

## Pearls Before Swine

One of the strangest and more controversial statements Jesus ever made is found in Matthew 7:6.

MAT 7:6 "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

1. The construction of this statement has several possibilities.

a. The order may be dogs, pigs, pigs, dogs.

MAT 7:6 "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they [the swine] trample them under their feet, and [the dogs] turn and tear you to pieces.

b. The order may be dogs, swine, dogs and swine.

MAT 7:6 "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they [swine, dogs] trample them under their feet, and [swine, dogs] turn and tear you to pieces.

1) It is the swine, and perhaps the dogs, that will trample the pearls beneath their feet.

2) It is the dogs, and perhaps the swine, that will turn and bite the hand that fed them, even if it fed them 'holy' flesh.

2. Swine and dogs were considered unclean by Jews (2 Pet. 2:22), but the uncleanness is not the point here.

a. "Dogs" (kuon, **koo** ohn) were wild scavengers that would eat anything.

1) The dog referred to in the Scriptures is invariably the unclean animal so familiar in the streets of all oriental cities. He is a cowardly, lazy, despised creature. He eats garbage, dead animals (EXO 22:31), human flesh (1KI 14:11), and blood (1KI 22:38). His is the lowest type of vileness (2SA 3:8; ISA 66:3). Dogs wander through the streets (PSA 59:6, 14). With all their cowardice they are treacherous and violent. (PSA 22:16, 20). The only good thing said of them is that they watch the flocks (JOB 30:1; ISA 56:10-11).

2) Christ compares the Gentiles to them (MAT 15:26), and those who are shut out of heaven are called dogs (REV 22:15). The price of a dog (DEU 23:18) probably refers to sodomy. The return of a fool to his folly is compared to one of the most disgusting of the many filthy habits of the dog (PRO 26:11; 2PE 2:22).

3) See Matt. 15:26; Phil. 3:2; Rev. 22:15 - used as metaphor for sinful.

MAT 15:26 And He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

PHI 3:2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision;

REV 22:15 Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying. **Unger's Bible Dictionary**

b. "Swine" (choiros, **koi** rahs)

1) Most Jews would not keep swine, but some ignored the law on the subject. (Matt. 8:30-34).

MAT 8:30 Now there was at a distance from them a herd of many swine feeding.

MAT 8:31 And the demons began to entreat Him, saying, "If You are going to cast us out, send us into the herd of swine."

MAT 8:32 And He said to them, "Begone!" And they came out, and went into the swine, and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and perished in the waters.

MAT 8:33 And the herdsmen ran away, and went to the city, and reported everything, including the incident of the demoniacs.

MAT 8:34 And behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus; and when they saw Him, they entreated Him to depart from their region.

2) The hog is regarded by Muslims with no less loathing than by Jews. Many oriental Christians share this feeling, while others raise swine and eat freely of its flesh. The Jews in Christ's time had come to ignore their own law on this subject (MAT 8:30-34), as had some of their ancestors who ate pork (ISA 66:17).  
**Unger's Bible Dictionary**

3) LUK 8:32 Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and the demons entreated Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission.

4) **Prodigal son** reached the epitome of disgrace when he ended up in the hog pen and was ready to eat the food of swine. (Lk. 15:15, 16).

LUK 15:15 "And he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

LUK 15:16 "And he was longing to fill his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.

3. **The general sense of the saying is clear.**

a. Objects of value should not be offered to those who are incapable of appreciating them.

b. Swine and dogs have no appreciation of valuable things or holy things.

1) Holy flesh, the flesh of sacrificial animals, would never be appreciated by dogs.

2) Pigs or dogs would despise pearls because they could not be eaten.

3) Dogs were given unclean food. (Exod. 22:31).

c. It is obvious Jesus was not talking about literal swine and dogs.

• It is interesting that the kingdom of God is compared to a "pearl of great price." (Matt. 13:45, 46).

- Men recognize the value of pearls, not swine or dogs.
- Surplus sacrificial food was burned with fire.

### **What Was Jesus Talking About?**

1. Jesus is talking about men - not swine, dogs.
2. Jesus, at times, used some very harsh language.
  - a. Here He called some “swine” and “dogs.”
  - b. He called some “wolves.” (Matt. 7:15).
  - c. He called some “hypocrites” (Matt. 7:5; 23:13, 14, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29).
  - d. He called some “blind guides”. (Matt. 23:16).
  - e. He called some “serpents” and “brood of vipers”. (Matt. 23:33).
  - f. He called some “fools” and “blind men.” (Matt. 23:17, 19, 24).
- **John the Baptist** also used strong language to refer to those who were impenitent - “You brood of vipers.” (Matt. 3:7, 8).
3. The passage comes immediately after Jesus cautioned against judging. (Matt. 7:1-5).

