

## ***The One Who Has Shown No Mercy***

This little light of mine,  
I'm gonna let it shine!  
All the time!  
Let it shine!  
Hide it under a bushel...  
**NO!** I'm gonna let it shine!

These are words to a song often taught to kids in Sunday school. They are based on Matthew 5:16 which states, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5:16). As followers of God, we know that we are not to hide the gospel light shining in our lives but let it bring others from the darkness. How many of us hide our lights under a bushel?

In James 2, the Christians in some places were showing favoritism. When the rich would come to their assemblies they would save the best places for them and force the poor to sit at their feet in a less honorable place. This is a form of hiding your light under a bushel: Prejudice.

Jesus spoke in Matthew 7 about the danger of unrighteous judgement: *"Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye"* (Matthew 7:1-5). We realize that the Lord is not ruling out all judging because in 1 Corinthians 6 Paul informs the Christians in Corinth that they can find a righteous man and let him judge what should be done. What Jesus is warning us about is prejudice or unrighteous judgement. You cannot look at someone else and know what is in their heart. Those in James 2 were guilty of prejudice because they thought the rich would be better candidates for salvation than the poor. They did not show mercy to the poor.

The context of Matthew 7 and James 2 are identical. In both cases, they assumed the others were in sin and in need of a lot of help. In James they moved on to people they felt were "better" and in Matthew they willingly overlooked their own flaws. We all need to understand some key points.

James informs us that, *"Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.'" Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law"* (James 2:10-11). In God's eyes, there is no difference in sin. Whether you committed adultery or murdered someone makes no difference to God; they both end with you being separated from God. We often make different levels of sin but this is not the true case. The "*plank*" in our eyes is our own sin that blinds us to our

true condition before God. This “*plank*” can cause us also to become callus toward our neighbor. Before God we, “*all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). This puts us all on an equal playing field.

When we look at others, whether in the church or the world, we need to see our equal. No matter what they may dress like, how much money they have, or how they behave they are loved by God and should be loved by us as well. As James puts it, “*So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment*” (James 2:12-13).

To bring us full circle, Christ describes this circumstance in a parable. We often call this parable, “The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant.” Let us all reflect on the principles set forth in this passage and not hide our lights under a bushel:

*“Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, “Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all. Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.*

*“But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me what you owe! So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you all. And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, “You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you? And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”” (Matthew 18:23-35).*