

# Punishment Vs. Mercy

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I can see in the audience here that most of us have been around for quite a while. Looking back in our history, we have some good history and some bad history. We know the church has gone through certain phases that have been emphasized throughout the years. One of those was our authoritarian phase. Anybody remember that? What I mean by that is there was a time when, we as a church, thought that during the millennium as spirit beings we were going to rule with that rod of iron that Rick talked about the first day. That rod of iron which is mentioned in Revelation.

When you couple that authoritarian posture with the rod of iron, this then translated into our thinking that we were going to be able to meter out punishment to people during the millennium. We would hear things at the Feast. Maybe you heard this particular story of the famous 5,000-foot drop. It was famous at that and meant that if people didn't behave in the millennium, you would take them up to 5,000 feet and drop them. Then you would catch them just before impact. Actually, some of us A-types were looking forward to that. Enthusiasm, notwithstanding, we had that all wrong. Of course, our job or jobs in the millennium are going to be whatever God the Father and Jesus Christ assign us to. Nowhere in scripture does it say our function is going to be meting out punishment to people; it's just not going to be that way.

In the context of the millennium, the title I have for this, as Rick has already disclosed is:

## Punishment Vs. Mercy

I had a funny thought whenever I thought of this title. I thought back to the old church articles and booklets such as "Punishment or Mercy, Which?" Remember some of those titles? I don't know if that was grammatically correct or not but that's how some of them were titled. We can definitely glean some guidance from scripture about punishment and mercy. I have three pieces—not necessarily points. We are going to look at Old Testament examples, because stoning was the method of punishment, a type of execution that was a capital punishment. Then look at New Testament examples of mercy and the lessons we have there. Finally, what all this has to do with the millennium.

You can google about stoning in biblical times and there is a whole list of things that we can find—that we will find—in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible—Genesis to Deuteronomy. Death by stoning was for the following:

- Touching Mount Sinai when God was giving Moses the Ten Commandment—Exodus 19:13 (these are just reference scriptures).
- An ox that gored someone to death should be stoned, Exodus 21:28.

- Breaking the Sabbath, Numbers 15:32-36. Remember that's what the Pharisees constantly tried to accuse Christ of doing—breaking the Sabbath, healing on the Sabbath, doing other things on the Sabbath.
- Giving one's seed or one's offspring to Molech, Leviticus 20:2-5.
- Having a familiar spirit or being a wizard, Leviticus 20:27.
- Cursing God, Leviticus 24:10-16.
- Engaging in idolatry, Deuteronomy 17:2-7.
- Seducing others to do so, Deuteronomy 13.
- Rebellion against parents, Deuteronomy 21. You can look at those verses.
- Getting married as though a virgin, when not a virgin, Deuteronomy 22:13-21.
- Sexual intercourse between a man and a woman engaged to another man and actually both should be stoned, Deuteronomy 22:23-24.

That's a sampling of Old Testament reasons for stoning. That's not saying that stoning was a form of punishment that God prescribed. We have to remember there were no prisons at that time. There were cities of refuge if someone was accidentally killed, but there was no prison. The purpose, if you look at those examples where stoning was used, was to put away evil from among the Israelites. They would also learn the lesson from that. It was true justice and because of that fear, because of a timely punishment, it was a true deterrent. You contrast that to today's society where we encourage people to commit crimes. We are the worst enablers in history right now.

In the Mishnah, the Jewish oral tradition, there are also different things where stoning is prescribed. In the Mishnah it says sinners are to be stoned for the following: Sexual relations with his mother, with his father's wife (not the biological mother), with his daughter in law, with a human male (homosexuality) or with cattle (bestiality), a woman who uncovers herself before cattle, a blasphemer, an idolater, he who sacrifices one of his children to Molech (you'll see some parallels with the actual Old Testament laws), one that occupies himself with familiar spirits (a wizard), one who violates the Sabbath, one who curses his father and mother, one who has assaulted a betrothed woman, one who leads men to worship idols, one who misleads a whole town into worshipping idols, a witch (whether male or female), a stubborn and rebellious son. That is just a sample of offenses that prescribe stoning from the Jewish perspective of the Old Testament administration of the law.

