

## Hang Up Your Black Robe

Have you ever wondered why judges wear black robes? Well according to an article in Juris magazine, “The origins of wearing the black robe, as is done today, are debated amongst historians. Most historians say that the black robe tradition in England started with the multiple-year mourning of the death of Queen Mary II in 1694. Other historians point to the scholarly tradition of wearing togas, and then robes, as the source for judicial wear. Judicial robes are a lot like the gowns worn to graduations, so the scholarly connection may prove superior. Nevertheless, judges wear black robes because of *tradition*. Some states in the U.S. have rules defining what justices can wear, while most do not.” Hopefully this brief history will shed some light on the courtroom attire of those who sit on the bench. This is one possible assignment for God’s elect in His Kingdom as we will judge angels (**1 Cor. 6:3, Rev. 1:6, 5:10**). Don’t go out and buy a gavel just yet, we’ve a lengthy application process to get to God’s Kingdom.

A couple of months back, I received the most scathing email I’ve ever received in my entire life. It was from someone I considered a good friend whom I’ve known for over 25 years. I must admit, I was taken back and didn’t know how to react at that moment. It all stemmed from my disagreeing with a new direction this person wanted to go with training, rather than remaining in the current program. You would have thought I committed murder with the spew of personal attacks penned in his message. I actually had another friend review my response to make sure I said nothing that could have been construed as offensive to warrant such a tirade. I was assured I didn’t and the slanderous response I received was uncalled for. That being said, I did not do what I would have done 10 years ago. Instead of ripping an

even more malicious assault in response, I forgave him, prayed for him (**James 5:16**) and did not respond at all. Wow! Yea I know, I couldn't believe it was me either...

In as much as my flesh wanted to launch an all-out attack, it would have gained nothing. I have learned that the best course of action is to forgive and let God handle the situation, as any vengeance is His and His alone (**Deut. 32:35, 41, Psalm 94:1, Rom. 12:19**).

### **Forgive**

This conduct really set me to thinking. If I was so disturbed by his words and wanted to “get back at him”, how did that compare to Jesus hanging on the cross, after being beaten, scourged and crucified, saying, “Father forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (**Luke 23:34**) God's Word is full of scripture on forgiveness. (**Psalm 86:5, Matt. 6:12, 14-15, Mark 11:25-26, Luke 6:37, 2 Cor. 2:10**).

### **Take no Offense**

We are to take no offense. **Psalm 119:165**- “Great peace have they which love thy law: and *nothing shall offend them.*” **Proverbs 18:19**- “A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city.” **Isa. 29:21**- “Those who make a man a sinner with a word, and lay a trap for the reprovener in the gate, and turn aside the just for a worthless thing.” (AFV) **Matt. 11:6**- “And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.” (Luke 7:23) **John 16:1**- “These things I have spoken unto you that ye should not be offended.” We are to turn the other cheek (**Matt. 5:39, Luke 6:29**).

There are consequences for us causing offense to others. **Matt. 18:6**- “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” I doubt anyone would desire that fate.

### **Edify One Another**

Instead, our words and conduct should edify one another. **Romans 14:19**- “So then, we should *pursue* the things of peace and the things that *edify* one another.” (AFV) **1 Cor. 10:24**- “Let no one seek that which benefits himself; but let each seek that which benefits the other.” (AFV) **Eph. 4:29**- “Do not let any corrupt communication come out of your mouth, but that which is good and needful for edification that it may give grace to those who hear it.” (AFV) **1 Thess. 5:11**- “Therefore, encourage one another, and edify one another, even as you are already doing.” (AFV)

Granted this can be difficult in dealing with some folks. Especially difficult driving in Naples traffic during season! But if our ultimate goal is to be transformed into the likeness of our Savior Jesus Christ (**Rom. 8:29, Col. 3:10**), we must remember God’s Word. **Rom. 12:10**- “Be kindly affectionate toward one another in brotherly love. Let each *esteem* the other more highly than himself.” When talking with someone, how many times do you say I or me?

### **Do not judge one another**

**Psalm 75:7**- “But God is the Judge: He putteth down one and setteth up another.” **Romans 14:13**- “Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.” **James 4:12**- “There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and destroy: who

art thou that judges another?” (James 4:11, 5:9)

Each week, the world gets a little blurrier in the rear-view mirror and the road ahead becomes clearer. When I remember to put away my old self and remember to forgive, to take no offense, to edify one another, to esteem others more important than myself and not to judge others, the world has less of a hold on me. God gives us His peace and joy that comes with His way of life. This is all part of our growth to become like His Son. So, for now, we can hang up our black robes until The Great Judge says it's time to take the bench.

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