

21 October 2012

The *Condemnation* of the Wicked (Pt 6 *Condemn*)

This is our sixth study of the word *condemn* in the Holy Scriptures. In our previous teaching we identified four different meanings of the word *condemn* in the Scriptures, that include; give judgment against, reprove or judge, testify against and eternally damned. In the same study we covered three points:-

1. Our mouth *condemns* us
2. Our pride *condemns* us
3. Our oaths *condemn* us

In this teaching we will cover three additional points:-

1. Wicked devices *condemn* a man
2. It is the heart that *condemns* a man.
3. There are different degrees of *condemnation*

Let us add a little more detail to each of our points:-

1. Wicked devices *condemn* a man

Prov 12:2 *A good [man] obtaineth favour of the Lord: but a man of wicked devices will be condemn.*

See also Jer.18: 12

There are 26 occurrences of the word device or devices in the Scriptures. Only one of these is in the context of God and His devices (see Jer.51: 11), whereas the remainder carry negative connotations, with some referring to the wicked, as per our verse in Proverbs (see also Est.9: 25, Ps.37: 7, 140: 8, Prov.14: 17, Is.32: 7) and others being less specific (see Jer.11: 19 & Acts 17: 29). This should not surprise us when we look at the origin of the word device. According to the online Etymology dictionary ('etymology' refers to the study of the history of words), the word device has its origin in "late 13century from the French word *devis* 'division...method by which something is divided'"

What is a device? According to the Oxford dictionary the word means "plan, scheme, trick, contrivance, invention ". Therefore, based on the historical meaning of the word device, perhaps the planning or contriving is negative in a way that brings *devis*ion.

So when a man plans something that is evil he is *condemned*, whether he goes through with his wicked plan or not. We see an example of this in the Scriptures.

Matt.5: 28 - If a married man looks on a woman and lusts after her (desires a woman outside of marriage) he has, in the eyes of the Lord, committed adultery. Our courts do not *condemn* a man if he devises a wicked device but does not carry it through.

Why the difference? It would be impractical in a court of law to prove beyond reasonable doubt that a man devised a wicked device to murder someone, if the murder never took place. No human being knows what another is contriving or planning.

Whereas the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ knows everyone and when you understand that the devices of man are devised in his heart (see Prov. 6: 18 & 19: 21), which leads us to our second point, and God knows the heart of man, then you get a glimpse of why the difference. So whether a man plans a wicked device and commits the sin or not, he is *condemned* in God's eyes, he is judged already.

In the Scriptures there is an example of a wicked man (Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite see Esth.3: 1) who contrived to kill the Jews in Shushan. His plan was partially implemented (see Esth.3: 8-15), but God showed His people evidence of the devise (see Esth.4: 7, 13-16) and when the plan was revealed to King Ahasuerus, Haman and his sons were hanged (Esth.9: 24, 25). God knew the wicked devices of Haman and He revealed them to His servants and Haman and his family were *condemned* to death. Such devices that are devised by man may not necessarily be murder or adultery, as with the example in Is.37: 7, where evil men plan wicked devices that destroy the poor with lying lips.

Let us pray for our brethren that the Lord would help them to plan acts of goodness, mercy, grace and charity that glorify the body of Christ and that they would recognize devices of the devil that divide and destroy. For we should not be ignorant of Satan's devices (see 2Cor.2: 11), because all wicked devices *condemn* a man.

2. It is the heart of man that *condemns* him.

1Jn 3:20, 21 *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, [then] have we confidence toward God.*

Although our verse from 1John does not specifically refer to the lost of this age, and does not specifically say that the heart of a man *condemns* him, it does say, “if our heart condemns us”, which indicates that it is the heart where we are *condemned*. This would appear to align with other Scriptures regarding the heart:

- a) It is in the heart where the wicked work wickedness (see Pss 58: 2).
- b) It is the heart where evil imaginations are devised (see Jer.18: 12).
- c) The sin of lust takes place in our hearts (see Prov.6: 25).
- d) The lost have a hardened heart toward the Lord (see Jn.12: 40).

