

MAN'S DARK SINFULNESS AND GOD'S GREAT FORGIVENESS

JOHN 08:01–11

John 08:01–09:41 DIVISION OVERVIEW

Jesus Christ, Revelation of Man, Enslaved by Sin

In Chapter 8 Christ reveals Himself to be the Light of life. Man is seen gripped by sin (illustrated by the woman taken in adultery and by hypocritical religionists). Man is pictured as being critical, condemnatory, self-righteous and adulterous — every single person is sinful. In the woman, man is seen as adulterous and guilty — living a life of darkness, without purpose and meaning and significance. In the religionists, man is seen as deceitful, critical, condemnatory, selfish, self-righteous and loaded with guilt. Not a single religionist is seen to be free from the darkness of serious sin. Jesus reveals Himself to be the Light of the World, the One who brings liberty, forgiveness, purpose, meaning and significance to the life of man.

John 08:01–11 Introduction

This event is a most striking picture of “Man’s Dark Sinfulness and God’s Great Forgiveness.”

- I. A picture of Jesus’ life (vv. 1-2).
- II. A picture of man’s dark guilt (vv. 3-6).
- III. A picture of man’s dark nature: all men are sinful — guilty of serious sin (vv. 7-9).
- IV. Conclusion: the great revelation — Jesus alone has the right to condemn and forgive (vv. 10-11).

I. John 08:01–02 Life of Jesus Christ and Christian Believer

A picture of Jesus’ life. There is a real contrast of lives here. The contrast is that of Jesus’ quiet and worshipful life contrasted with the turbulent and judgmental lives of the religionists. Jesus is drawn within the turbulence to calm, settle, and leaven it. A picture can be drawn of the Christian life as quiet and worshipful contrasted with a turbulent world.

Note the secret to Jesus’ calm and peace: He got alone with God. He often went off into the mount of Olives to be alone with God (Lk. 21:37.) It was a favourite spot of His, a place where He could be alone with God and His disciples, a place of quietness where God could meet with Him face-to-face, strengthening and encouraging Him (Mt. 26:30, 36f).

During the night, Jesus got all alone with God. This is a striking point, for it is information about our Lord that deeply moves and touches the heart. “Each evening, He went out, to spend the night on a hill called the Mount of Olives.” (Lk. 21:37). He was

facing so much, the final preparation of His disciples and His own final hours on earth, and He was facing it all in just *one week's time*. He needed time alone with God, a very special time, for He needed great strength, and the source of His strength was God. Every muscle in His body and every thought of His mind must have been craving for God's presence and wisdom and strength. He needed...

- to make maximum use of time in teaching the disciples, teaching exactly what they needed in these final hours.
- to have His own heart prepared to the maximum, ready to bear all the punishment of sin that was to be laid upon Him.

Note also that Jesus began His teaching early in the morning. The words “gathered” and “teach” are continuous action in the Greek. The people kept gathering to Him, and He kept teaching them. His very mission in life was that of worshipping God and teaching and ministering to people. By this He demonstrated how all men should walk through life: worshipping God, teaching and ministering to people. Every man needs to be taught, and every man needs the ministry of others during the trials of life.

II. *John 08:03–06 Man's Sin, Guilt and Depravity*

Man's dark guilt. Man's guilt and sin are pictured in all the parties involved.

1. There was the guilt of the woman and some unknown man. They were both guilty of the serious sin of adultery, a sin that affects so many lives. Under Jewish law it was considered so serious that the parties were to be stoned to death (Lev. 20:10; Deu. 22:13-24). Note how the sin speaks to the sin of every person.
 - => The sin was a work of darkness. All sin is, and most sin is actually done under the cover of darkness. An attempt is made to hide it from wife, husband, mother, father, employer, classmate.
 - => The man and woman thought what we all often think — that their sin would never be discovered, that no one would ever find out. But they overlooked two things that we all ignore: in the vast majority of cases, sin has been discovered; and sin, the very act of it, is always seen by God.
 - => The sin took place at the time of the feast, where the atmosphere was party-like and where men and women were brought together by drinking and dancing and the indulgence of the crowd (see Jn. 7:37f). Such an atmosphere corrupts even those with the best intentions and the highest morals.
2. There was the guilt of some witnesses, some people who were offended by the woman in particular. Jewish law required two witnesses to convict a person. It is most unlikely that the woman and her male companion were seen by the religionists. They would not have been in such a defiled atmosphere. The Pharisees and Scribes were too strict in

their rules and regulations. Some commentators do think, however, that the religionists had some scoundrels set a trap for the woman in order to drag her before Jesus to entrap Him. This seems most unlikely. Plotting a sin of the flesh does not fit in with the nature of the Pharisees and Scribes. Their sins were more of the spirit, much deeper, but less visible and less condemnatory to the public.

The point is this: the witnesses who caught the woman in the act of adultery were great sinners.