Another thing that I researched—I was an instructor and I used to tell my students that the only advantage I had over them was that I get to research the topic before I gave the class—and if you look up stoning, you are going to discover that there are eight

nations in the world today that still do stoning; they still execute by stoning, usually a public stoning. Just in the world that we live in today, to avoid all that ceremony of public stoning, it's easier to shoot people. We see far too much of that going on. The stone could actually be a lead bullet. It could be from the business end of an AK or unfortunately today, it could also be a 556 from an M-16. That's about as political as I'm going to get.

I won't turn there but we have a couple of familiar examples in the New Testament about stoning. We have Stephen in Acts 6 and 7—he was stoned. Paul was stoned at Lystra at the instigation of the Jews and he was left for dead but then he revived. We can find that account in Acts 14:19. There's also a colloquial expression that says: ,

“People who live in glass houses should not throw stones.”

A corollary to that is if you live in a neighborhood of glass houses, nobody should throw a stone. Of course, that is just meant figuratively. Throwing stones means projecting your thoughts, your emotions, on other people, usually in a negative sense of dislike in the form of gossip or slander. Some think that that expression, “throwing stones” came from a popular biblical account that Christ gave in John 8. In John we have the account of the woman caught in adultery.

**John 8:1** *But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.*

*2) Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.*

*3) Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst ... (NKJV)*

As we know, as we see later, they were working a set up to try and trap Christ on one of many such attempts. As we read this account let's note two valuable lessons. There is a striking example in this entire incident—a contrast actually—between the attitude and the approach of the Pharisees and the attitude and approach of Christ. The attitude and approach of the Scribes and Pharisees was that they were the PhD's. They understood all the laws but their application of it was to use it as a whip and they focused almost entirely on the punishment aspect of that. In this case, they were trying to use it to belittle Christ—that's what they thought. But, as we know, they weren't going to get away with it.

The second thing is, we have Jesus' response to them—His attitude and His approach; the way He dealt with this terrified woman and her accusers. The important thing and the point I'm trying to make is, when we look at the contrast between these two attitudes, think about the attitude and the approach that we have today and that we would choose to have in the World Tomorrow—in the millennium. Let's continue in John 8:4.

*4) they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. (NKJV)*

In a modern novel or movie now, we would have a graphic description here—the obligatory sex scene.

*5) Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" (NKJV)*

You can hear the attitude coming down through the centuries with that kind of a statement.

*6) This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. (NKJV)*

Which was their motive all along. Actually, they smugly refer to Moses—Moses commanded us—it wasn't Moses' law, it was God's law through Moses. They left out all the details of this particular law, as though Christ wouldn't know the difference. But he did as we will see.

*6 continued) ... But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. (NKJV)*

As in the Proverb, "Don't answer a fool according to his folly", He never missed the opportunity to teach a lesson and that's what He was doing here.

*7) So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."  
8) And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. (NKJV)*

They were trying to trap Him, leaving out details of the law regarding adultery. Today we would say they were weaponizing the law, which is exactly what they were doing, but Christ knew all the points of the law. The criteria for adultery is in Leviticus 20 and Deuteronomy 22. The question is, where was the man? That's a part of the law. Getting back to the account, we don't know what he wrote. I don't know if you have ever looked that up out of curiosity and looked at the different theories or ideas. A popular idea is that he wrote their sexual sins down. We really don't know—it's one of those questions we'll ask Him one day. I don't know about you, but I have a list of things. My wife does too—"why did You make wasps?"

*9) Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience ... (NKJV)*

Whatever he wrote, it had an effect on these hard-hearted men. He convicted them by their own guilt of misusing the law at what they were trying to do. The Greek word for *conscious* is just to be "conscious of your own behavior – to know intuitively". You own it; it's not something that someone else is doing—you can't blame it on some thing or some other person. You have to honestly see your conduct in a moral sense. It is that sense of right and wrong.

