

## The Faults of Others

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Why can we so easily see the faults of others better than our own? Perhaps being hypersensitive to the faults of others may give us a false sense of superiority or help soothe our guilt-stricken consciences. For example, consider King David. When the prophet Nathan came and told him about a wealthy man who harmed a poor man, David wanted to execute the wealthy man almost instantly (2 Sam. 12:5-6). After verbalizing his wrath and condemnation, Nathan declared to David, *“Thou art the man”* (2 Sam. 12:7).

Why was David unable to see his sin? Why was David unable to see the futility of his scheming and plotting? God knew of David’s lust, adultery, lying, and murderous conspiracy. David was self-delusional. We too are often self-deluded. We do not want to see ourselves for what we are at times.

Jesus addressed this problem in the Sermon on the Mount. He said, *“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye”* (Matt. 7:1-5).

Before we start to point out the faults of others, Jesus demands we first look at ourselves. The judgment of others is often biased and self-interested. We focus on the faults of others to deflect attention from our faults. If we are going to become part of God’s kingdom, then correcting sin begins with me.

Much of the New Testament echoes the command of Jesus to first correct our sin. For example, James wrote, *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed”* (Jas. 1:22-25).

James warns about the danger of self-delusion. We must use God’s word as a mirror to see ourselves as God sees us. We are not to take this mirror and shove it in the face of others, but put our face before it. God’s word has the ability to show us who we really are: sinners in desperate need of renewal. If we use God’s word to correct our image, we will be blessed in life.

Also, the apostle Paul frequently wrote about self-examination. He told the Corinthians that self-examination was part of the purpose of observing the Lord's Supper: *"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup"* (1 Cor. 11:28). Participating in this sacred meal forces us to look into our hearts and determine if we are living worthy of the sacrifice of Jesus.

At the conclusion of the second letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote, *"Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!"* (2 Cor. 13:5). Paul told Timothy, *"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee"* (1 Tim. 4:16). Do we examine, test, and prove ourselves before God? Or, are we thoughtlessly living our lives?

In addition to self-examination being personally challenging, this process takes time. If we commit to the process of self-examination, we will grow. We will learn better how we are to reflect the image of Christ. Paul wrote, *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect"* (Rom. 12:2). The transformation of the mind requires thought.

Also, engaging in self-examination will give us a heightened sense of awareness of the sensitive nature of correcting sin. Correcting sin is delicate work. Generally, when we find sin in our lives we become defensive and or evasive. Yet, with the proper heart, we can find the willingness to repent. The personal experience of correcting our sin will give us the experience needed to help others correct sin.

Yes, the faults of others need to be corrected. Jesus did not teach us to ignore the faults of other people. Instead, Jesus taught if we focus on our faults first, we will become better equipped to deal with the faults of others. Both beams and specks need to be removed from the eye (Matt. 7:1-2).

### **Sensitive Work**

Correcting sin in the lives of others is sensitive work. Our approach to this will have a major impact on the outcome. If we are harsh, condescending, and unloving, the person needing to make corrections in his or her life will be less likely to repent.

Paul warned Timothy, *"And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will"* (2

Tim. 2:24-26). Love, meekness, and the ability to reason are needed to help someone acknowledge sin repent.

Attempting to correct the sins of others is a situation ripe for temptation. Mainly, we can be tempted by pride. We must not use someone in sin as a means to elevate ourselves. We must not use the situation to kick someone when they are down. Rather, by redemptive love, we must seek to restore a soul to their Savior.

This is what Paul meant when he wrote, *“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted”* (Gal. 6:1-2). Before we attempt to correct someone in sin, let us first look into our own hearts. Where we find sin, let us resolve to repent. Let us work together to better reflect the image of God in the hope of eternal life.

### **Conclusion**

May we never underestimate the power of pride to harden our hearts against one another. If he can use pride to destroy us and pit us against one another, the Devil will be perfectly content to do so. Let us humbly and lovingly appeal to those in sin. Likewise, if someone humbly and lovingly makes such an appeal to us, let us be humble enough to hear them and make corrections.