

## *Logs, Dogs and Hogs* *Luke 6:37-42*

The old pastor's hair is more white than gray now. His step is slow. And his life in the ministry is almost over.

For a while he taught theology at a small Bible college. The rest of the time he was a nomad, wandering from church to church. Somehow, he could not seem to settle down in any of them more than a few years.

The problem was not his preaching. His sermons were both scriptural and spiritual. He was faithful in visiting and counseling, too.

The people in the pastor's churches liked him. It was his wife they could not abide.

She was thin, plain woman in sensible shoes with nervous smile. And at first, she seemed personable.

But it was not long before church members started using side doors into the church on Sunday mornings.

Others simply stopped coming to church. And the few visitors who came never returned.

Church boards fretted over the empty pews. But none of them wondered why people stopped coming.

Each week, the pastor's wife would corner someone. Then with a saccharine smile, she would point out their faults and failures.

And that was not her job any more than it is ours. Jesus said it is a work reserved for His Holy Spirit.

*He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; John 16:8*

### *The Sin*

The Savior's sermon took a sudden, sharp turn. He abruptly dropped His discussion of loving our enemies to focus upon a problem that has always plagued God's people.

*Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; Verse 37*

The word Jesus used for judging is the Greek word from which we get words like critic, criticize, and critique. It means to scrutinize the character and actions of others. And as if that was not enough, Christ added another word—condemning, handing out hard, harsh judgments.

Quite simply, what Christ condemned is a critical eye and a sharp tongue. Our Savior spoke about the sin of looking upon the faults and foibles of other people around us with harsh judgment.

And that is a violation of the most basic tenet of the Christian faith. It is failing to look upon people as our Savior wants us to. As He did.

Yes, there will come a day at the end of time when Jesus will judge all mankind. But while He did condemn the self-righteous during His days on earth, He never criticized the weaknesses of sinners.

Even when a woman caught in the very act of adultery was thrown down into the dust before Him, Jesus refused to condemn her. Instead, when all of her accusers had slunk away in shame, He spoke gently and tenderly to her.

*Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one, Lord."*

*And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more." John 8:10-11*

When He was passing through Jericho for the last time, Christ called a thieving tax collector down from his perch in a sycamore tree. Then without a word of condemnation, our Savior spent the evening with him.

And before that evening was over, the tax collector resolved to repent of his sin and pay back every penny he had stolen.

*Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much." Luke 19:8*

Our Redeemer restored sinful men with love and compassion, not condemnation. Harsh criticism never brings remorse and repentance.

Being critical of others a violation of our Lord's command that we are to love one another as He loves us. And only the love of Jesus Christ convicts men of sin.

Worse yet, when we judge others, we are taking upon ourselves a job our Heavenly Father has reserved for His Son.

*For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, John 5:22*

Even God the Father does not judge men. Only His holy and righteous Son has the right to do that. Christ alone is fit to judge.

He can see what we cannot. He reads the hearts of men, understands the pressures they face, and weighs their motives. So we dare not try to do what even our eternal Father does not do.

And we would be wise to remember that Christ's judgment upon self-appointed critics will be both harsh and just.

*For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. Matthew 7:2*

The Master's warning is sobering. If we are quick to find fault with the aims and actions, the deeds and decisions of other people, our Lord will be just as quick and critical when He judges us.

*...if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. Matthew 6:14-15*

When Jesus sits as our Judge, we will need mercy and forgiveness not criticism and condemnation. And that is also what others need from us.

## *The Symptoms*

To illustrate His point, Jesus painted a picture that is so exaggerated, it almost sounds like a joke.

*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? Or 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? Verses 41-42*

The Master described a man staring intently at a sliver he sees in another man's eye. Of course, it is not as if the other man does not know the sliver is there. He is agonized by the pain it causes.

Yet the critic points out the sliver as if the one who is suffering is oblivious to his problem. Not only that, the critic acts under the assumption that his own eyes are clear and clean.

But they are not. Instead, a huge log sticks out of his eye. That is the very foundation of the foolishness of criticizing others. It is setting ourselves up as a model of sinless perfection and purity so profound that we are fit to judge the faults of others.

Our Savior also insisted that when we are critical of other people, we reveal a stunning spiritual insensitivity. First, we assume that other people are not aware of their shortcomings. Yet at the same time, we are utterly unaware of our own failings.

More than that, being critical of others reveals that our standards are all out balance. Jesus said those who look harshly upon the sins of others are oblivious of and indulgent with their own failures.

Of course, there are times when God's people are commanded to bring correction to sinning saints.

*If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. Matthew 18:15*

Both Christ's command and illustration remind us that when we must show someone else a fault, our aim should always be to correct not condemn. And Paul added that we are to do that with meekness and gentleness. We are not to come as critics but as brothers, conscious of our own sin and dedicated to

help and heal someone who is hurting.

The Savior also said that when we are moved by a harsh, self-righteous inclination to criticize others, we are hypocrites. We are pretenders, wearing a mask to hide who we really are.

When we act as critics, we pretend to be acting out of a commitment to uphold God's righteousness. But that cannot be true if, at the same time, we willingly ignore our own faults.

