

## Logs, Specks and the Love of Christ

June 17th, 2012

Luke 6:37-42

*"<sup>40</sup>A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. <sup>41</sup>Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? <sup>42</sup>How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye."*

This passage is really a part of, building upon, the text which Jason unfolded for us last week on loving our enemies. It's another challenging passage, with some challenging commandments from Jesus. So it's important to step back and remind ourselves of why He's making these commands, and why we should obey. These are hard and unnatural commands: Love your enemies, do good to them, turn the other cheek, don't judge and condemn, but give and forgive. He's saying, "Do this...live this way." But why?

The answer is that in creating us and saving us from our sin through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God has made us a people who exist for the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1). He has made us a people of His own possession, that we might proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. By grace, we have come to know Jesus, so that we might make Him known through gospel proclamation and demonstration (1 Peter 2:12). And one of the key ways we do that (show the love of Jesus and identify ourselves with Jesus) is through the way we love:

*"<sup>34</sup>A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

Love is **the** litmus test of determining who are the people of God. Now if we're honest with ourselves, we have to come to grips with the fact that our failure to obey these commandments of Jesus (especially here

in this text), have presented a distorted image of Jesus to the world, one that is not particularly flattering. The way Christians act toward one another and those outside the Church often repels people from Jesus.

When Christians become known as self-righteous, intolerant, critical and condemning, when they become known for what they are against (homosexuals, the democratic party, evolutionists, abortionists, the public school system, etc.) rather than what they are for, we're not representing Jesus very well. In these verses, then, Jesus is not just laying down some arbitrary, difficult commands to obey. He is teaching us how to represent Him well in the world, so that He might be praised. So let's examine the passage and consider what Jesus is commanding, what He is promising, and what He is providing.

### **The Command, Negatively**

We see what Jesus is commanding beginning in verse 37: "<sup>37</sup>Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned." So, don't judge, and don't condemn. This is a well-known popular, but misunderstood, verse. Jesus is not forbidding all kinds of moral judgment about another person. If that's what this meant, the entire life and teachings of Jesus would be a contradiction.

Jesus made judgments, Jesus rebuked people and told them to stop doing this or that, He's doing it right here. Jesus said you could know a tree by judging the fruit that it bears, and He gave the Church authority to judge unrepentant sinners by treating them like unbelievers. So He's *not* saying, "Don't warn people about sin that you observe in their lives, don't correct attitudes or behaviors that are contrary to My will."

So what is He commanding? I think the word "condemn" is meant to clarify and explain what He means: don't be judgmental. Don't be a fault-finder, the sort of person who takes a twisted sort of pleasure in puffing yourself up by pointing out the shortcomings of others, the person who always believes the worst, the person who is always

criticizing, constantly negative, harsh person who seems to have the spiritual gift of discouragement.

Is that you? Are you more meticulous in scrutinizing the flaws and failures of others than in scrutinizing your own, blind to the log in your own eye (v.41-42), trying to help another person remove the speck in their eye? To harshly judge and condemn another person, what you're really saying in your heart is, "I'd never do that sort of thing!" *That's* the log in your eye, pretending that you are a good, decent, virtuous person all by yourself, not realizing that apart from God's gracious work in your life, no good thing dwells in you. Don't be that person!

### **The Command, Positively**

But the command isn't only stated negatively (don't judge), but then Jesus turns it around and states positively what He is pursuing in His people: "...Forgive, and you will be forgiven; <sup>38</sup>give, and it will be given to you." I don't think He's talking about money here. "Give," means give grace, compassion, gentleness, patience, love. Freely you have received; now freely give. Take the mercy that you've received from God (not sparing His beloved Son to purchase your salvation), and now bend that forgiveness out towards those who have hurt you, wronged you, offended you (Col. 3:12ff).

Of all people, Christians ought to be the most generous, charitable people when dealing with the faults of others, because we more than anyone should know the awful depths of the sin in our own hearts. There is a brokenness that flows from that (Matt. 5:3) which enables you to extend mercy and compassion towards others, and if you don't find that kind of humility and charity in dealing with others, then you have to ask the hard question of whether you have really entered the Kingdom ("Forgive, and you will be forgiven"). Because the measure you use towards others is the measure of grace, mercy and patience that God will exercise towards you (cf. Matthew 18).

## **Right Judging**

But when we have experienced that grace, not only are you freed from harshness toward others who have specks in their eyes, but you are in a good position to go all the way with what Jesus commands here.

Notice that Jesus is commanding us to reckon with the reality of our own sin and corruption, to get the log out of our eye, to clothe ourselves with a generous spirit, so that we'll have the warmth, grace and humility necessary to compassionately heal the specks in the eyes of others. Love will confront sin in others, but it will do so from a position where you have drained all sense of superiority, self-righteousness and resentment from your heart.

Often we turn this completely around, saying nothing to correct the person who has hurt us, but inwardly harboring hatred, bitterness and resentment towards them (and maybe talking to others). But Jesus is commanding us to turn it back around: take the sins of others seriously, but do so only once you have really owned the reality of your own sin. When you're being corrected by someone like this, you know it. You can tell the difference, and it is a joy to be cared for by such people, and we absolutely need that kind of care to grow into the image of Jesus, because sin is blinding (Hebrews 3:12-13).

