

Double Standards

Joe Slater

Jesus never approved of sin, but He directed His most severe criticism toward people with double standards. His withering denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees stemmed from their shameless, two-faced behavior. “*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!*” (Matthew 23:13). Those experts in the Law were quite accomplished at telling others what to do; their own behavior, however, wouldn’t pass the smell test.

King David understood that God’s Law applied to him just as it did to his subjects. David was far from flawless (witness that awful episode of adultery with Bathsheba and murder to try to cover it up). To rebuke him for those sins, Nathan told David a parable about a greedy rich man who stole a pet lamb from his poor neighbor. The rich man slaughtered that lamb to feed a guest.

Nathan’s story gave David just enough rope to hang himself! The indignant king pledged to execute the rich man for being so heartless and cruel (2 Samuel 12:3). Then came Nathan’s immortal words: “*You are the man!*” (v. 7). To his credit, David owned up to his sin and repented, rather than acting like God’s commands against adultery and murder applied to others, but not to himself.

Why is it so easy for me to see your faults, but to ignore the same (or worse) shortcomings in myself? Jesus warned of this danger: “*Judge not, that you be not judged*” (Matthew 7:1). While many abuse this text as though it forbids all judging, context shows the Lord was dealing with unrighteous, hypocritical judgment. Until I get the plank out of my own eye, what business do I have criticizing you for the speck of sawdust in your eye? (vv. 3-5).

Brother Roy Lanier, Sr., used to tell us preacher boys: “What’s sauce for the goose ought to be at least salad dressing for the gander.” God shows no partiality; neither should we. God’s word applies to me just as it does to you.

Four Score And More

“Instead, you ought to say, ‘If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that’” (James 4:15).

I was recently given a coin that appeared to be different from the rest. I looked closer and noticed the mint date on the coin was 1941. I studied the coin for a moment, amazed by the fact that it was eighty-one years of age. Statistics indicate that the average circulation life of an American coin is thirty years, which means this coin has defied the odds by a country mile. In fact, the coin is in extremely good condition for its age.

I can only imagine the places this coin has been since 1941. I wonder how many have held it and what may have been purchased with it during the past eight decades. While thinking about it, my mind went to Psalm 90:10 and how the writer describes a person’s years as “three score and ten” (seventy) or even “fourscore” (eighty) by way of careful living. Presently, I’m knocking on the door of “three score,” which makes the thought of three score and ten rather sobering!

Every living person has a “circulation life,” whether we realize it or not. The writer of Hebrews tells of the final appointment that no one will miss (9:27). Healthier living may grant some the ability to push it out or take a temporary raincheck, but this day will eventually come for everyone. Some have a short period of time on Earth, while others will defy the odds. Regardless, the best choice is to be prepared to meet the Lord when the recall date finally comes.

--Kenny Westmoreland (Celina, TN)

Instead of working hard to make ends meet, work on having fewer ends.

--Courtney Carver (via Facebook)

Are You In The Right Hands?

“*O Lord, you are our Father, we are the clay and you are the potter, we are all the work of you hand*” (Isaiah 64:8).

Most people spend a lifetime shackled by the past. Why? Could it be that they are letting the wrong set of hands and the wrong set of circumstances determine their worth? As a master potter, good shepherd, and creator, God wants to take our lives and make the most out of them. The heavenly Father wants to reveal to us what we were really created for.

Phillip Keller wrote a book entitled “Lessons From A Sheep Dog: A True Story of Transforming Love.” In the wrong hands, Lass, a border collie, was shackled and growling. On the ranch, a transformation took place in the dog’s life; she began to work the sheep with the excitement and usefulness for which she was created.

People without God working in their life are like Lass. They live a shackled life without any purpose and direction. Life becomes a mere existence for them. In the hands of Satan you are going to find an empty life. In the hands of God you are going to find purpose and joy. At times, Phillip said he had to discipline Lass when she lost focus. After Lass got the message, Phillip would reassure her that everything was fine. God disciplines us too on occasion, but his loves never fails or fades.

Is your life in the right hands? Are you living up to the potential for which God created you? If you are, then you are headed in the right direction, and everything is going to be just fine.

--Roger Holm (Tijeras, NM)