

## Let us not *condemn*, but have mercy (Pt 7 *Condemn*)

This is our seventh teaching in our study of the word *condemn* in the Holy Scriptures. In our previous teaching we were reminded of the Biblical meaning of the word *condemn* and covered three points. The meaning from Scripture included; give judgment against, reprove or judge, testify against and eternally damned. The three points covered:-

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

In this study, we will revisit the account of the Lord Jesus handling the woman caught in the act of adultery. We will take a different approach to previous studies and consider the word *condemn*, within the context of the passage in Jn.8: 1-11. In our passage Jesus was teaching a gathering of people that included his disciples, general town folk, and the Scribes and Pharisees. We can apply His teachings from this passage to establish three points: -

1. The Old Testament law is still applicable today.
2. The Lord Jesus came not to *condemn* but to save the sinner from their sin.
3. The Lord Jesus had mercy on the sinner.

There are two remaining points from this passage that will be covered in our final study in this series. .

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

### 1. The Old Testament law is still applicable today.

Mt 5:17 *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

See Jn.8: 4-11.

Let us read our passage in Jn, 8: 1-11. In these verses the Pharisees tried to trick Jesus, they tried to trap him with the law, to see how He would respond with a woman caught in the very act of adultery. There was no need for the Pharisees to establish whether or not the accusation was true, because it was evident to all that she was guilty of transgressing the law of Moses (see Lev.20: 10 & Deut.22: 22), she has been caught in the very act.

The Lord Jesus did not say to the Pharisees that the law did not apply any more, that it was no longer holy, just or good and neither did the apostle Paul teach this to the church (see Rom.7: 12). But rather, both the Lord and Paul taught that the law was still applicable in their day. The Lord Jesus demonstrated this truth by His actions in the account of the woman taken in adultery.

Some churches today take this teaching and cling onto parts of the law and apply them to their church life today. One such example is Seventh-Day Adventists (SDA) who argue that our day of worship should be on the Sabbath, which is a Saturday. They teach that Christians who do not worship on the Sabbath day are being disobedient to an everlasting commandment (Lev.24: 8). But, as with any other Old Testament law, where that law is fulfilled in something else or changed in some way, then the church is required to take account of that change, such that the particular Old Testament law is no longer applicable. Examples include: -

Jesus shedding His blood on Calvary fulfilled the Old Testament law where bulls and goats shed their blood for the forgiveness of the people's sin.

Jesus said He was Lord over the Sabbath (see Matt.12: 8).

Paul teaches the church to worship on any day of the week (see Col.2: 16).

You may notice a sign on the side of SH2 which offers a reward to anyone that can provide a verse that supports Sunday worship. If the authors of the sign read Col.2: 16, they would realise that no such commandment was ever given, but rather a requirement not to judge anyone for the day they worship.

So, we have learnt that the Lord Jesus Christ came not to destroy the law but to fulfill. Paul also teaches that the law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, and to this end the preacher uses the law as a means of bringing the lost to Christ (see Gal.3: 24, 25), such that the law provides knowledge of a man's sin (see Rom.3: 20). For without the law, sin was dead (see Rom.7: 8). Hence, when a preacher uses the Ten Commandments in his gospel preaching he does so that all may know of their sinfulness before God who is holy. Whereas the Pharisees stood above the woman caught in adultery, we are encouraged to remain meek, so that the preacher preaches in a way that does not place himself above his audience, but he remains lowliness.

For the Christian today, he does well if he sets about to obey the law, the Ten Commandments. For new believers who struggle to know what is acceptable to God, a good place to start is; obey the Ten Commandments. Children are often encouraged to memorize them, they can be found in Ex.20: 2-17 & Deut.5: 7-21);

*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.  
Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image; thou shalt not bow down unto them.  
Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.  
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.  
Honour thy father and thy mother.  
Thou shalt not kill.  
Thou shalt not commit adultery.  
Thou shalt not steal.  
Thou shalt not bear false witness.  
Thou shalt not covet.*

Paul encourages the early church Gentile Christians to not carry out circumcision (see Acts 15: 5), as required in the law, but to abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled and from blood (see Acts 15: 20, 29 & 21: 25). Therefore the law is still valid and applicable for a Christian today.