When you think about that, guilt can be a healthy response. It can have a positive effect on us, if it affects your conscience in a certain way. But a lack of remorse could be—and we will see that with the Pharisees—a lack of that guilt and the reaction to that, could be pride. They just don't see anything wrong with their behavior. Callousness is the end result of pride—just don't care. Arrogance is another product of pride; they just feel superior and there's no personal guilt because it's not in the picture. "I can't be doing anything wrong." That was their approach. Remember, the Scribes and Pharisees demonstrated all of these bad qualities. That's why Christ called them hypocrites in Matthew 23, a familiar chapter in Matthew. I think I have written in mine, "ouch", "ouch", "ouch" because there are so many critiques that He gave to the Scribes and Pharisees.

*9 continued) ... went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last.*  
(NKJV)

Typical hierarchy, they had their pecking order. Interesting to note they even had their superiority order. A structure from the smallest to the greatest. Remember the disciples asked Christ "Who is going to be the greatest in Your Kingdom?" What He told them was because the only example they had had was that of the Pharisees and their religious system—don't do that, don't follow that example. It's interesting that the oldest left first. You have to think about that, he was the individual who had the most experience and knew better. He just thought he could fool Christ with his superior knowledge of the law. He was the ringleader—he led them in and he led them out. Continuing verse 9.

*9 continued) ... And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*  
(NKJV)

Remember there were others there, as He was in the temple. In verses 3 through 9, He gave a profile of those Scribes and Pharisees and their attitude and approach, showing them at their worst. To them and their legalism, everything was black and white. It's like they were all prosecutors and there were no defense attorney's there. "Let's prosecute, let's punish"—that was their approach.

In a sense they yielded this self-righteous "hammer"; if it was white it was okay, if it was black then it was a nail. That was their approach—very legalistic. There is a reference in Titus 1, We will go down to verse 15 but back in verse 10, Paul was talking about those of the circumcision and he is warning about their evil influence and their attitude.

**Titus 1:15** *To the pure ...*

Remember some scholars say these were the Judaizers who infiltrated the different churches and of course Paul is warning Titus about that. They wanted to hang onto the Old Testament, especially the rules and the law. Reminds you of Sharia law.

*15 continued) ...all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. (NKJV)*

They weren't stricken by their conscience; they didn't see that they were doing anything wrong. They had that kind of arrogance.

*16) They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work. (NKJV)*

Remember these are the same people, the same attitude, the same ones, these Pharisees and Scribes, who engineered Christ's death. I remember reading once in a commentary, that these folks had a high intensity hatred for Christ. In the context of the woman taken in adultery, these same people with that same attitude and approach, took savage delight in catching this woman and dragging her before Christ. With pompous pride, using her as a test case for Him. They thought they had Him between a rock and a hard place. They thought the Old Testament said one thing about stoning the woman. But they knew they were in a hard spot too because they knew they couldn't do anything without the Romans permission because they were under the government of the Romans. What they really wanted to do was assassinate and kill Christ but they were afraid of the people. We can see that back in Matthew 21.

**Matthew 21:45** *Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. (NKJV)*

Like holding up a mirror to show them what they were really like.

*46) But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet. (NKJV)*

Political Polls, don't you know—they feared the people. You have to think about their attitudes when they asked him back in John 8:5, about Moses commanding stoning,

“What do *You* say?”

They had this seething hatred for Christ. I have had experience with people who will approach you like that, with that kind of an attitude— “What do you say or think Jack?” You know with that kind of approach where they don't really care about what you are going to say anyway. That happened to me once. A person approached me and what they really wanted to do was start a debate about a doctrinal thing—I believe it was about whether Christ was a created Being. The upshot of the whole exchange was that, I didn't believe the same things they did. That's fine—it's a free country, you can believe what you want. I don't believe that and I was not going to be drawn into that argument. I don't want to play that kind of game.

The point is, Christ refused to get drawn into their little trap. He very effectively shut them out and taught His disciples a valuable lesson in the process; punishment versus

mercy. He just bent down and wrote and stopped them in their tracks. Let's go back and continue in John 8:10.