MAT 7:1 "Do not judge lest you be judged.

MAT 7:2 "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

MAT 7:3 "And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

MAT 7:4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?

MAT 7:5 "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.

- a. The words of Matthew 7:6 show Jesus did not condemn all judging.
- b. The words of Matthew 7:15 also show Jesus did not condemn all judging.

MAT 7:15 "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

- c. The words of Matthew 7:20 also mean we are to judge other and avoid some because of “their works.”

### **Note:**

- The church is to withdraw from the ungodly. (1 Cor. 5:1-11).

- The civil government has the right to exercise judgement on evil doers. (Rom. 13:1-7).
  - Elders were to stop the mouths of false teachers. (Tit. 1:9-13).
  - Elders were to protect the flock. (Acts 20:28-30).
4. Jesus did not apply this to Samaritans and Gentiles.
- a. The Jews often called these men dogs, but Jesus is not calling all Samaritans and Gentiles dogs and swine.
  - b. He did send the apostles “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Matt. 10:6).
  - c. Jesus did preach to both Gentiles and Samaritans. (Jn. 4:5-45; Matt. 15:21-28).
5. He did not apply it to all sinners. (Lk. 19:10).
- a. He reached out to the worse of men.
  - b. He preached to publicans and sinners.

LUK 15:1 Now all the tax-gatherers and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. :2 And both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

- c. The parallelism of 7:6 shows Jesus had in mind one type of men, not two. It is unsafe and unfounded to make dogs represent one kind of men, and swine another.

## Meaning Of Jesus

1. The words of Jesus here do not mean we are to prejudge people as swine and dogs.
  - a. The disciples were encouraged to cast off the dust from their feet from those who would not receive them. (Matt. 10:13, 14).
  - 1) Examples from the book of Acts. (Acts 13:45, 46; 18:6).

ACT 13:45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming. 46 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

ACT 18:6 And when they resisted and blasphemed, he [Paul] shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads! I am clean. From now on I [Paul] shall go to the Gentiles."

- 2) These scriptures reveal that judgment came after evil actions and rejection of the truth. (Rom. 16:17, 18; Phil. 3:18, 19; 1 Tim. 6:5).

ROM 16:17 Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

ROM 16:18 For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

PHI 3:18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,

PHI 3:19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.

1TI 6:3 If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness,

1TI 6:4 he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions,

1TI 6:5 and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

- b. Jesus expects His disciples to make an effort first to convert or change others - not prejudice and avoid them.
- c. We must preach the gospel to every creature. (Mk. 16:15; Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8). See 1 Cor. 6:9, 10.
- d. Men manifest themselves to be dogs and swine by rejecting the gospel and retaining their vicious, filthy, wicked nature.

2. Jesus refused to impart His message to Herod Antipas. (Lk. 23:8, 9).

LUK 23:8 Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.

LUK 23:9 And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.

3. He also refused to answer the insincere Pharisees upon occasions. (Matt. 15:2, 3; 21:23-27).

4. We must be careful not to present the gospel in situations that will bring mockery and disgrace to Jesus and the gospel.

- a. There are some controlled settings that make it impossible to present the truth of the gospel.
- b. Here are some of them.
  - 1) Radio and T.V. programs controlled by those who will not let truth be presented.
  - 2) Saloons and houses of prostitution.
  - 3) Strip joints
  - 4) Atheistic and agnostic groups
  - 5) Those who make plain they lack sincerity and honesty, and who seek to mock truth and godliness.

## How Some Have Misused It

1. It could be wrongfully used as a reason for not presenting the gospel to the wicked or certain classes or groups of people.
  2. It would not be difficult to imagine some of the early Christians using this prohibition as an argument against:
    - a. Presenting the gospel to Samaritans and Gentiles.
    - b. Having full fellowship with Samaritans and Gentiles.
    - c. Even Cephas withdrew himself from the Gentiles when criticized for eating with them. (Gal. 2:11-14).
  3. It was used an argument against admitting unbelievers to the Lord's Supper.
    - a. The Didache (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) is a manual of Syrian Christianity dated around A.D. 100.
    - b. It says, "Let none eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptised in the name of the Lord. It was concerning this that the Lord said, 'Do not give dogs what is holy.'" "Eucharist" is a name some give the Lord's supper. It comes from the Greek "eucharisteo" [you kah ree **steh** oh] meaning "to give thanks."
    - c. There is no scriptural authority for practicing closed communion.
    - d. Each person is to examine himself/herself and partake.
- 1CO 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.
- e. Policing the Lord's supper is not authorized and makes the Lord's supper a time of chaos and hard feelings rather than a time of remembering the Lord's death and resurrection and a time of personal reflection.

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