Is it any wonder that it is the heart that *condemns* a man? It is because of the wickedness of his heart that a man is judged.

Although when the Bible refers to the heart, it does not refer to the organ as purely a mechanical pump that gets filthy with actual dirt, like the lung does when a person smokes. When the doctor operates on a patient and removes their heart and replaces it with one that works, he cannot see the stain of sin, as they can the tar in the lung of a smoker.

But rather, our sin is spiritual and not physically discerned and the heart that the Bible is talking about, is our physical pumps that circulates blood around our body, but the same physical pump has a spiritual side to it that is infected with sin. And just as a doctor cannot see the stain of sin on a wicked man's heart, nor could he see the righteousness of Christ that God sees when a person is saved (see Rom.4: 22-24).

The unsaved man gets a glimpse of the spiritual nature of his heart when he weeps, and he has a sense that such pain or sadness comes from his heart. But the same heathen does not see, he does not understand that all of his evil ways are devised in his heart, just as he does not understand that the devil has blinded his heart (see Eph.4: 18).

Here is something to think about:

Our woman folk who are not saved are more in tune with their feelings, more in tune with their heart, therefore *perhaps* more open to receiving the Lord. Whereas an unsaved man who generally does not recognise a feeling or anything in his heart, even if it he feel over it, is *perhaps* a little more hardened toward the Lord. And because men are not naturally in tune with their feelings, they do not recognise so clearly the Holy Spirit of God reproofing them of sin in their heart (see Jn.16: 8).

This awareness of the heart, is I suggest, carried over to when a person gets saved. For example, when a man gets saved *perhaps* they are more in touch with their feelings, because God has done a work in their heart (see Eze 36: 26). I know for myself, as a Christian I have a greater sense of my feelings and weep more.

Let us now turn our focus back to the unsaved man who is stained by sin and has an evil heart toward God. When a preacher is preaching the gospel of Christ crucified and the sinner knows he is under conviction of sin, he will feel the reproofing of the Holy Spirit in his heart.

Can the preacher see that the sinner is under conviction? No because he cannot see the lost man's heart, as the Lord can. But perhaps, if the preacher observes the body language of the sinner he will pick up that something is happening in the man's heart, God is doing a work, the Holy Spirit is convicting him of his sin, in righteousness and judgment (see Jn.16: 8). One of the indicators or signs that something is happening in a man's heart, is what is happening to his eyes. Often they go watery, or get a glassed look about them and that is a good time to invite the person to call on the name of the Lord and tell God that they believe His Son died for their sins and that He rose from the dead after 3 days (see 1Cor.15: 1-4). When the sinner hears that all have sinned, and the wages of his sin is death, and feels convicted by the Holy Spirit of God, he is *condemned* and the person knows and feels that *condemnation* in his heart. The sinner chooses to either submit to the Holy Spirit of God or harden his heart, but it is the heart where a man believes unto righteousness (see Rom.10: 10), not the head. The Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit convicts a man and he decides to believe Christ Jesus died on the cross, or he chooses to not to believe (see Jn.3: 16, 36, Acts 16: 31) and so God's grace is not irresistible.

One of our brethren suggested he prayers the Psalms when praying for the lost. A couple of examples include; Ps. 17: 13, 14 and 83: 13-18. It is interesting to note that our purpose in praying these prayers is that “they may seek thy name O Lord” (verse 16 also similar in verse 18). Let us pray for the lost, that they would be reproofed of their sin, of righteousness and of judgment (in their heart), that they would turn from their iniquities and know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

3. There are different degrees of *Condemnation* for the wicked

Jas 3:1 *My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.*

See also Matt.23: 14, Mk.12: 40 & Lk.20.47

The book of James has long divided Christians as to whether it is doctrinally (doctrine's are teachings) applicable to this, the church age. By that we mean; Is the book of James specifically for this age, as we know the thirteen letters of Paul are to the church? Some teachers would suggest that because James begins the book with "James, a servant of the God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes of Israel..." the book is therefore, doctrinally applicable to Jews in the tribulation (one example is Doug Stauffer as expounded in his book - One Book Rightly Divided). Others would point out that because it does not contradict Paul's epistles to the church, it is therefore applicable to the church.