**John 8:10** *When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"*

11) *She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, [this just points to Christ's character] "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."* (NKJV)

Some try to use that to say that the law has been done away with. Any Bible student knows that is not scriptural; it doesn't say that at all. We don't know much about this woman. She might have been a notorious prostitute and they were simply watching her. Again, they didn't bring the man. The law clearly says that, if one or both are married—it doesn't matter—they are both be stoned. The important thing is Christ's approach. It's an approach we should emulate. We have some important lessons to learn whenever we analyze this account. The attitude and approach of the Scribes and Pharisees and Christ's attitude—the sharp contrast between those two attitudes. We have that mean-spirited attitude which just wants to hit and punish everything. It seems like human nature never changes in that respect. There are those who like the Scribes and Pharisees, get a satisfaction out of pointing out other's sins. It becomes an air of superiority and smugness and they hope people get what they deserve. We have heard mean comments like that about folks in the church. This person or that person is having these issues because they are sinning. You don't know that—how can anybody say that?

We do have those situations where we do know when someone does something they shouldn't be doing and they are in fact sinning. We have guidance from Paul for that in Galatians 6. In Galatians 6 it doesn't say to approach someone with a superior attitude or "I hope you get what you deserve." attitude. It doesn't say that at all. It's about going to a person with a spirit of meekness.

**Galatians 6:1** *... brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.* (NKJV)

You have to note here that Paul is not talking to the ministry. In the past only the ministers could deal with issues or problems. It doesn't say that here at all. It says, "you who are spiritual" and that applies to all of us. In the context of Galatians 5, it contrasts carnal nature—the works of the flesh—with spiritual nature. Spiritual nature, if we have it, only comes with God's Holy Spirit producing spiritual fruit.

If we think of it in those terms, in this account of the woman caught in adultery, we see human nature at its worst and we see spiritual nature at its best in the way Christ handled the situation. He had compassion on the woman. These other people were perfectly willing to kill her. Why is Paul bringing this up? In Galatians we can get a sense of what is going on in this congregation, because that is important to the context

of what we're talking about. I think we are going to see some parallel rock throwing today. The nature of this type of thinking hasn't changed over the centuries. Have you ever noticed that? Human nature never changes, ours included. We are all very familiar with Galatians 5, the context is of the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5:23.

**Galatians 5:23** ... *gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*  
24) *And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.* (NKJV)

When I see that "crucifies the flesh" I think of Paul in Romans 7 where he described that so appropriately. It's a struggle; the flesh or human nature, we're warring against that each and every day. It's warring against God's Holy Spirit. God's Holy Spirit wants us to do one thing and our human nature is telling us to do something else.

25) *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*  
26) [I put a "but" here] *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.* (NKJV)

That just means, in the context of this church or any church, in the congregation competing in vanity with one another. Some were evidently doing that then and some are doing it today. Verse 26 is actually picking up from verse 15 where it says

*"But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another".*

*Devour* means "to destroy one another". It's like a fire that consumes all the fuel that you feed it—it just keeps burning. In a sense, emotionally, when you think about that. There are some and unfortunately, if we think of it in those terms—sometimes we've been there too. People just can't let go of their differences. They can't let go of endless arguments and the verbal "stones" and emotions that fly back and forth. Notice a couple of scriptures over in James 3. We know it's talking about the untamable tongue which is actually how we devour one another.

**James 3:5** *Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!* (NKJV)

We have all seen forest fires and grass fires. There is a hill about a half mile directly south of us. Because she is from Minnesota and I grew up here in Southeast Washington with desert and sage brush, I always tell my wife the reason you don't see any old growth sage brush is because it's all been burned off in the past. Sage brush can get quite large, almost like Juniper trees. All we have is grass; we call it cheat grass. One time on the other side of that hill from us, there was a freeway. Somebody had a blow out over there and the tire went down on the ramp. It caused a spark and set a fire in the ditch which went right up that hill, over the top and down the other side and we had a nice black hill. Just like that. Actually, the tongue is like that and that's what James is saying here. He said it ignites a fire and it does.



6) *And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. (NKJV)*

It means that an unruly tongue—that tongue of fire it's talking about—can corrupt an entire church, as well as your life. That attitude and approach of attacking people can do that. Remember what Christ said and it is so true,

“Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.”

Something else to remember—this is just a reference scripture—1 Peter 5:8. “*Seeking whom he may devour*”, who is that? There *devour* is a different Greek word and it means “to swallow up”. It has an associated meaning to what Paul and James were talking about and others in the New Testament. The point being, we can't forget Satan's role and influence in all of this. Back to Galatians 1 this time. You just get a feel for what's going on here. This attitude of biting and devouring and competing with one another; it's having an adverse effect on this Galatian church and it's teaching us something. It tells us back in the beginning of the Epistle, Galatians 1:6.

