

# Making Sense of Quite a Muddled Mess

## Part 3

Now, having touched on various topics, I would seek to address how I must think of my fellow man. Again, my view is not based on personal feelings about my fellow man but the Word of God delivered to me by my Lord. My Savior said: **Lu.6:31**- *And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.* This must be my manner of life with regards to my neighbor, no matter who they may be. As I listen to Jesus, I ask myself, how do I want to be treated by others, and then I seek to treat everyone I encounter in that same way. Let me give you a personal example. As a pastor, I am brutally aware of the failings of many who have held this office. There have been pastors who have stolen from their congregations and things along those lines. Most egregiously there have been those who have used the office to fulfill their own lusts and desires. Some even abusing children in the process. As a pastor I don't want anyone to view me or reject me because they hold that if others have done this then I would too. I don't want anyone to believe that I would in any way condone such behavior. I want people to simply take me for who I am. Love me or hate me, just let it be based on whom I prove myself to be. Therefore, based on Jesus' words, I have to treat people as I want to be treated. So, when I see someone in the street, be it a mail carrier or a police officer, I treat them as I would want to be treated. I don't view them in the light of the sin of another, because I wouldn't want that either. I treat them with kindness and respect, with God's love and compassion. This I must do, and that from the heart, because this is what my Lord has called me to do. In fact, I endeavor to treat all people this way no matter who they may be or where I may encounter them. I seek to treat the cashier in the supermarket with the same respect that I would treat a teacher, politician, police officer or any other individual. I do this because this is what I am taught in the Word.

This is what is so radical and shocking about the Gospel and the Kingdom of God. In Jesus' day it was unheard of, because of long held prejudices, for Jews to have dealings with Samaritans. Yet, Christ, as He commonly did, sets all things properly in the light of divine reality. When He comes to Jacob's well, He engages a Samaritan woman. **Jn.4:7**- *There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.* This was so outside of the norm in this culture that the woman was taken back by Jesus' engagement. **Jn.4:9**- *Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.* Yet, most telling is the reply of the Lord. **Jn.4:10**- *Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.* Jesus wasn't looking at a Samaritan woman that He shouldn't engage, He was looking at a woman, created by God, who needed His love and compassion. Thus, He would engage her to bring to her the gift of eternal life. His example is unmistakable, it is undeniable. We are not to allow fleshly biases to be the dominant feature of our thinking. The truth of God must be our sole guide. As Paul said: **Acts 17:26**- *And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.*

So then, does that mean that we offer excuses for sin in our society. Never should that be the case. But that we seek to lay the blame, if you will, at the feet of those who deserve it. When Paul is faced with Peter's hypocrisy and unwillingness to socialize with others purely because they were Gentiles, he spoke up. **Gal.2:11-14-** *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?* Peter was in the wrong and so Paul addressed him in that regard. In other words, we must hold people accountable for the actions that they commit. We are compelled to address those who sin against others and call their behavior what it is. For Paul, he simply blamed the guilty party and sought to address the matter in that way.

But, is this all that there is to it. When I have identified the sin of others, have I done all that my God would have me to do? Well, no not exactly. Actually, at this point I must be mindful of how I tread. I must be aware that at this moment my soul stands in grave danger if I don't walk even as my Lord would have me to walk. Living even as the Word of God has set before me: **Mic.6:8-** *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* I have to realize that just to become someone who can see what others do wrong, the failure of others, isn't always the safest place for my soul. Others have been just like this and it was not well with them. **Is.65:5-** *Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.* **Lu.18:11-12-** *The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* I must be very careful that I don't become one who can point out sin in others and immediately justify myself. This is not pleasing in the eyes of the Lord. In fact, Jesus goes on to say: **Lu.18:13-14-** *And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.* So, I say again, how I tread when I have identified sin in others is of the utmost importance to myself. You see, the Pharisee is now blinded to the fact that his behavior is not pleasing to God. He can only see that he hasn't personally done what others have done and in that he finds his satisfaction. Jesus, however, doesn't see it this way. That leads us to our final point.

How do I personally address and pray properly for these types of sins in our society? How do I adopt the heart of the Apostle Paul when he says: **2Cor.9:21-22-** *To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.* **1Cor.10:32-33-** *Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.* I must be willing to look at myself and say, 'Father, how can I be of use to my fellow man, how can I do more than stand off at a distance and merely point out the sin of others as though that is all that you would have me to do? Father, how can my life be to the profit of many?' When I

have considered these things, I do find that there have been others before me who have seen very clearly the failings within their own society. These chose a path, not of the Pharisee, who stood off at a distance and claimed his personal innocence. These chose to step into the midst and intercede before God, even owning the errors for themselves that they might pray more powerfully. When I read men like Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezra, I find that these chose not to distance themselves from the errors of the people, but to embrace them, even as their own, and thus to be of use to God and men. Their prayers are too long to be considered in whole here, but we will simply place their opening lines before our view that we might go back later and consider them more carefully. **Jer.3:25-** *We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God.* **Jer.14:7-** *O LORD, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee.* **Dan.9:5-** *We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments.* **Ez.9:6-** *And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.* We could go on for there are many more instances such as these in Kings, Chronicles, Nehemiah, Psalms, Isaiah and such. However, these should prove sufficient to help us understand the mind and heart of our God.

What, I ask, were these godly men doing? Had they actually been men of gross idolatry and sin in their own lives and it finally came to the surface? I think not. What they are doing is making a choice in their intercession. They could stand at a distance and wag a finger at those who had failed or they could embrace them, lock arms with them and seek God for them. These men chose the latter. As F.B Meyer so wonderfully put it in regards to Daniel: *'He confessed his sin and the sin of his people. There is such a thing as vicarious confession, in which some holy soul takes to himself the task of bearing the sins of his people, and pouring out the story before God, as though the sins were his own.'* These men didn't run away from those who had sinned, wagging a finger in their faces and simply chiding the failure of others. They locked arms with them, bowed their knees before the Father and prayed, pleading with God for healing and wholeness in their lives. But, why would one do such a thing? Well, if we are paying attention, we can't help but remember that Jesus did this very thing. He didn't come into the world to wag His finger in our faces for our sins, He came to take those sins upon Himself and die on the cross for our forgiveness. He locked arms with sinful men and women and took their sins to Himself before His Father. Without His identifying with us in our failure, which surely was not His own, we would all be forever lost. So, what will I do? I can spend my days pointing out what others do wrong, distancing myself from them and their failures. I can wag my finger and explain in swelling words what others do that is in error. Or, like these godly men before me, or more importantly like my Lord, I can lock arms even with those who have failed and kneel before the Lord and pray. *'Father forgive us, we have sinned, we have not lived as you would have us. Heal us O Lord God, for we are desperate for Your holy touch. Father, You sent Your Son into this world and He never sinned but pleased You in all things. Yet, when the time came, He identified with me in my sin, He took my sin to Himself that I might be saved. Help me not to distance myself from others who have sinned but to intercede for them that You in Your grace might save and heal them. To You O Lord be the glory, now and forever more, Amen.*

May the Lord richly bless you,  
Pastor Mark