

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



John 8:32 and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

**January  
27  
2019**

## DON'T BE LIKE PHARAOH

Jim Stauffer

It is said of Pharaoh during the 10 plagues God sent to that land and people, ...*Pharaoh's heart was hardened, ...he hardened his heart, ...And the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart* - **Ex. 7:22; 8:15; 9:12**. In each case he was told of the specific calamity that was to come and yet he refused both before it came and after, to let God's people leave the land. Finally the 10th plague, the death of the firstborn was inflicted upon his people and he relented and in fact insisted Moses lead his people out of the land.

It is both easy and appropriate to view this today as the equivalent of God's promises to us of salvation (*continuing prosperity in Pharaoh's case*), or eternal condemnation (*the plagues sent to Egypt*) dependent upon our response to the message of promise.

Jesus says, *Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest*. (**Mat. 11:28**) We learn further this relationship we develop with God and Christ in the interest of salvation contains the promise of salvation from the condemnation our sin has already brought upon us (**Eph. 2:1-5**).

We further learn from His revelation of the promise, the demands of faithfulness of those who would be called His children, yea His disciples (**Mat. 10:28; Rev. 2:10; 2 Tim. 4:7,8**).

This recognition on our part leads us to put aside the things of the world, knowing their temporal nature and how God disdains that in His disciples (**1 John 2:15-17**). But then Pharaoh knew after just a couple of the plagues Moses was empowered by a God Pharaoh did not know but whose power he had already seen. So, we ask, why did he continue to suffer at the hand of God in the face of this knowledge?

Maybe we can see the answer to Pharaoh's conduct by looking in the mirror. Pharaoh was hearing God's message from His prophet, Moses, but would then turn away and not heed what he was told. We see this in the disciples of Christ as James warns, *"For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has*

*looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was."* (**Jas. 1:23,24**)

Brethren, when we allow ourselves to forsake God's commands to us we become hearers of His word but not doers. Jesus says, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments."* (**John 14:15**)

In cases like this we become as Pharaoh and seek to enjoy the pleasures we value greatest instead of what God calls for us to do. We disdain His commands and demonstrate a lack of love for Him. As a result we deserve just what Pharaoh received, the judgment of God as promised in His word.

### WIDOWS INDEED # 2

*"Honor widows who are really widows. But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day. But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. And these things command, that they may be blameless. But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever"* (**1 Timothy 5:3-8**).

Widows who are really widows deserve some attention. They deserve honor, respect, and deference. Why? Because of the way they have lived before the Lord and before all. Just as the qualifications of an elder are obviously on display, so, too, the life and conduct of these widows is without question. They are without relatives or children to care for them. If, though, the widow has family members that can step in and help, they should do so. Children have the obligation to care for their aged parents when they need help.

**1 Timothy 5:16** says: *"If any believing [man or woman] has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the*

*church be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.”* The church and the family have been given specific responsibilities.

The good life of the widow indeed sets a good example for all. The true widow is left alone or desolate. That is OK because she finds trust in God; that is where her hope is. Her faith in God is demonstrated in her prayer life; she is following Paul's words in **1 Timothy 2:1-2**. On the other hand, some of these widows may be living in pleasure; they are giving themselves to the fleshly, bodily appetites. She is alive but she is dead. The *widow indeed* emphasizes her relationship to God; this is her ultimate fulfillment. She is not seeking fulfillment in the sinful, fleshly pleasures of this life.

So, Timothy is to teach and command these instructions with a view toward blamelessness. Remember that an elder in God's church must be without blame; he must be without the hint of any scandal or blemish. So, too, the widow indeed must so order her life. When she does this, she is recognized as a faithful child of God; she is marked out for special care; she deserves it; this care must be lovingly given.

What about those family members who have the obligation to step in and help but will not do so? What if they take no thought for their loved ones? This person has denied the faith. The faith in this case refers to the gospel, the faith once for all delivered (**Acts 6:7; Jude 3**). This person is an infidel. They are, practically speaking, without faith. In fact, they have fallen below even the standards of the heathen.

What does this all mean? It means that the early church was concerned about each other; they were supposed to have care and concern for every member of the body. In a godless society, the household of God was to set the better example regarding the care of each family member. Elders were to be (are to be) men who rule well their own households; in turn, they help in the management of the church. Every member of the body is important; no member should be excluded from needed care. Order can only exist when we do what God says to do.

**Randy Harshbarger**

## Be Not Deceived!

Among the most important phrases of the Scripture is the title of this article: Be Not Deceived! God does not want anyone to be led into error and falsehood and that is why this phrase is used so often in scripture, four times in the New Testament along with like phrases such as **Colossians 2:4**, *“This I say, that no one may delude you with persuasiveness of speech.”* And warnings such as that found in **Matthew 24:11** about false prophets who will *“lead many astray”*. Warnings

such as these, and many others, show our God interested in leading His people in truth.

In line with the desire for truth is the need for preachers to speak out on those who misuse the word of God to further their own agenda. There have always been those who try to appear to be ‘good’ by identifying with God's word in some way. So it is today with our ‘Socialists’ and ‘Democratic Socialists’ who appeal to the example of Jesus as justification for their political goals and saddling their ideas on the population.

1. Socialism is inherently atheistic. Everywhere it has been implemented there has been an almost immediate persecution of Christianity: Russia, Nazi (National Socialist Party) Germany, China, North Viet Nam, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania etc. That which is inherently atheistic cannot be endorsed by Jesus or the scriptures.

