

February 17, 2019

The Deeper Things

"For the Word of God is living and active; sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates even to dividing the soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

Hebrews 4:12-13

"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

Matthew 7:3-5

True discipleship is always a very personal issue. The Word of God was not penned so we could use it as a magnifying glass to study and condemn the faults we find in the lives of others. More than once in Scripture we are warned against doing that very thing.

The Word was written so that you and I can see ourselves and our weaknesses and failings reflected in its truths. Just as our world tries to encourage us to use labels to judge and condemn others, so it also tries to encourage us to focus on the lives and shortcomings of others so that we don't look at our own behaviors.

Jesus makes it very clear in his short parable of the plank in Matthew 7 that our initial and primary focus must be on removing and overcoming our own faults. All of us, every single one of us, has our own set of failings and shortcomings. We are all tempted and we all sin. The Apostle Paul makes this point in his letter to the Roman believers where he writes, *"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:9-23)

So, when the world entices us to pick through the lives of others finding faults and failures and condemning those things, it is tempting me to look away from my own faults. Our Lord would tell us to look to our own faults first. He commands us to remove our own *'planks'* before we get into the speck removal business.

God's Word is a powerful tool. The Hebrew author shows us that nothing in all creation will be hidden from God's sight. None of us can escape from the convicting Word of God. The noisy drum-beat of the world constantly demands that we focus on the sins and faults of others, that we join in condemning those sins in the lives of others, and that we take sides against anyone who does not join with us in participating in judging and condemning.

For **the word of God** is **alive** and **active**. **Sharper** than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it **judges** the **thoughts** and **attitudes** of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12



The Hebrew author reminds us again that everything in our own lives will be uncovered and laid bare when we stand before the one to whom we must give an account. I will not be called to give an account for the sins of anyone other than myself. The Apostle reminds the believers in Rome, *"So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another."* (Romans 14:12-13)

So, what do we do with the Word of God? How do we apply it? Our Lord makes it abundantly clear, I believe, that we

must always apply it to our own shortcomings first. When I look into the mirror of the Word of God what do I see? When I read and understand the command to *"Love my neighbor as myself..."* or the command to *"...do to others what you would have them do to you..."* or the command *"As I have loved you, so you must love one another..."*; I need to measure my own obedience to those directions.

When I stand before God in judgment, even if I have been washed in the blood of the perfect sacrifice, I believe I will still have to give an account to my Father and God for my own disobedience. On that day, what will I say?