So, to sum all that up: Jesus is commanding His disciples to put away a harsh, critical, fault-finding spirit towards others, by reckoning with the reality of their own sinfulness and dependence on God's grace for every good thing, to the end that they would have the humility and grace to engage in the loving, tender, healing work of helping others to see their sin and remove it from their lives. All that is no easy task!

## **The Promise of Jesus**

So what does Jesus promise to those who obey Him? The simple answer is, He promises blessing: "[Do not judge and condemn, but forgive and] <sup>38</sup> give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed

down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”” Though your obedience doesn't save you, it matters. God blesses and rewards those who faithfully pursue obedience to Him, and I think the main reward is God Himself (John 14:21).

Motivation to loving well in the hard places of life is the knowledge that every sacrifice of love you make will be abundantly restored when the Kingdom of God comes in its fullness. In light of verses 23 and 35, that is the reward in view...not necessarily earthly comforts and blessings, but heavenly treasure, poured into your lap, overflowing.

And don't miss the window here into the loving, good, generous heart of our God here! The image is from the 1st century world of commerce, it's the opposite of what happens when you get a bag of chips at the grocery store. The merchant would place grain in a container, and then shake the container to get the grain to level out so that he had room to put more grain, then he'd press it down to fit *even more* grain in the container, until it would overflow, so the buyer has as much grain as possible. It reminds me of raking leaves and putting them in a trash can, and then stomping it down to fit more leaves.

That's the way your heavenly Father is in pouring out blessing and goodness into your life! Is that not beautiful? If there is a picture of God that remains in your mind that He is some sort of stern, gloomy, arms-crossed looking at you with irritation, cosmic killjoy, let this picture of God crush that twisted image from within you! This is a God who takes pleasure in His people, who loves to bless them with good. So do not look to your circumstances or your feelings today to measure the goodness of God in your life. Look at this metaphor coming from the lips of Jesus Christ. "6Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life..." My cup overflows. This is our God!

And His commandments, even the hard ones -- making peace with your enemies, forgiving, refraining from judging and condemning even when people really mess up, in areas of sexuality, or money, or whatever -- are not God's attempt at depriving you of the good life. They're coming from God who loves to bring joy, blessing, and overflowing good into the lives of His children. And your faithfulness to Him will bring more and more of that blessing, if not now, then in the consummated Kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

### **The Provision of Jesus**

So the commands of Jesus -- both in this text and all the others -- are for our good, and obedience brings blessing. But still, it's hard to walk this out! There is a broken-hearted boldness that is needed; to have every bit of resentfulness and haughtiness drained from us, even when we're wronged, yet a courage to come alongside another person and help them see the sin in their own life, though they might get angry with you and reject you, no matter how gentle and gracious you are.

How do we get that? In addition to the promise of future reward, Jesus also *provides* us with something right now, and that something is Himself as an example to behold and imitate. Right here in the middle of the commands and the admonitions, Jesus says, "<sup>40</sup>A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher." Having kids have given me an especially vivid glimpse at how profound the power of example is, and how we tend to imitate those people who we are around and admire (Ephesians 5:1-2).

In a commentary on Proverbs, Charles Bridges wrote, "We are the disciples of him, who died for his enemies." Christians are followers of One who died for His enemies. Our teacher, the One who (when fully trained) we will be like, is the only human being who has ever lived who had no specks in His eye. He was completely perfect; in every respect tempted just as we are, yet without sin.

But He was not merely a human being; He was the eternal, all-wise, all-knowing Lord of glory, who sees all your specks and logs, the ones you try so desperately to hide from others, the ones you yourselves are even ignorant of. Because of His perfect righteousness, He has every right to justly judge and condemn you.

Yet what did the sinlessly perfect, all-knowing, omnipotent King of the universe do when He saw you wallowing in your miserable sin? Does He condemn you? Does He mock you and accuse you before His heavenly Father, and take pleasure in your damnation? No! Not only does He not condemn you, He comes to earth to bear your condemnation! Not only does He not accuse you before His Father, but He defends you! "But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Seeing all the wretched logs in our eyes, in love Jesus gave Himself to be hung on a log: "<sup>13</sup>Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree." He suffered death on the cross to pay the penalty for your sin, rose from the dead on account of His sinless life, so that by believing in Him, His perfection would be counted to you. Now you can stand before the throne of the King of Kings and sing,

*No condemnation now I dread; Jesus and all in Him is mine!  
Alive in Him, my living Head, and clothed in righteousness divine;  
Bold I approach the eternal throne and claim the crown through Christ my own!*

That's where the broken-hearted boldness needed to imitate Jesus comes from. If your eyes were so covered with the specks and logs of sin that Jesus had to suffer and die to rescue you, there is a humility that will arise there that cannot be harsh and critical towards others, even those with serious sin. But when you see that not only did Jesus *have* to die, but that He was *glad* to die, because He was so filled with love for you, there is a courage there to risk rejection from someone

when Jesus calls you to the gentle, tender work of speck-removal in another's life, whether you're loved or hated for it.

"<sup>40</sup>A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher." Jesus is our teacher, and so much more. You are not above Him. He calls you to do nothing that He Himself has not already done. And He gives you His Spirit to fully train you to be like Him. So look again this morning at Jesus, let His infinite mercy and grace train you, and then bend that mercy and grace out to others.