**Galatians 1:6** *I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7) which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8) But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. (NKJV)*

It was probably a mix of Judaism and Agnosticism; I haven't studied that for a while but that's probably what's going on here.

9) *As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. (NKJV)*

You think about that untamable tongue and about how fire burns and consumes everything in its path. Have you ever noticed how small disagreements start in a church? It's incremental. You have a little argument, a little disagreement about this or that and it escalates and eventually it comes around to a doctrinal thing where people will just disagree. It acts like the fuse that Paul and James were talking about; a fire until it blows up and then what happens? Another split. If you know the signs, you see it coming almost every time. We've been through—I forget—five? It seems like a lot more; at least five or six.

10) *For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? (NKJV)*

Paul is pleading with his Galatian brethren. He did do things to please men. He persecuted the church of God cold bloodily and no doubt he impressed his superiors doing that. He was one of the good guys in the good ole boys' club.

*10 continued) ... For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.  
11) But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. (NKJV)*

It's not out of Judaism.

*12) For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. (NKJV)*

It was not legalistic, punitive Judaism; it was different from that. It goes on to say that in verse 13.

*13) For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, [that's with all of its mentality] how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. (NKJV)*

He once stood in the shoes of these Pharisees and Scribes. I can't remember exactly the place, but it says he was a Pharisee of the highest order. He was all full of arrogance and that superior attitude they had, that "drop the hammer" approach. He did the same thing—he applied that for any infraction of the law—in their thinking and opinion.

*14) And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. (NKJV)*

Remember that list of stoning from the Mishnah—the traditions of the fathers. Evidently, some were being influenced to go back to that Old Testament, strict administration of the law, of the ordinances and statues, including death by stoning. Possibly, with the idea being encouraged by some that you could earn salvation by doing all these things—by works—strict law keeping in this case. Let's go back to Galatians 5; if you look at the context leading up to Galatians 5, of course there are no chapters, just one discourse from Paul.

**Galatians 5:1** *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. (NKJV)*

Much was added to that list of do's and don'ts the Scribes and Pharisees had and it became a harsh yoke of bondage.

*2) Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, [that was one of the provisions of the Old Testament law keeping] Christ will profit you nothing.  
3) And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. (NKJV)*

If you've done that, it's fine but it's not an end unto itself. No cause to get all self-righteous about it, because you've done something in the law; "Boy, I'm great." But do the rest, keep the spiritual intent too, that's what Paul is getting at here.

*4) You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (NKJV)*

The Greek for *estranged* here means "useless"—it means that they have become "severed" or "alienated" from Christ because of that approach they had. That of law keeping, strict law keeping, while ignoring the spiritual intent of the law. Notice too that it never says anywhere in all of this that God's law is not important, it is just the way it's being used. It's that one-sided, legalistic application of the law and that was what was being demonstrated in this congregation. In Galatians 6 it is still the context of all this.

**Galatians 6:12** *As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, [that identifies who it's talking about] only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. (NKJV)*

In other words, they didn't really want to keep the spirit of the law, just strictly the letter of the law. The emphasis was on the strict law keeping. That was necessary—that included all the do's and don'ts and all the punishments.

*13) For not even those who are circumcised keep the law ... (NKJV)*

Christ said they ignored the weightier matters of the law.

*13 continued) ... but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. (NKJV)*

It elevated them and their self-righteous, superior self-image. Continuing in Galatians 5:5 this time.

**Galatians 5:5** *For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. (NKJV)*

Not just keeping the letter of the law.

*6) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. (NKJV)*

Paul, reflecting Christ's example, gives us a lot of instruction in our attitude and approach. I would like to go back to Galatians 6 and break that down a little bit. I like the Amplified version of this because it makes it so plain. I'm one of these people who has twenty or thirty translations in my software, so I get to bounce around.

*Galatians 6:1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any sin ... (AMP)*

Sometimes just misconduct; unfortunately, in misconduct one thing just leads to another. Somebody who knows about it and sometimes we do. Sometimes we wish we didn't know about it. But there is a way to handle it.

