreign substance from it. And the person from whose eye the splinter is to be removed must be willing for us to do it - his unwillingness or resistance will make the operation impossible. Your wisdom makes him willing to allow you to extract the mote while your love is the local anaesthetic that minimizes the pain of the operation.

If you are blessed by these bible study outlines, we'd like to hear from you.

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