## 2. Jesus Christ came not to *condemn* but to save the sinner.

Jn 3:17 *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*  
See also Matt.18: 11, Lk.19: 10 & Jn.8: 11.

As we established in our second teaching on the word *condemn*, the Lord Jesus Christ taught that He came to save the lost, and he showed this when the woman was caught in the very act of adultery and brought before Him. He did not *condemn* her; He did not judge her sin. His desire was to save the sinner from her sins, that none would perish in hell (see 2Pet.3: 9).

Christians that you meet on the street, your every day church-goer, often believes that is all Jesus did, He taught his disciples that the Son of God came not to *condemn* the world but to save the lost (see Jn 3:17). When you ask them about those who reject the Lord Jesus Christ, they simply turn you back to the same passage and reiterate, that Christ came not to condemn but to save. So in their mind, there is no *condemnation* if they reject the Lord Jesus Christ; hence, their whole Theology, their whole interpretation of the Scriptures is based on Jesus not *condemning* people. Therefore, everyone goes to heaven and there are no consequences to sin, there are no consequences to rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ. In such thinking there can be no hell, even though the Bible says it is a real place, it is low (see Deut.32: 22), and in the nether parts of the earth (see Eze.31: 16).

There was a man named Benjamin on Queen street two weeks, who believed in Jesus, but when he heard about the Jesus of the Bible who also preached about hell seven times, he told me that he didn't like that Jesus. When we read any passage that spoke about consequences to rejecting the Saviour (see Jn.3: 36), he would rationalise his interpretation of the passage by claiming the passage in question was parabolic, referring me to a verse in Scripture (which he couldn't remember) that proclaimed all Jesus spoke was parables and therefore cannot be taken literally. One point that occurred to me later on, was; if everything Jesus spoke was in parables, then His words, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved" (see Jn.3: 17), are also parabolic and therefore cannot be taken literally.

I remember listening to an American preacher one day who asserted that if there is no hell, then there is no heaven, and if there is neither heaven nor hell, then we may as well go and party, because the Bible is a lie. BUT, if the Bible is true, then there is a heaven and there is a hell, and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has made it so that only those who believe 'The Book', who believe the gospel of Christ crucified, by faith, only they will go to heaven. And regardless whether people on the street convince themselves that they know Jesus, that He *will* not and *does* not *condemn* any man, and that everyone is going to heaven, does not mean it is true.

Benjamin's belief is similar to those in the church today who believes that God is only a God of love, and the God of wrath is the God of the Old Testament because the Old Testament is law and The New Testament is grace (see Jn 1:17 - *For the law was given by Moses [but] grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*). Such an understanding is the premise for which Bible Colleges today, like BCNZ (now Laidlaw College) interpret the Bible. So the Pastors, Ministers, Vicars, and Priests that get qualified by such colleges teach their flocks the same, i.e. - God is a God of love, a God of grace, the Lord Jesus does not and never will *condemn* anyone. But the problem with such a premise, with such a Theology, is that it does not allow for the passages in the New Testament that teach eternal punishment for those who choose to reject the Lord Jesus Christ and Him crucified (see Jn.3: 36, 5: 24 & 1Thes.1: 10).

Both the Old and New Testaments teach consequences to sin, and a person either believes God's spokesperson or they do not. For people today they either accept God's one-off payment, one-off gift to remedy their sin, or they stand before Him in judgment, and they pay the debt that is owed for their iniquity. In the church age, the wrath of God is still revealed from heaven against all ungodliness (see Rom.1: 18, 2: 5, 6, Eph.5: 6 & 2Thes.1: 8).

