

Condemnation by our brethren - (Pt 4) of *Condemn*

This is our fourth study of the word *condemn* in the Holy Scriptures. In our previous study we looked at the meaning of the word and discovered that the Oxford meaning included; "Censure, give judgment against; bring about conviction of, as his look - him; doom (to death, to be beheaded; also fig. to toil etc); -ed (for -ed persons); pronounced fortified (smuggled good etc), unfit for use, incurable. Hence condemnable." The Oxford Thesaurus writes, "censure, castigate, attack, berate, upbraid, reprimand, rebuke, reprove, reprehend..." And under condemnation points to, "censure, criticism, castigation, stricture, denunciation, damnation..." When we consulted the Scriptures we found four (4) different meanings of the word *condemn*, that include; give judgment against, reprove or judge, testify against and eternally damned.

In the same teaching we covered four points:-

1. When God chastens us He does so that we be not *condemned* with the world
2. When a brother corrects us he does so not to *condemn* us
3. When we judge our brother we *condemn* ourselves
4. When we hold a grudge against our brother we *condemn* ourselves

In this teaching we will cover three additional points:-

1. When we do something that causes our brother to sin we *condemn* ourselves
2. When we *condemn* the just and justify the wicked we are an abomination to the Lord.
3. The sinless lamb of God was *condemned* to death by His brethren

Let us add a little detail to these points:-

1. When we do something that causes our brother to sin we *condemn* ourselves

Rom 14:22 *Hast thou faith? have [it] to thyself before God. Happy [is] he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.*

In our previous study on this word, we learnt that when we hold a grudge against our brother or judge him we *condemn* ourselves. In this teaching we find that the same is true, when we cause our brother to sin. Our verse does not say what my point says, but I suggest that my point can be made from the context of the chapter and more specifically verse 21, ("It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is *offended*, or is made weak"). Paul is saying that a person is happy if he *condemneth not* himself with that thing which he does, which he allows, that may cause his brother to be made weak, or to stumble (I suggest it means 'cause our brother to sin'). When we do something that causes our brother to sin, we *condemn* ourselves. Perhaps it is similar to not putting a stumblingblock in the way of a blind man (see Lev.19: 14), as this would be similar to causing a weak brother to stumble. And perhaps there is similarity between this and the teaching from the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 17: 1, 2 where the Lord points out that it would be better for us to have a millstone hung around our neck and be cast into the sea (so we drown) than for us to offend one of the little ones.

What examples in the Scriptures can you think of where a believer causes his brother to sin?

How about Aaron in Ex.32: 2?

And Aaron said unto them, Break of the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me...verse 4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, and after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be our gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. Aaron sinned when we encouraged the people to sin. Those that were weak, were made weaker by Aaron's sin.

It likely that the same occurred when Aaron murmured against Moses (see Num.11: 1-11), he did something whereby his brethren were encouraged to stumble.

Our verse in Romans 14 goes a little further than the examples of Aaron, where it says that if we do *anything* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, is made weak, when we do so, we *condemn* ourselves. But *condemn*, in this context does not mean, that we will be *condemned* to hell for an eternity, because we know that once we are saved we cannot lose our salvation (see Eph.1: 13). But *condemn* could mean 'reprove' and therefore it is probable that the Lord will reprove us for our actions, when we cause our brother to stumble, to be made weak or he is offended.

One of the examples that Paul used in Rom.14: 21, is "drink wine". If you believed that it is acceptable before God to drink wine and you had a younger brother next to you that was unsure, but when he saw you drinking, thought to himself, it must be okay because my elder brother is drinking wine. If that weaker brother then drinks to excess (yes he is responsible for his sin, just as Israel was in following Aaron), the elder brother would have played a part in the weaker brother sinning. It is likely, given our teaching from Romans 14 that the elder brother would be

condemned, not judged, but perhaps reproved by the Lord, for causing the weaker brother to err. Romans 14 teaches us that it is better for us to recognise that 'drinking wine' may be a weakness for our brother, and therefore not to drink, even though we may be doing so for medicinal purposes (see 1Tim.5: 23). It doesn't matter what we do, if what we do causes our brother to stumble, causes our weaker brother to sin, then we will be *condemned* for our action, we will be reproved, well that is what the Scriptures teach.

Can you remember a time when your actions caused a brother to sin, or perhaps you have said something and perhaps your criticising tongue caused your brother to judge another brother. As we walk on our journey as a Christian we can always look back on the times when we have not done what the Scriptures teach and we can feel discouraged by our behaviour that has caused others to sin. But rather than allowing the devil a foot hold, let us learn from the Scriptures, let us learn from our past mistakes and encourage each other, let us pray for each other, that we allow not those things which will cause our brother to sin, lest we be *condemned*.

2. When we *condemn* the just and justify the wicked we are an abomination to the Lord.

Prov 17:15 *He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both [are] abomination to the Lord.*

We have mentioned in our previous teaching that when we judge our brother we will be *condemned* (see Rom.2: 1). We have also noted that the meaning of the *condemn* can include judge and hence this point is linked to our previous, but there is a slight difference. And that is when a person condemns the just (a believer) and justifies the wicked both are an abomination to the Lord.

We see that the Lord hides his face from those who call evil good and good evil (see Mic.3: 1, 4), but our verse goes a little further and says that those who condemn the just and justify the wicked they are an abomination to the Lord. According to the Oxford dictionary the word abomination means "morally or physically loathsome". The online Thesaurus points out that abomination can also mean extreme dislike or hate.

When Israel *condemned* their prophets, when she rejected the Lord's prophets and justified their wicked behaviour, they called their action good, or as Is.66: 3 says, *their soul delighteth in their abominations*, such an attitude is an abomination to God, it is loathsome to Him.