- a. They were vindictive and revengeful. They wanted to strike out, to get back at her. She was publicly exposed. She should have been held in custody in some private place until judgment was passed, but she was unmercifully dragged before the public to expose her sin and to shame and punish her. Why? Apparently, she had hurt her husband or some loved one so much that he struck out at her. Public exposure was his way to strike back at her.
- b. The man who committed adultery with her was not exposed. Why?
 - => He could have escaped, fled before they grabbed him.
 - => He could have been feared or bought off his accusers.
 - => He could have been released because, as is the case in so many societies, misbehaviour (sin) by men was more acceptable than by women.
3. There was the guilt of the religionists and the public. When the accusers dragged the woman to the religionists, people all along the way joined in, as the case so often is. The religionists saw a chance to test Jesus, so they took the woman before Him, hoping to discredit Him.
 - => If Jesus said the woman was not guilty, He would be breaking Jewish law and be leaving Himself open to the charge of being too lenient with sin.
 - => If Jesus said the woman was guilty and should be killed, He would be breaking Roman law which did not consider adultery a sin worthy of death. He would also be criticized as lacking mercy and love, compassion and forgiveness.

Note several things about the dark nature of man seen in these religionists and in the crowd who joined in the public exposure.

- a. There was a sinful spirit among all these involved, a spirit...
 - of self-righteousness that lacked forgiveness
 - of criticism that lacked love
 - of judging that lacked compassion
 - of censoring that lacked understanding
 - of condemning that lacked sympathy

- of punishing that lacked restoration
 - of savagery that lacked curing
 - of destroying that lacked the second chance
- b. There was hypocrisy. They felt and claimed that they were religious, better than the woman, free from any sin serious enough to be exposed. They even used Scripture to condemn her sin and to support their right to condemn her.
- c. There was complete failure to “love your neighbour as yourself” (Mt. 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mk. 12:31; Lk. 10:27; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14):
- => a complete failure to do what we all need sometime, to be embraced and pulled out of the sin and hurt gripping us.
- => a complete failure to hush — be quiet, and say nothing, except to the one caught in sin — and to set about a ministry of restoration and reconciliation to God and man.
4. There was Jesus ignoring sinful man as long as He could. “He bent down, and started to write on the ground with his finger,” saying nothing. He was silent for a long time. We are not told why Jesus stooped in silence or what He wrote on the ground. Various commentators say it was...
- to allow Him to think through the situation.
 - to force the accusers to repeat the charges (v. 7). By so doing, they and the public would begin to see and sense their lack of compassion.
 - to write Scripture or some of the sins of those standing around, hoping to convict them (see Job. 13:26).

Note this: Jesus did ignore them in all their sinful, critical, self-righteous, hypocritical spirit; but He ignored them only for a time. Jesus will not ignore nor allow sin to go on forever. He will arise, face it and judge it.

III. *John 08:07–09 Man's Depravity in Judging Others*

Man's dark nature. All men are sinful and guilty of serious sin.

1. The woman was guilty of a very serious sin. The law said she was to be condemned to death. Her accusers and the people were right, legally justified in their charge. If they were to be stopped from killing her, and even more, if they were to be corrected and rebuked, something phenomenal would have to happen. It did, and note what it was:

=> “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”

No man is without sin. Every one of the men standing there knew it, and every one of them was convicted within his conscience. They all left, leaving Jesus and the woman alone.

John 3:19 *This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.*

Rom 3:10 *As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one." (see vv. 9-18; 3:23)*

2. Jesus said that stones could be thrown at the sinner. But He placed a limitation on throwing or casting stones. "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." (Note: this means that only Christ can judge, for no person is without sin.)

Throwing or casting stones is not based on how much Scripture a person knows, nor on how great a person's calling and gifts are, nor on the position a person has. It is based upon moral goodness and perfection, and no man has achieved that.

Mat 7:3-5 *"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." (see Rom 14:4, 13; 1 Cor.4:5; Jas. 4:12)*

Rom 3:9-12 *What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."*

IV. John 08:10–11 Jesus Christ is the Only Saviour

The great revelation. Jesus alone has the right to condemn and forgive. The picture of the woman is the picture of every person. When it comes to sin and judgment, every person stands alone before Christ – stands naked and stripped of all righteousness, for no person possesses righteousness. There are no accusers, not among men. No man can condemn the woman nor anyone else. The only righteousness and the only perfection, the only One who is not guilty of sin, is Christ and Christ alone. He alone is worthy to stand in judgment. However, note the most glorious news in all of human history.

1. Jesus did not condemn but gave a second chance.

Luke 17:4 *"If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."*

Mat 18:21-22 *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."*

1 John 2:1-2 *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

2. Jesus wished to forgive and did forgive: “Neither do I condemn you.”

Rom 8:34 *Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

3. Jesus challenged, but warned: “Go now and leave your life of sin.” Stop your sinning – make a clean break – do it no more. The warning is clear: repentance is essential for forgiveness.

John 5:14 *Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”*

Luke 24:47 *And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*

Acts 2:38 *Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

Rom 6:12 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.*

1 Cor 15:34 *Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God – I say this to your shame. ■*