

TONIGHT'S READING



THE NEED OF THE SINFUL (I)

Scripture Reading:

John 8:1-12 ¹And everyone went to his own house. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ²And early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him, and He sat down and taught them. ³And the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the midst, ⁴They said to Him, Teacher, this woman has been caught committing adultery, in the very act. ⁵Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. What then do you say? ⁶But they said this to tempt Him, so that they might have reason to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote with His finger on the ground. ⁷But when they persisted in questioning Him, He stood up and said to them, He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. ⁸And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹And when they heard that, they went out one by one, beginning with the older ones. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman stood where she was, in the midst. ¹⁰And Jesus stood up and said to her, Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? ¹¹And she said, No one, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more. ¹²Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall by no means walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 8:24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins.

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.

John 8:36 If therefore the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed.

ALL PEOPLE BEING SINFUL

All the people in the world are sinful. John 8 proves in two ways that all people are sinful. The first way to show us this is symbolic. This chapter is a record of a woman who committed adultery. If we read this record carefully, we will see that the Spirit uses this case to symbolize the sinful condition of all the people in the world. In the Bible the woman represents man's standing before God. The people of the world have the standing of a woman before God. Therefore, this woman represents all humanity, and her adultery signifies that all humanity commits the sin of adultery.

The spiritual significance of adultery is that a person has other loves, other pursuits, apart from God. In principle, we commit sins because we have another love, another pursuit besides God. Our sins can be compared to a woman loving someone other than her husband. Every person in the world has a love, a pursuit of something that is not God. Therefore, every person has committed the sin of spiritual fornication before God.

When the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees questioned the Lord Jesus about the woman who had committed adultery, their thought was that only she had committed adultery, not that they too had sinned before God. The Lord Jesus, however, countered their question by saying, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (v. 7). The Lord seemed to be asking, "Who is without sin among you? You say that this woman is adulterous, but before God you are no different than this woman." The Lord Jesus put these self-righteous people on the same standing as the convicted woman.

John 8 is very explicit in proving that all people are sinful. When the Lord Jesus said that the person who was without sin should be the first to throw a stone, He was saying that the scribes and the Pharisees were sinful. The Jews regarded the scribes and Pharisees as the noblest and most moral people. They were also self-righteous. If they could not escape the Lord Jesus' convicting words, who can escape being convicted by Him? Who would dare to say that he is without sin? The scribes and Pharisees brought a sinful woman to the Lord Jesus with the intention of ensnaring Him, but instead, the Lord Jesus confounded them. They brought the woman to the Lord Jesus in order to condemn her, but instead they were convicted by the Lord Jesus. The scribes and Pharisees saw only that the woman had sinned; they did not see that they were just like the woman. Because they did not know themselves, they brought the woman to the Lord Jesus and questioned Him. When they brought the woman to the Lord, they did not realize that they were bringing themselves to the Lord for judgment, because their condition before God was the same as the woman's condition.

The scribes and Pharisees had a high reputation and standing among the Jews; they were very powerful people. They brought the woman caught in adultery in order to threaten the Lord Jesus. They thought that they could ensnare the Lord Jesus and have a reason to accuse Him. If the Lord Jesus said that they should not stone the woman, He would be acting contrary to the law of Moses and could not have been from God. If He had said that they should stone her, He would have been acting contrary to His being the Savior who came to save sinners. Therefore, the scribes and Pharisees must have been haughty and insolent when they questioned the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus, however, was fine and wise. He was not quick to answer the scribes and Pharisees; instead, He stooped down and wrote with His finger on the ground. They continued to question Him, and He continued to write. We can imagine the scene. On the one hand, the scribes and Pharisees were haughty and insolent. On the other hand, the sinful woman was in fear and trembling. Under these circumstances the Lord Jesus stooped down and wrote with His finger on the ground. His stooping down must have given the impression of humility and lowliness. This was in stark contrast to the accusing scribes and Pharisees. When the Lord stooped down, He calmed the arrogant scribes and Pharisees, and He also comforted the woman. Then He gave the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees the opportunity to think about themselves.

Because the scribes and Pharisees persisted in questioning the Lord, He stood up and said, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (v. 7). They questioned the Lord Jesus in order to trap Him. In His reply the Lord Jesus judged and convicted them. He seemed to say, "Look at this sinful woman. You have also sinned before God. Whoever among you is without sin should be the first to throw a stone at her." These words touched their conscience. When the scribes and Pharisees heard this, they were judged. Their morality and ethics were a hypocrisy. The Lord Jesus pricked their conscience slightly, and they could not do anything. "When they heard that, they went out one by one, beginning with the older ones" (v. 9). Their leaving was their confessing that none of them was without sin. The older ones were the first to leave, followed by the younger ones. The conscience of an older person is often more sensitive. An older person has more sins, and his conscience has more holes. Therefore, the older ones were the first to flee. The younger ones saw that the older ones had fled, and they too fled. They fled because their conscience convicted them of their sins; they could not stand the Lord Jesus' word. The sinful woman was not condemned by the Lord Jesus, but the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees, who condemned others, were condemned by the Lord Jesus. The scribes and Pharisees were judged by Him. The Lord Jesus did not plan this, but their self-righteousness forced Him to speak so that they might judge and condemn themselves. The Lord Jesus wanted the scribes and Pharisees to know that the woman whom they condemned was sinful and that they were sinful as well. Even though she had sinned outwardly, they were sinful as well. Both the dishonorable and the honorable were sinful.

When we are about to condemn others for sinning, we should realize that we have the same illness. When we see a thief, we should ask ourselves whether we are “civilized” thieves. We are still thieves if we use different tactics and tricks to get others’ riches. Some thieves hold a gun, but other thieves hold a pen. We may say that someone who commits adultery does not have good conduct, but we also should ask whether we have good conduct. Are we inwardly clean? We may pretend before others, but we cannot pretend before the Lord Jesus. From the human perspective, there are good people and bad people, but from the Lord’s perspective, everyone is the same. People differ only in degrees. Even if others are big sinners, we can be small sinners. Others may be barbaric sinners, but we can be civilized sinners. This chapter of the Bible proves that all people in the world sin.