

Condemned Already

SS/HN 30/05/04 am

Reading: Luke 20:1-19, John 5

Study: John 3:17-18

Psalms: 145:2-8, 145:17-21, 18:16-19, 18:28-32

The analogy of a court room is often used to explain our salvation. We stand before the judge and we are guilty. We have no defense – guilty. The judge is just so has to pronounce sentence according to the crime. But his own son, the son of the judge steps forward to take that sentence upon himself, and so the one who is guilty is set free. The picture in the text before us today is somewhat more like being on death row. We are all born, in effect, on death row.

We saw last time the amazing, the immeasurable love of God toward the world when he gave his only son to die for our sins. We saw that *whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life*. We asked why would anyone not believe, why would anyone not accept this love of God, this free gift of salvation, of eternal life in Jesus Christ. The first answer to that is found in these verses.

People are blind to the fact that they are condemned already. They do not accept that they are born in sin. Like Pelagius, whom Augustine opposed, they think they have the capacity to do good themselves. They think they are born in some state of neutrality, that they are born innocent. But we are all born guilty, born condemned already, born on death row.

Adam brought sin into the world. He brought the whole human race under condemnation. He disobeyed God; he sinned and brought judgment from his Creator upon himself and upon us as sons of Adam. We are not born like Adam before he sinned, but like him after he sinned. We inherit from him a fallen nature. This is called original sin.

SC Q18 reads 'the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consists in the guilt of Adams first sin, the want of original righteousness and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin'.

That is the default condition, to use the language of today. Some time ago I reminded a man of what the Scripture says in John 3:36. *He who does not believe the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God remains on him*. He found that hard to accept. The truth of the wrath of God itself was hard for him to accept, but that Gods wrath is upon every human being who does nothing, who makes no response to the love of God revealed in the giving of His Son – well that was very hard to accept. Accept it or not it is the truth. Denying you are on death row will not save you from death.

When God sent his Son into the world did he come to judge or condemn the world? The Jews may have thought this way. They were expecting the Messiah. They were expecting Messiah to come and deliver the Jews – those who were striving to keep the law – to deliver them from the Gentiles who were oppressing them. They thought the Messiah would judge the Gentiles.

Even his own disciples when they were rejected by a Samaritan village came to Jesus saying *Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them as Elijah did?* What did Jesus say (Luke 9 54f.). Had he come to judge those who were against Him? He rebuked his disciples saying *the Son of man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them*.

We must be careful of our own attitude toward those who do not receive Jesus. Let us not be like the Jews who thought that Messiah was coming to judge the enemies of God – that is their enemies. Remember how they so

self-righteously dragged that woman before Jesus who they caught in adultery. They stood there waiting for Jesus to condemn her. What was Jesus attitude? He was concerned to save her from her sin.

It is quite ironic that when Jesus did say that he had come to judge the world (9:39) – a verse that appears to contradict our text – that he was referring to the Pharisees. They were people who thought that they were righteous, who thought that they saw everything clearly. They took offense at Jesus – '*Are we blind also*'. You say you see said Jesus but *your sin remains*.

Let us remember that Jesus came to save. That is what our text says. Not to condemn but *that the world through him might be saved*. We saw last time that the world means mankind, the human race. He did not come to save only the Jew, but Jews and Gentiles, the whole world.

Are those who have the law and are seeking to live by the law any better? Not at all says Paul. *For we have previously charged both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin.*(Romans 3:9) *You are without excuse O Man, you who judge another, for in whatever point you judge another you condemn yourself.* (Romans 2:1) Not much room for us to move is there. How effectively are you condemning yourself?

He came **to save from what**. From political oppression-that is what some think. The church must move to save people from oppression. If only we had Christian leaders and truth and justice and love and compassion, the world would be a much better place. Is that what Jesus came to save man from. His kingdom remember is not of this world.

To save us from sickness and unhappiness. To save us from a meaningless and empty life. To save from a life of poverty and give us a prosperous and 'abundant life'. Is this what Jesus came to save us from? Was this what the disciples looked for when they followed Jesus? They left homes, they left their comfortable jobs, they were persecuted, they suffered. Salvation did not bring them many of the comforts of this world.

Saved from what then. God sent his Son that the world through him might be saved. Death row, remember! That is where every one of us was born – on death row awaiting the execution of the sentence of death. That is where Adam put us – condemned already. To be saved then is to be taken off death row. God sent his Son to save us from perishing, from destruction, from death. He sent his Son *that we might live through Him* (I John 4:9).

There were scenes of jubilation outside the courthouse in the city the other day when a young man who had been imprisoned was set free. How great is the rejoicing when someone is taken off death row. How much greater is the rejoicing when someone is taken off the death row that leads to perishing, to eternal punishment in Hell. There is joy in heaven we are told, *joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents* (Luke 15).

Do you know that joy? Do you share that joy of being saved? Maybe we could all rejoice a bit more in such great and free salvation! Do not rejoice when you see demons cast out or the sick healed, *but rejoice that you names are written in heaven said Jesus* (Luke 10:20).

So God did not send his Son to condemn the world – people are condemned already. Jesus will of course come a second time and that will be in judgment. He will come to *judge the living and the dead* (2 Thessalonians 4:1). Death is no escape from this judgment. This is when the sentence will be executed or carried out. And we do not know that day nor that hour do we? You are on death row and you do not know when your name will be called. How foolish, how tragic, to delay taking up the offer of freedom given here by God himself.

He who believes in him is not condemned. How can you get off death row? Believe in Him. Believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God. Just believe. Not only will you be set free but there will be rejoicing in heaven as we have seen. God himself will be pleased for is not will that any should perish (1 Peter 3:9). It is we

might say with reverence, a win-win situation.

Have you ever had someone reject your gift to them? I know someone who takes my gift then goes off to the shops to see how much it cost – that is OK. But someone who says no thanks I don't want your gift. You put money aside for weeks, you spent all day looking for that special gift and the one you love says no thanks and turns away.

He who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. Note the repetition of not believe. Why this reference to 'the name' and not just 'Him'. There is something very personal about a name. There is something very precious about a name. My name may not mean anything literally but it means a lot to me- and did to my parents who gave it to me.

When Jesus came into this world Joseph was told to *call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins* (Matthew 1:21). His name means something. It means something literally and it means a lot to His Father in heaven who gave him that name. *God has highly exalted him and given him the name that is above every name* (Philippians 2). Does the name Jesus mean anything to you?

Unbelief. The sin of unbelief goes to the very heart of God who gave his only begotten and infinitely beloved son. They are condemned already.

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