

Call to Obedience #236
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"...go, and sin no more."

Jesus Is Strong on Sin, Forgiveness, and Holiness.

By Reimar Schultze

"And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." (John 8:3-11).

The doctrines of sin, forgiveness, and holiness seem to become more and more muddled as we approach the day when the Son of Man will come in a cloud with power and great glory. Jesus and Paul speak of the last days as days of great deception. It is obvious that this deception arises to a great extent out of the dulling and distortions of biblical doctrines. This is especially serious when it comes to the cardinal doctrines of the church, such as the doctrines of sin, forgiveness, and holiness. Unholy men will produce unholy doctrines.

From the text above, let me now present these doctrines to you one at a time.

The Doctrine of Sin

From this passage of the adulterous woman many have made the mistake of concluding that Jesus is soft on sin. They believe that Jesus' refusal to apply the Law of Moses to the woman indicates that God has become soft on sin – especially on the sin of adultery. Many believe that the gray headed Old Testament God has retired. The meek, loving, young, contemporary, merciful Jesus has now taken over, and we live in a day of mercy, love, compassion, and tolerance toward sin.

Nothing can be further from the truth. First notice that the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament, and that the moral demands of the Son are the same as the moral demands of the Father. There is no split in the Trinity. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD" (Deut. 6:4). If we declare two standards, then we declare two Gods, and we destroy the Trinity. The holiness of the Father is the holiness of the Son, and the holiness of the Son is the holiness of the Holy Spirit.

Hence, the Pharisees were wrong when they tried to pit the Mosaic Law concerning adultery against Jesus. They did not know that the Jesus in front of them, and not Moses, gave this law on adultery. Yes, my friend, Jesus is God, and Christ was hid in God when the Old Testament laws were given. It is his Son, Jesus, as much as it is God the Father who told Moses to write these laws.

So Jesus the Son and God the Father are equally hard on sin. THEY told Moses to write the law that an adulteress should be stoned (Lev. 20:10). THEY told Paul to tell us that no adulterer shall enter the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9). THEY told us that if a man looks after a woman to lust after her, he has already committed adultery in his heart (Matt. 5:27,28). God is hard on sin. The Father and the Son told Moses that if a man did any work on the Sabbath Day (Ex. 31:15) or if a son rebelled against his parents (Deut. 21:18-21), he should be killed. God, the Triune God, is hard on sin. He hates sin, and the basic laws of God have not changed, nor has his attitude. It has always been that "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20).

Now the question arises, "Why did Jesus not consent to the stoning of this adulterous woman?"

The answer comes from our knowledge that, in Jesus, we have the fullest revelation of the holiness of God we will ever receive on this side of eternity. Also that, in the presence of this effervescent, pure white, glistening holiness, all who were in the temple were worthy of death: the adulterous woman for having committed the act of adultery; all those who had committed adultery in their hearts, having lusted after some woman; the Pharisees who had murder in their hearts, plotting to kill the Son of God; and all the rest of the people in the temple. They all had sin in their lives and were worthy of death. No sin can stand before God. Jesus said, "...He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." (John 8:7) There in the temple, the convicting power of the **Holy** Spirit worked through Jesus, and all men became disqualified to cast a stone except for Jesus himself.

No, Jesus is not soft on sin. Rather it is through his holy life that sin has become even more exceedingly sinful. Every Sin! Not just the sin of adultery but also the sins of lust and hate. God has not changed. He said, "For I am the LORD, I change not..." (Mal. 3:6) God is hard on sin.

The Doctrine of Forgiveness

As sin has been revealed through Christ, the Holy One of Israel, to be more exceedingly sinful than ever imagined, so has the forgiveness of God never been more powerfully revealed as through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us consider the sin of adultery. In the Old Testament, God punished the act of adultery. In the New Testament, with a new revelation and illumination through the holiness of Jesus, God punishes the thought of adultery and every other evil thought. The thought is the root of any act, and it shows the condition of the heart. The act of adultery begins with a thought, with a lustful thought. The act of murder begins with a thought — a hateful thought. In the Sermon on the Mount and in the rest of the gospels, Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, gets into our hearts and thoughts. He brings his holiness to bear upon wickedness in the innermost chambers of our hearts and souls.

Again, had Jesus killed the woman for her lustful heart, he would have had to kill the Pharisees for their murderous hearts, for they were much more interested in killing Jesus than in killing the woman. Yes, at the challenge of the Pharisees that the woman should be stoned, divine justice through the deeper revelation of Jesus, demanded that all present be stoned, and none would have been left, save Jesus only. Oh, the holiness of Christ is great, but so also is the forgiveness of Christ.

Aren't you glad that Jesus did not come to condemn the world — for, truly, she was already under the sentence of condemnation — but He came to save the world? That is where His forgiveness comes in. And as the holiness of Christ through the Holy Spirit reaches deep into the heart of men and women to convince them of their sin, so Christ's forgiveness reaches just as far. As man can sin to the uttermost, Jesus can save to the uttermost!

Now, when the holiness of God is revealed to the sinful heart, there are generally two basic responses: 1) a coming to Jesus or 2) a walking out the door, sooner or later. Holiness divides. Light has always separated men. Hence, the adulterous woman, having been convicted, came

to Jesus for forgiveness. But the Pharisees, also having been convicted, walked out of the temple and left Jesus.

Pray for a greater revelation of Jesus in your church, and you will see people either run to the altar to be forgiven, or you will see them run out the door as the Pharisees did. This is a great need of the church – a greater revelation of Christ through the **Holy** Spirit. This greater revelation of the holiness of God will first bring division, but then purity, unity, and power into a church. And if you do not want to be holy, my friend, you have no business in the church of Jesus Christ.

The Doctrine of Holiness

Jesus said unto the woman, "...Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11)

Jesus lifted the condemnation that rested on her, for condemnation rests on every child of disobedience (3:18,19). Jesus forgave the woman and told her to leave her ungodly, sexual relationship. To live a holy life, she had to forsake the wrong man and get back to the right man. Yes, "...go, and sin no more" (8:11). Jesus is strong on sin. Jesus is strong on forgiveness. Jesus is strong on holiness.

"...go, and sin no more" is a message preached in every church where Christ is present; and where Jesus is Lord, that message is frequently preached. If you are in a church where "...go, and sin no more" is not preached, where "holiness" is not preached, then you are not in Jesus' church.

"Follow...holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14) is just as much the New Testament as the Old Testament message. Forgiveness is expensive, and it cost Jesus his whole life in order to make it available to us. And because Jesus gave his life to provide it for us, it will cost us the forsaking of all sinful living and an entire surrender to his Lordship to receive it. There is no cheaper way. We must live in daily fellowship with him now and forever.

So Jesus will never give us a word of forgiveness without also giving us the word, "...go, and sin no more." Christianity without holiness is not Christianity, but a religion of man. It is a religion that mocks God, tramples on the blood of Jesus, and makes it an unholy thing. Hence the book of Hebrews warns us: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me..." (10:29-30).

So, the story of the adulterous woman is not the story of a permissive Jesus who has broken with the strictness of his Father, but it is a story of a **Holy** Jesus who does not only see the sinful act of an adulterous person, but every evil thought and intent of the human heart. The message to that woman is a message to all of us: "...go, and sin no more."

Indeed, blessed are those who "...have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" (Rev. 3:4). God is strong on sin, God is strong on forgiveness, and God is strong on holiness. The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament: "...Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord" (Mark 12:29).

"For I am the LORD, I change not...."