*1 continued) ... you who are spiritual [that is, you who are responsive to the guidance of the Spirit] are to restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness ... (AMP)*

*Restore* is interesting in the translation from the Greek because in the Greek, it's a medical term. It's akin to "restoring a broken arm or leg—a disjointed limb". The point is, there is something in the body that is broken and needs fixing.

*1 continued) ... [not with a sense of superiority or self-righteousness], [That sense of superiority that the Scribes and Pharisees had, just the opposite] keeping a watchful eye on yourself, so that you are not tempted as well. (AMP)*

Sometimes if a person has a superior attitude, they think they have some kind of spiritual Kevlar (a strong, heat resistant synthetic fiber); they are not tempted like the rest of the people are—they are somehow above that. That's not true, it says "*maintain that spirit of gentleness*".

*2) Carry one another's burdens and in this way, you will fulfill the requirements of the law of Christ (the Messiah) and complete what is lacking [that is, the law of Christian love]. (AMP)*

We know His example in this. Complete what is lacking; we all have faults and shortcomings aplenty.

*3) For if anyone thinks he is something [special] when [in fact] he is nothing [which in reality is what we are without God's Holy Spirit] [special except in his own eyes], he deceives himself. (AMP)*

Like the Pharisees were; they were blind to their own problems. That's also in verse 7; "*Do not be deceived because God is not mocked, whatever man's sows is what he is going to reap.*"

*4) But each one must carefully scrutinize his own work ... (AMP)*

If we do that correctly, we are measuring that with Christ's example. We know what God wants from us and we give God the credit for that. We do not assume that we are so righteous that we can do things by ourselves. We should be thankful to God for being patient with us while we are learning all of this stuff.

*4 continued) ... [examining his actions, attitudes, and behavior], and then he can have the personal satisfaction and inner joy of doing something commendable without comparing himself to another. (AMP)*

In other words, you do something right and you give the credit where it belongs.

*5) For every person will have to bear [with patience] his own burden. (AMP)*

We are going to be judged on an individual basis for what we do, for our conduct, our attitude and approach in all these things. The whole point Paul is making here is, if you are genuinely concerned about someone, you will approach that person with that right attitude and a right spirit of gentleness and meekness. Or you won't really help the person. Too often what happens, when someone sets out to help other people, they tend to think they are someone special. We've seen that in the church in the past. Philippians 2:3, *esteem others better than yourself* but it turns out to be an exercise in ego inflated vanity and pride. They think, "I'm the one who helped this person, they need me, I can straighten them out, I can help them with their problems, I have my life together".

We had an example of that when we first came into the church. We were DNR—if you don't know what that means, then good. In any case, my wife Marie was by herself, five kids and 2 teenagers at the time. One lady at the church took it upon herself to give Marie child rearing advice—unsolicited, the best kind. Marie didn't appreciate it. It was a superior approach and this lady has passed on now—I would never mention her name—but it turns out that in her case, her children didn't turn out so well. What Paul is saying, getting back to what he said, there is a difference between helping people follow God's law of love, exemplified by Christ and His attitude and His approach and that of a superior attitude demonstrated by the Scribes and Pharisees. That's the lesson in all of this.

As we read in Galatians 6, prove or change yourself first. Work on yourself first. There is an example in pre-marital counseling that says, "Don't try to change the other person; your soon to be maid." Kind of the same thing, the same principle, if you're going to help the other person, the point being work on yourself first, work on your problems first. Yes, you can influence people, you can help people, hopefully with biblical principles, but any time you try to change people into being like you are, they may suffer the same problems you're going to suffer. See what the point is? You can't change someone into being like you. It becomes a bad situation. They may bear the same burden you will.

Another example for marriage—if you have marriage problems and don't work on them first, how can you help someone else that maybe just needs encouragement in their marriage.

To summarize these lessons in these two attitudes and approaches.

First lesson is: Don't take the same approach and attitude these Scribes and Pharisees did in John 8.

In this simple incident—seems simple on the surface, until we look into it. Don't throw stones at other sinners, which is nothing more than a superior approach. That is saying they just needed to be punished and they deserved it anyway. Help them if you can, but don't take that attitude that they deserved to be stoned. It's like that saying, "hang them, it will teach them a lesson". That's not going to help anyone.