So in our first point we mentioned that the law is still applicable today and it was given that all would come to the knowledge of their sin, then, in this point, we have learnt that the purpose in God sending His Son was not to *condemn* the world for their sin but to save them. But, we all still have to choose whether we believe in Christ or not. Let us remember that Jesus did not come into the world to *condemn* the sinner.

### 3. The Lord Jesus had mercy on the sinner.

Jn.8: 11 *She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.*

See also Matt.14: 14, 20: 34, Mk 1: 41, 6: 34.

Following on from our previous point, that Jesus did not come into the world to condemn the sinner, we now expand on that and say, not only did He not condemn, but He had mercy on the sinner. When Jesus said to the woman caught in the very act of adultery; *neither do I condemn thee: go, sin no more.* He was not dismissing her sin, but rather He showed her mercy, grace and compassion.

The Oxford online dictionary indicates that mercy is “compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone whom it is within ones power to punish or harm.” Therefore, the additional supporting verses in the gospels (as detailed above and include Matt.14: 14) account for the Lord Jesus Christ having compassion on the multitude, because there are no specific verses that reference Him showing mercy to the crowd.

The Old Testament is a written account of God’s mercy on a nation that provoked Him to anger and jealousy when they disobeyed Him and went whoring after other gods made by their own hands, gods that were no gods (see Judg 2: 17). Yet, in His grace, the Father continued to show mercy, offering them forgiveness, rather than *condemnation*, if only they turned from their sin and walked in His ways of righteousness (see 2Chr 6: 37, 38, 39). And as we have seen from our passage in the gospel of John, His mercy and grace continue to be offered in the New Testament. The only difference is God’s grace, mercy, love and forgiveness are through Christ Jesus. Whereas Israel was to turn from their sin, offered the required offering for their sin and trust in God to save them from their enemies, today Christians are saved by belief in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and faith that He died for their sin once for all, on the cross at Calvary.

Take a moment out of your day to think of the cross of Christ, where a man who was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, committed no sin, yet He was nailed to that cross for our sin that we might be made the righteousness of God (see 2Cor.5: 21).

In Him is the love of God (see Rom.8: 39).

That same man, also said He did not come to condemn but to save, yet He was *condemned* when He did no wrong. That same man who is God in the flesh, will judge the wicked (see Acts 17: 31) at the white throne judgment (see Rev.20: 12-15) and the judgment of the saved (see Rom.14: 10). He is our example today; to have mercy and compassion on the sinner.

Is that how we respond to the sinners we meet?

Or do we stand above them, do we tell them of their sin, whilst we have a beam in our own eye (see Matt.7: 3-5)?

Or the drunk, do we look down on them as a stain of society? Rather than having compassion for them, rather than showing them mercy?

I am not saying, that we tell anyone their sin is okay, or make excuses for their sin as the world is so good at doing. I am saying that whether we be preachers, teachers, or Christians witnessing to our neighbours, those whom we share the gospel to are no different to ourselves. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God (see Rom.3: 23).

The only difference is, we are saved sinners. I suggest we share the law and allow the knowledge of the law and the Holy Spirit to convict the lost of their sin. Just as the Jesus did, when the Pharisees left Him without throwing a stone at the woman.

Just as Jesus looks out on the multitude and had compassion, let us have compassion, let us have mercy on the Roman Catholic, the Mormon and the drunk, with no distinction between them. For they are all being snared by the devil, just as we ourselves get entangled in his traps. The only difference is, we have a way out, whereas they don’t know the way out of their snare. So let us, in humility, have mercy on them, as Jesus did on the woman caught in adultery.

Having said what we have said, let us say it again. In this study of the word condemn in the Holy Scriptures, we have covered three points that included:

1. The Old Testament law is still applicable today.
2. The Lord Jesus came not to *condemn* but to save the sinner from their sin.
3. The Lord Jesus had mercy on the sinner.