

## A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS

### XLV. The Sermon On The Mount: False And True Righteousness J. Christ's Righteous Practices In Contrast To Unrighteous Practices 6. Righteous Versus Unrighteous Judging (Matthew 7:1-6; Luke 6:37-42)

#### I. Introduction

- A. Christ's great Sermon on the Mount provided valuable insight on God's true righteousness, what Israel's religious leaders greatly lacked as seen in their dead traditionalism.
- B. To illustrate the contrast between the Pharisees' unrighteous practices with truly righteous deeds, Jesus gave six illustrations, and the sixth illustration deals with the issue of righteous versus unrighteous judging in Matthew 7:1-6; Luke 6:37-42. We study this passage for insight, application and edification:

#### II. Righteous Versus Unrighteous Judging, Matthew 7:1-6; Luke 6:37-42.

- A. Christ's directive not to judge other people in Matthew 7:1a does **not** mean that one should never "distinguish between good and evil" or "between truth and error in doctrine," for in Matthew 7:5 ESV He taught the need for us to "take the speck out" of a fellow believer's eye, and in Matthew 7:6 He taught that one "should never entrust holy things . . . to unholy people" (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 33), with both commands requiring a judgment between good and evil!
- B. Accordingly, the Lord's directive is a prohibition about being "ensorious" (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Matthew 7:1), that truly righteous people are not to be habitually condemning of others.
- C. To clarify what comprises the sin of habitually condemning, Jesus gave the test of hypocrisy, Matthew 7:2-5:
  - 1. Jesus warned that one who condemns another in passing judgment on him will himself be judged by the measure with which he passed his judgment on the other, Matthew 7:2.
  - 2. If one then sees a "mote" (KJV), that is, "(a) very small, dry particle; a speck" in his brother's eye (Ibid., fn. to Matt. 7:3) but did not consider the log that was in his own eye, he would not be able effectively to tell his brother that he needed to pull out the very small, dry particle or speck in his brother's eye when he had the log in his own eye! The brother would retort that the person with the log had no righteous grounds to hold himself up as a judge of the speck in his eye, Matthew 7:2-4.
  - 3. Thus, if one removed the log in his own eye so he could see clearly to remove the speck from his brother's eye, he could qualify to remove the speck in his brother's eye and have his judgment accepted, Matt. 7:5.
  - 4. In summary, to earn the right to make a critical judgment of another person, the one making the judgment needs to have his own thinking, conduct and beliefs align with righteousness before making his judgment. Anything less than that is being sinfully censorious.
- D. As for Matthew 7:6, Jesus warned against voicing a criticism to morally deficient people even if the one making the judgment is un hypocritically upright, for morally deficient people often react in harmful ways:
  - 1. In Israel during Jesus' earthly life, "(d)ogs and pigs were despised." (Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.) Thus, the "dogs" and "pigs" in Matthew 7:6 refer to "unholy people" (Ibid.) who despised righteous standards and trampled under feet the pearls of righteous wisdom that others tried to teach them.
  - 2. Such unholy people were often harmful, seen in Jesus' Matthew 7:6b ESV warning that when one tries to throw pearls of corrective wisdom toward unholy people, the unholy ones can not only "trample" those pearls of corrective wisdom "underfoot," but also "turn to attack you."
  - 3. Thus, even if a believer is not hypocritical, but lives a righteous life, he needs to be careful not to go about expressing criticism even of people who really are evil and deserve to be criticized, for evil people often are not only not prepared to accept correction, but they can abuse those who offer righteous criticism!

***Lesson:*** (1) Truly righteous believers unlike the Pharisees are not hypocritical critics of others, but they correct their own faults before sharing their criticisms of others who deserve to be corrected. (2) However, it is wise for even correct and un hypocritical people not to criticize unholy people like the Pharisees, for unholy people not only often reject the pearls of helpfully corrective wisdom, but they often attack their critics!

***Application:*** (1) Before we criticize another person for a wrong, we must be sure that we are not guilty of the same wrong lest our criticism be ineffective, and we face retaliation. (2) We need to avoid criticizing unholy people who do not value words of corrective wisdom, and who also attack those who criticize them. (3) In summary, we must rely on the Holy Spirit to know IF we should criticize another party, and IF so, to do so CONSTRUCTIVELY.