2. In **Acts 5** we see that even in the face of genuine need there was still respect for private property. In questioning Ananias about his contribution for the poor, about which he had lied, Peter observes, *“While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power?”* **Acts 5:4**. Socialism NEVER RESPECTS PRIVATE OWNERSHIP! But God does!.

**Cleveland R. Reddinger Jr.**

## Christians Need to Be More Judgmental of Each Other by Shane Scott

*What?!?!? More judgmental? Shane, have you lost your mind?!? Everyone knows that Jesus said we are not supposed to judge each other. “Judge not lest ye be judged!” And see, I even quoted it King James style just to let you know I’m really angry!!*

If I may slip a word in edgewise, let me explain what I mean by “judgmental.” I don’t mean hyper-critical, or hypo-critical, but I do mean critical – critical in the sense of holding each other accountable when we need it. And it turns out, that’s what Jesus meant as well. Look at the full context of the verse you quoted- *Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.* (**Matthew 7:1-5**)

Was Jesus condemning all “speck removal”? Not at all. In fact, Jesus quite plainly says that he wants us to be able to see clearly enough to take the speck out of



our brother's eye. But what Jesus was condemning was a hypocritical mindset that is eager to point out the mistakes in the lives of others while self-righteously ignoring the glaring problems in our own life.

We know for certain that Jesus was *not* opposed to making *any* judgments. In the very next verse, he insists that we make a very serious judgment: *Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you. (Matthew 7:6)*

Who are "dogs" and who are "pigs"? We have to decide – judge – who fits this description.

A few verses later, Jesus goes on to say that we must discriminate between right and wrong choices to make: *Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. (Matthew 7:13-14)*

And in the next breath, he warns about the insidious danger of false prophets, who we must distinguish from those who teach the truth- *Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. (Matthew 7:15-16)*

Taken in its broader context, Jesus' statement that we should not judge simply cannot mean that we are never to make critical judgments about a person's character, or about certain beliefs, or about choices in life. What Jesus is teaching is that we must do so from a profoundly humble posture that has as its first impulse careful introspection rather than careless criticism. But just as surely as a speck in the eye needs to be removed before it causes permanent harm, we need to help each other confront the mistakes we have made before those mistakes cause greater damage. Here's how Paul expresses the point: *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. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal. 6:1-2)*

Like Jesus, Paul says that we should help heal or restore a brother who has slipped into sin (has a speck in the eye). And like Jesus, Paul says that we should do so having first examined our own behavior (*"keep watch on yourself"*), guarding against prideful self-righteousness (*"lest you too be tempted"*). But the bottom line is the same. In the right spirit, and with the right motives, we need to call each other to account. According to Paul, this is a measure of whether we are truly *"spiritual."*

I'm convinced that the root problem with many of the hot-button issues prevalent in our culture right now is the refusal of professed Christians to hold each other accountable. For instance, the generation that is younger than me really struggles with the clear biblical teaching that same-sex actions are sinful. It seems

arbitrary to them for this one behavior to be singled out as sinful. But same-sex conduct is not singled out for censure. ANY sexual relationship outside of the one man + one woman for life relationship of marriage is sinful. When the Pharisees came to Jesus to ask him about divorce, here's how Jesus answered the question:

*"Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but **ONE** flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. (Matthew 19:4-6)*

According to Jesus, God's design is the inseparable *"one flesh"* relationship of a man and woman in marriage. Since divorce violates this design, Jesus condemns it, and says that remarriage after divorce (with one exception) constitutes adultery: *And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery. (Matthew 19:9)* So does this mean that homosexual acts are sinful? Yes. But it also means that premarital sex, extra marital sex, and divorce and remarriage are wrong as well. The reason that the biblical injunctions against homosexual conduct seem arbitrary is because far too many professed Christians have been arbitrary in what they have taught and practiced. Christians who wink at sex outside of marriage or casually engage in serial divorce and remarriage but suddenly draw the line at homosexuality aren't living by conviction; they are just bigots.

Similarly, how many Christians object to the horror of abortion as an affront to the sacred value of human life while at the same time harboring prejudice toward others merely because their skin is a different color? Have we held each other accountable for racial prejudice, or have we just swept it under the rug? Aborting a fetus is wrong because that human being bears the image of God. But what about hurling racial epithets? *With [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. (James 3:9-10)* We can't claim to stand for the dignity of human life while despising and denigrating human beings whose skin is a different shade than our own.

Brothers and sisters, the world can see through our inconsistencies. And above all, the Lord who judges the thoughts and intents of our heart can see through us **(Hebrews 4:12-13)**. The answer is not to surrender to the culture and walk away from the standards of God's revealed truth. The answer is for us to be more consistent, to hold each other to greater accountability, to *"judge"* each other with a deeper and holier love for God and one another.

*Let us be reminded to pray for those we support who are preaching in other areas of this country and also of the world. Remember to pray for Kyle Bennett in Boston Ma., Matt Hodge in Marshfield, Mo. and Cleveland Reddinger in El Dorado, Ks. Overseas we need to remember, Wilfredo Pelino and Jonathan Sapitula in the Philippines as well as Moses Tivane and Francisco Vascob in Mozambique.*

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7845 Cottonwood Dr.

Lenexa, Kansas 66216

913-764-9170

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## ***What Must I Do To Be Saved?***

**Hear** the gospel - Romans 10:17

**Believe** in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

**Repent** of sins - Acts 17:30

**Confess** Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

**Be Baptized** for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

**Be Faithful** unto death - Revelation 2:10