Does our verse in James 3 apply to us today? Once we have understood what the verse means, I am going to suggest that it does because of other supporting verses in the Scriptures, and on that boarder basis do I then make my point "there are different degrees of *condemnation* "

As with many passages of Scripture there are several interpretations and James 3: 1 is no exception. For example, by simply changing the meaning of the word *condemnation* to mean judge, allows for a different interpretation than if it means 'eternally damned'.

Question: Can the word *condemnation* in Jam.3: 1, mean *condemned* to hell?

If the letter to James is applicable to the church today then we would say that it cannot mean, *condemned* to hell, because the audience are 'brethren' (see 3: 1) and this would contradict Eph.1: 13, which we know is applicable to the church age, and we know that believers in the church age cannot loose their salvation and end up in hell (see Eph.4: 30). But if the book that was written to the 12 tribes of Israel was doctrinally to the Jews (as some suggest) then we know that the Lord Jesus kept his *condemnation* for the 'so called' masters of the day, or the teachers, otherwise known as the Pharisees (see Matt.23: 13, 14, & 15), and the Lord pronounced on them greater damnation. Therefore on the surface it would appear that our verse cannot mean eternally damned and be applicable to Christians today.

Keeping that in mind I use our verse in James by making an application from it, on the basis that there are other verses in the Bible that teach that there are different degrees of condemnation. Several examples in the Scriptures of God having different levels of punishment for different sins include:-

Matt.23: 14 - The Lord rebukes the scribes and Pharisees and says, they *shall receive the greater damnation* (see above).

Gen.6: 11, 12 - The earth was corrupt before God, for all flesh had corrupted their way except Noah (verse 8). As a result of such wide spread corruption, God flooded the whole world (well, thats if you believe the Scriptures and not the evolutionary scientists).

Gen.13: 13 - The men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly (see also 18: 20 - their sin of sodomy [see 19:5], was very grievous). God punished both Sodom and Gomorrah with brimstone and fire from heaven (see Gen.19: 24), such that these two cities were to be forever an example to the world of God's condemnation of those who live ungodly (see 2Pet 2:6).

Yet when Solomon took 700 wives and 300 concubines which turned his heart away from the Lord (see 1Kgs11: 3, 4), he did not smite him, but rather He rent the kingdom from him (see 1Kgs11: 11) and he stirred up an adversary unto Solomon (see verse 14).

David his father was not smitten when he sinned against the Lord and took Bathsheba's husband and put him on the front line of battle so he would be killed and then took Bathsheba as his wife (see 2Sam). In all that David did, the Lord saw David as doing right save in the matter of Uriah the Hittite (see 1Kgs 15: 5).

David also numbered the people without asking the Lord and the Lord did not smite him but the Lord asked David what punishment he preferred and David chose pestilence in the land which killed 70,000 men (see 1Chron.21: 13, 14).

So the God of the Bible sets forth different degrees of judgment or *condemnation* for different sins.

How does this effect Christians today? When we hear of a wicked man raping or generally abusing the weak (women folk -see 1Pet.3: 7, and children), we can have a level of comfort, that *perhaps* they will receive greater damnation or *condemnation*. If the court system doesn't administer justice, then we can be assured that God will judge justly (see Jn.5: 30, 7: 24, Acts 17: 31 & 2Tim.4: 8) and so *perhaps* the wicked who abuse the weak will end up in a hotter place in hell for an eternity.

But just as we hope that our God will judge the wicked justly and administer greater degrees of *condemnation* for the child molester, let us ask the Lord to help each one of us to remember whom Christ had the greater damnation for. It was for the religious hypocrites who paid a tithe on mint and cummin, and omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith. In our hope to see greater degrees of *condemnation* for the wicked, let us ask the Lord to enable us to do all thing with charity (1Cor.16: 14).

Having said what we have said, let us say it again

1. Wicked devices *condemn* a man
2. It is our heart that *condemns* a man.
3. There are greater degrees of *condemnation*