When the Pharisees judged or *condemned* the Lord and justified their wickedness, such behaviour was an abomination before the Lord.

Modern day examples could be:

If St Matthews in the city (a progressive Anglican church in the centre of Auckland), were to *condemn* or judge those who write against their acceptance of Sodomite marriage and thereby *condemn* the just, and they justify the abomination of Sodomy and call it good, then not I, but the Lord would see them, their church leaders and teachers as an abomination. Because they would be *condemning* the just and justifying the wicked.

If the Roman Catholic church (who are also perceived by the world to be 'the church' as they do St Matthews in the city), were to *condemn* or judge the Protestant churches for pointing out where they have erred from the Scriptures, or when they encourage true believers to come out of her (see Rev.18: 4) and then in the same breath they worship the wafer cookie as God, and so boast in themselves of their idol worship (see Ps.97: 7), such would be an abomination to the Lord because they would be *condemning* the just and justifying themselves (the wicked).

The Muslim today who *condemn* Christians for saying anything against their prophet Mohammad (like those who are marching in Muslim lands around the world against the movie that ridiculed the prophet Mohammad) and justify their own killing of Jews. Such behaviour is an abomination to the Lord who felt the same way about the nation of Israel making an idol and bowing down to worship the idol. In both cases the just are *condemned* and the wicked are justified and are an abomination to the Lord.

When I first looked at our verse in Proverbs I assumed that it was written for the heathen. But the two examples from the Scriptures are of the Lord's chosen people and two of our modern day examples, are according to the world, a Christian church. So perhaps there is room for our verse in Proverbs to apply to both.

Let us pray that the Lord would help us not to *condemn* the just and justify the wicked. And if we hear or see a brother *condemning* the just or justifying the wicked, let us with all charity and grace show them that such action is loathsome to God.

3. The sinless lamb of God was *condemned* to death by His brethren

Lk 24:20 *And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.*

See also Mk 10:33, 14:64

We have pointed out that when we judge our brother we *condemn* ourselves, when we hold a grudge against our brother we *condemn* ourselves and in this study we identified that if we put a stumblingblock in front of our brother and cause him to sin, we will be *condemned*. In this point we will consider the example of our Saviour in Lk.24: 20, where the sinless lamb of God, was *condemned* by his own people, the chosen nation of Israel and specifically the leaders of that nation, the chief priests. He was not just judged by them, but He was *condemned* to death. The chief priests demanded He be crucified (see Jn19: 6), and because it was a feast day the Governor was able to release one of the prisoners that was due to be crucified. One of whom was a robber and it was he that the chief priests and elders of Israel got released (see Matt.27: 20), even though the Lord Jesus was righteous, even though He had committed no sin (see Heb.4: 15), the chief priests (leaders of his brethren) *condemned* Christ to death, and so *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him* (see 2Cor.5: 21).

A similar example in the Scriptures could be the Old Testament Prophets, who, although non were sinless and did not take on themselves the sin of the world, nor were they raised from the dead, but they were *condemned* to death and persecuted by their brethren (see 1Thes.2: 15).

I remember Friday night on the street talking with an older gentleman, who was happy to simply trust that God would judge him justly for the good and evil. He was trusting that God would weigh up his good and bad and then judge him. I suggested his belief was more aligned to Roman Catholicism than the Holy Scriptures. He felt it was unjust for God to send his Son into the world to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God. To him that was offensive and God would not do such a thing. But I assured him, that according to the scripture of truth (see Dan.10: 21), according to the Authorized Bible, that is exactly what God has done. *For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned in the flesh* (see Rom.8: 3).

For a Jewish person today to become a believer, perhaps they have to work out in their own mind, perhaps they have to work through why their forefathers *condemned* a righteous man to death, how they could put on a cross the lamb of God. It is not hard to understand what happened to the Lord, but it may be difficult for some to accept and believe. Even though Israel *condemned* the prophets that the Lord sent to bring correction, none, as we have mentioned were sinless, they had all broken God's law. And so the only explanation for a sinless man being *condemned* by his brethren, is the depth of man's sin. Such an action shows how dark and wicked man is. People today often want to know why God allows good people to be killed whilst murderers go free, they want an explanation for why the good suffer. There are no end of explanations on the world wide web for why children get cancer, why babies die, or why God would allow suffering? How can a loving God allow a young girl to be abused? "If God is good, why do babies and children die from illness, accidents and abuse?" The only explanation I have seen, the only valid explanation that any religious group offers, is Christ. Where God sent His only begotten Son, to live a perfectly sinless life and to suffer at the hands of men and be crucified on the cross. And then on Him, was placed the sin of the world. It is our sin that causes our suffering, it is not God that causes our suffering and we know that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom.3: 23). A sinless man became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God (see 2Cor.5: 21). God loves this world so much, he knows the depth of our sin, he knows the depth of our depravity, he knows that man will *condemn* a sinless person whilst justifying the wicked. The only explanation for the worlds suffering is man's sin and the cross event, where a sinless man was *condemned* to death by His brethren. Perhaps we ask the question; how could a sinless man be crucified, how can a man who committed no sin, be *condemned* to death at the hands of those who professed to be sons of Abraham (see Matt.3: 9), whilst a robber is set free?

Let us pray for wisdom to answer questions like "how can God allow the suffering of little children". Let us remember that all answers come back to what God has done in Christ, where the sinless lamb of God was *condemned* to death by His brethren. He who committed no sin, suffered for our sins (see 1Pet.3: 18), that we might be made the righteousness of God.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this our fourth study on the word condemn, we have covered three points which include:-

1. When we do something that causes our brother to sin we *condemn* ourselves
2. When we *condemn* the just and justify the wicked we are an abomination to the Lord.
3. The sinless lamb of God was *condemned* to death by His brethren