The second lesson from all this is: Jesus' approach and His attitude.

Which basically is, repentance brings peace. Remember what he told the woman in the end? Go and sin no more. He knew that the solution for her was to recognize her sin and change her life. Unfortunately, some people will go to other people and try to impress someone, kind of like these Scribes and Pharisees did in trying to trip up Christ (they were way outmatched on that score but they tried it anyway). It's much better if the person who is helped understands what sin is doing to their life. That's what we are going to be doing in the future. To help people establish and develop a relationship with God which cause blessings in their lives. It brings a peace to their lives. That's the way people need to be helped.

Let's look at example of adultery in the Old Testament. Turn to Proverbs, a familiar area. Proverbs 6, we know where we're going, seven things God hates; we're going to break into the context.

**Proverbs 6:16** *These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:*

*17) A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood,*

*18) A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil,*

*19) A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.*

*(NKJV)*

When you think about it, the Pharisees were guilty of all of these; everyone one of them. It goes on in verse 20. We know there are two sides of this—a physical and spiritual side to these words.

*20) My son, keep your father's command, And do not forsake the law of your mother. (NKJV)*

It's advice on how to live your life. God's law brings peace and it protects you both physically and spiritually.

*21) Bind them continually upon your heart; Tie them around your neck. (NKJV)*

Our behaviors are like something we wear. We put these “clothes” on every day. Maybe to cover up our human nature, among other things. Spiritually we should put on those behaviors every day.

*22) When you roam, they will lead you; When you sleep, they will keep you; And when you awake, they will speak with you. (NKJV)*

In other words, they speak to your conscience and guide you like a lamp as it says in the next verse.

*23) For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life ... (NKJV)*

There is just a reference over in James 2:10.

**James 2:10** *For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.*

*11) 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. (NKJV)*

Back to James 1:13, I like this one from the New Living Version.

**James 1:13** *And remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, “God is tempting me.” God is never tempted to do wrong and he never tempts anyone else.*

*14) Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. (NLT)*

That’s the way it works; it will pull us in little by little and the next thing you know we are up to it to our eyeballs.

*15) These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death. (NLT)*

It takes place in the mind first—it’s what is inside. I remember this cute story of this balloon salesman. He had his tank of helium and was blowing up balloons to let them go—I think it was at a carnival or something. A little colored boy came along and he tugged on the arm of the salesman. and said,

“If you inflated a black balloon, would it go up?”

The salesman looked at him with a lot of compassion and said,

“It’s what is inside the balloon that makes it go up.”

It's what is inside us that is important. Back to Proverbs 6.

**Proverbs 6:26** *For by means of a harlot A man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life.*  
27) *Can a man take fire to his bosom, And his clothes not be burned?* (NKJV)

You can't snuggle up to sin, you can't snuggle up to a fire.

28) *Can one walk on hot coals, And his feet not be seared?*  
29) *So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; Whoever touches her shall not be innocent.* (NKJV)

That's talking about adultery and we know we can do that spiritually too, that's a different sermon.

*Continuing in verse 32.*

32) *Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; He who does so destroys his own soul.* (NKJV)

The point being, when it says *lacks understanding*, it means a person doesn't realize or acknowledge how much he or she is hurting the other person, as well as many others. There are many others involved usually in that kind of affair. There are families, spouses—everything. Lastly the adulterer himself destroys his own soul. There's pain, there's suffering, there's guilt. We could say this person is going to be reduced to a crust of bread—a crumb. I had an example that I wish I didn't have. I knew a man once who was bragging to me—I don't know why—trying to impress people, telling me about having an affair with a woman. I knew the woman he was bragging about it. I usually don't tell people exactly what I think but I was thinking in my mind what a jerk he was for not only doing that, but to be telling other people about it. If that wasn't bad enough, then he said the woman broke the affair off because she was sitting watching TV with her family one night, looked at her husband and her kids and said this great cloud of guilt settled down on her because she had realized what she had done. Betrayed her husband, betrayed everything and she felt crummy. She allowed herself to be seduced and she regretted that. That's a sad story.