Other critics are like the pastor's wife. They act as if they genuinely care that someone else is suffering from the pain and poison of sin.

But beneath the mask of caring and compassion, beats heart that willingly, even joyfully, inflicts pain upon someone else. That is one reason why the person who receives such hard-hearted correction is usually harmed rather than helped by a critic's attention.

It goes without saying that we should care that others suffer with sin. And we should always uphold Christ's righteousness and holiness.

But constantly criticizing others is never the way to promote purity. We do not convince others of the importance of holiness and righteousness with harsh words.

We proclaim purity with our lives, by living as examples of humility and holiness.

## *The Seeds*

Refusing to be critical of others not only pleases our God. It also plants a positive seed in other people's lives that benefits us.

*Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return. Verse 38*

When we are understanding and indulgent of people's faults, they treat us the very same way. Jesus said it is like a grain merchant who puts an extra scoop of barley into his generous wine merchant's basket. The lesson is clear. If we are kind to others, they will treat us the same way.

But the opposite is also true. Criticizing and condemning other people is contagious. It plants ugly, unsavory seeds. If we are harsh and hard or caustic and critical, others will treat us that way.

And that is not all. Our Savior also said that condemnation is a kind of hereditary disease. It is passed down from teacher to disciple.

*And He also spoke a parable to them: "A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher." Verses 39-40*

If a professing believer is blind to his own sinfulness, he cannot plant repentance and remorse in other people. If we are blind to God's rich mercy and glorious goodness, we can hardly guide others to a grace we do not know. We cannot introduce men to a Master we have not met.

Worse yet, Jesus said people cannot help but become like the teachers they choose to follow. So if we are critical, new believers among us will become just as caustic and unkind as we are. That, the Savior said, was the case with the Pharisees.

*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are. Matthew 23:15 (NIV)*

Criticism is an epidemic problem among many Christian fellowships. And time will not cure the disease. We must root it out within ourselves.

Before we infect others around us.

## *The Solution*

Jesus once told a story about a fundamental Pharisee and a thieving tax collector. Both of them climbed the broad stone steps up to the temple courtyard. Then in the smoky haze in the shadows of

Solomon's porch, they prayed.

*The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: "God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get." But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" Luke 18:11-13*

The question is which of those two men had a sin problem like a splinter in his eye? And which one represents the man with a log in his eye?

Jesus said the identifying mark of a person with sin like a log is that he is unaware he even has a sin problem. And so it was with the Pharisee. He was utterly oblivious to the fact that he was poisoned and polluted with pride and self-righteousness.

Having a sin problem that is like a log in our eye is the sin of spiritual satisfaction and self-righteousness. And Christ said that when we are afflicted with so great a sin, we are utterly unfit to bring correction to anyone else.

*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. Verse 42*

Nothing clouds our vision of other people's faults quite so completely as self-righteousness. It magnifies the sins of others. Yet at the same time it minimizes our own.

Instead of looking for splinters of sin in other people's lives, we should be searching for sin in our own hearts. And if we do not see any, we should do what David did. We should seek God's help.

*Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, Psalm 139:23-24*

In the Savior's story of the Pharisee and the tax collector, only one man found forgiveness and freedom. The tax collector ached over his many sins. So with tears of remorse, he confessed his sins to God.

That is the way to deal with any sin. It makes no difference if we are afflicted with an aching splinter or a great log of iniquity of which we are oblivious and unaware.

The only way to remove any sin problem is to confess it to the Lord who loved us so much He died for us. When we do that, God's Word promises us that Christ's blood will cleanse us from all our sin. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. 1 John 1:9-10*

God's Word says that all of us have sinned and come short of His glory. So indulging the illusion that we are without sin is calling the God of truth a liar. Worse yet, it is a sign that we have never really received the Redeemer as our Savior and Lord.

The Savior spent an alarming amount of time trying to confront self-righteous Pharisees. Yet although Jesus was God in the flesh, He made precious little progress. And Matthew said there is a good reason for that.

*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. Matthew 7:6*

Jesus said those who refuse to face their own sinfulness are like savage street dogs or fierce, feral hogs. The Gospel of grace is more precious than any pearl. But they have neither an appetite nor any appreciation of it.

God's Son shed His blood and gave His life to pay for our sins. He was raised from the dead for our justification. And through His Holy Spirit, He calls us to come that we might be forever free and forgiven.

However, doing that requires that we face the fact that we really are guilty of sins that are like painful splinters of wood embedded in our eyes. Pleading for mercy from our Master, we must admit that although we ache over our guilt, we are powerless to remove our sins or remedy our sinfulness.

The Pharisees were never able to acknowledge that their whitewashed self-righteousness was a serious sin. So they did precisely what Jesus predicted dogs and hogs always do when they are offered

something as holy and precious as God's love.

They savagely opposed Jesus. They peppered Him with pointed questions to trap Him. Then they plotted and planned to murder Him.

In the end, they who believed they were holy and righteous stooped to lies and bribery to crucify the very Christ they craved would come.

The lesson for us is not that we should dare to assume others around us are dogs and hogs who are not

worthy of our witness. The real lesson is to make very sure that we are not one of those dogs or hogs.  
We must make sure we do not have a log of sin in our own eye.