



Spirit of Grace Herald

The Ministry of Dennis
& Benedicta Pollock

June, 2022

Spirit of Grace Ministries

P.O. Box 2068
McKinney, TX 75070
(530) 712-4253

Email: grace@spiritofgrace.org

“Who Are We To Condemn?”

Sometimes, if Christians become critical of a particular behavior or person, another Christian may ask: "Who are we to condemn?" So today we will consider: "Is there ever a cause for Christians to condemn anyone for anything?" Or should we simply recite "There but for the grace of God go I" after every despicable behavior, and following every heinous deed? Should Americans in the 1940's have said about Adolf Hitler, "Who am I to condemn this man?" Are we to be like the proverbial monkeys who cover their eyes, ears, and mouths... See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil?

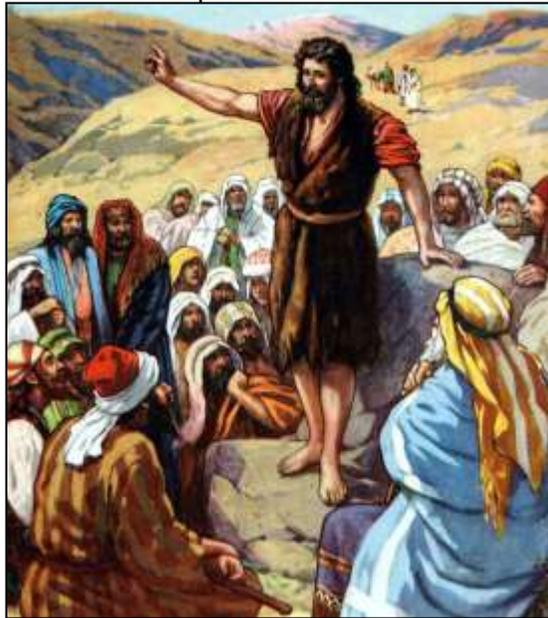
Most people would instinctively recognize that this cannot possibly be the case. And certainly, if we look at the Bible, we do not gain the impression that God's servants never opened their mouths to criticize anyone.

In Psalm 15 we are given a description of a godly man. This man "walks uprightly," he "works righteousness," and he does not "backbite with his tongue." But in the middle of this short Psalm, we read a puzzling statement. The Scripture says of a godly man: "In whose eyes a vile person is despised." So a righteous or godly man

or woman looks at a "vile person," one who behaves immorally, judges their behavior as vile and wicked, and despises the person, or at least, their lifestyle.

The idea that we are to be so morally blind or so tolerant that we cannot ever say anything negative about monstrous and evil behavior certainly does not come from the Bible. In the Old Testament there were men, called by God, whose job it was to be professional, spiritual critics. These men were called prophets. Isaiah was one of them. He declared:

**Alas, sinful nation,
A people laden with iniquity,
A brood of evildoers,
Children who are corrupters! (Isaiah 1:4)**



To condemn or judge a behavior or a lifestyle is to evaluate it, analyze it, and conclude that this behavior or lifestyle is evil and displeasing to God. Should we ever do this? Of course we should. Since we are called to live a life pleasing to God, we must be able to discern between what pleases God and what displeases Him.

John the Baptist condemned King Herod, saying "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." Stephen condemned the men who had gathered to him and were ready to stone him, saying, "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did,

so do you!" (Acts 7:51). When Elymas the sorcerer tried to encourage the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, not to listen to Paul as he shared the gospel, the apostle said to him, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?" (Acts 13:10). James condemned the rich landowners who refused to pay their workers their wages, saying, "Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten..." (James 5:1).

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These anointed men of God did not say, "Who am I to condemn?" They spoke out forcefully and called men to task for their sins. The apostle Paul declared that if there were men in the church who were sexually immoral or drunkards, they should be put out of the church. Some people might call that judgmental; Paul saw it as necessary church discipline.

Sadly, today we have so diluted the truth, and become so tolerant of sin, so insipid, so bland, so spiritually weak, that we have deluded ourselves into thinking that we are never supposed to evaluate sin or rebuke it in anybody. And if we don't rebuke sin, who in the world will? We certainly will not hear much moral outrage from the ungodly, whose motto is always, "You live your truth; I'll live mine."

Our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, took sin seriously, so seriously that He knew He must die on the cross for our sins, that we might be forgiven. He blasted hypocrisy, and He called us to be a holy people – and a prophetic people who will serve as the conscience of our world. Jesus was not crucified because He went around telling people they had a great destiny, and they were all winners.

Jesus spoke out very specifically about the sins of His day. He could weep, but He could also whip. He loved the world far too much than to go around spouting platitudes about how wonderful we are, and how much potential we have. He called men and women to a radical lifestyle of faith, obedience, and self-denial. And He promised that if we would put our faith in Him and embrace the godly lifestyle that inevitably accompanies genuine faith, we will live forever.

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