If you're going to help somebody, it's not to say, what does the law demand of this person? Or how can the law punish this person? How can we teach them to face as many consequences as possible so they will obey God? That's not how it works. You think back to how Christ helped this woman in the example in John 8. He would rather teach her how to understand not to hurt herself and maybe have more self-respect so that maybe she wouldn't commit that sin again. That was His point and the point of the story. That's a lot better than some religious leader trying to gain mileage with their peers by looking down on someone. (Remember they were perfectly willing to kill her—cold blooded and heartless.) Christ was more concerned—more about the attitude we should have too—how to help her with her needs in a way that she doesn't stoop to that



tragic sin again. Sin just ravages us when we commit those kinds of things. His desire was to help her understand God's law as something that can and does make someone happy and brings peace. That's opposed to just being punished.

Sometimes in the past, unfortunately I think many have been guilty of this. We have this mentality that when we hear about the millennium and what we're going to be doing as kings and priests knowing all this information about God's law, we can't wait to set the world straight. We've had that approach in the past. We just have to show them how special we are. Take Christ's approach by asking, how can we help people understand the harm sin does in their lives? How can we help them so they will be blessed and find peace? When you think about that, that's a job description for kings and priests in the millennium. How to help people understand what sin does to their lives.

We need to remember a couple of scriptures. 1 John 1, we always have to look at things from the perspective of our own human nature. What we battle and struggle against all the time, before we think that we have the ability to know what people need rather than what God wants them to have. We know the context here is the basis for fellowship with Christ.

**1 John 1:5** *This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.*

*6) If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. (NKJV)*

Remember the hatred and lies of those Scribes and Pharisees.

*7) But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

*8) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' (NKJV)*

In a purely physical sense, we are no better than anyone else no matter how special we think we are—we just are not.

*9) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

*10) If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (NKJV)*

We're going to have to some opportunities one of these days, hopefully in the not too distant future. Wouldn't it be better, if given the opportunity to encourage people to confess their sins—not to us—but to God rather than punish people, euphemistically to stone them, so that they might receive forgiveness. That will give them great blessings and peace. People are sinning and the world doesn't have peace, they really don't. There is no peace there. Wouldn't it be better to help people draw close to God and Jesus Christ and get rid of their unrighteousness? Then they could take on more and

more of the righteousness of God's character. Wouldn't it be better if we could influence people to find that peace? How much better off would they be than if we just "drop the hammer" on them? Will there be punishment in the millennium? Sure, there will be; someone mentioned the other day, Zechariah 14, just as a reference. I'll read that. The context here in Zechariah 14:18 and 19, is that all nations will learn to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

**Zechariah 14:18** *If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.*

*19) This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. (NKJV)*

As Rick was saying on the first day, it's rebellion. Even in that, if you look at it, there is still an element of mercy when you think about it. God could wipe them out; He did that to the earth once. The question then becomes, if we are going to become teachers for 1000 years and instruct people in God's ways, how are we going to do that? What kind of attitude and approach are we going to have? How to punish people? Or how to teach people to live the way God intended?

Two closing scriptures; these scriptures show what God wants for all mankind.  
2 Peter 3:9.

**2 Peter 3:9** *The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us [and aren't we thankful], not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. (NKJV)*

If you notice, Lord here is kurios with a definite article so that means it's referring to the Father. The point is it's coming from the top, God Himself, the supreme authority who is not willing that any should perish. It adds emphasis to 2 Corinthians—my very last scripture—2 Corinthians 1:3, from the New Living Translation.

**2 Corinthians 1:3** *All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. (NLT)*

Various translations will say, *merciful, mercies, compassionate*. Yes, we can have those qualities somewhat as human beings, but it's talking about mercy on a God plane, not on a human plane. It speaks to God's perfect, holy, righteous character. Changing people from the inside rather than punishing people is what God the Father and Christ really want. That's their attitude and approach. So, we have these lessons in scripture which tell us and show us these things. Someday, when we are changed, then we can truly help people understand and overcome sin in their lives. That should be our goal. As spirit beings, we will have the same attitude and approach that Christ had, as He did the will of His Father. Rather than punish people and euphemistically stone them, we will be able to say with Him—remember what He said whenever people were taken over with sin—*"neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more"*.