

# Open Book

Everyone who had condemned her to death was gone. But, there was Jesus, writing on the ground. Surely a stillness permeated the place so completely that no one dared to break it. The disciples probably looked on from the background, mouths agape. Did she dare approach? She was guilty and everyone knew it. She knew it.

The mob had departed, but incredibly, she remained. Nothing prevented her from running away. No one forced her to face the Teacher. Did her feet shuffle? Was her mouth dry? Did her heart race? Just one word from the man before her and she would have been brutally executed earlier. He had not defended her or dismissed her guilt but rather put it in the proper perspective. What would he do now that the threatening crowd had dispersed? (See John chapter 8)

How many would come that close to death and then stick around to face the conclusion of the matter? Yet, this woman waited. Why?

Faced with the painful humiliating reality of personal sin, people react in different ways. Peter wept bitterly. (Mat 26:75) The humble worshiper in Christ's parable, *"standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote*

*upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."* (Luke 18) Paul exclaimed, *"Oh, wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"* (Rom 7:24) Isaiah cried, *"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips,..."* (Isa 6:5) Cain barked, *"Am I my brother's keeper?"* (Gen 4:9) Judas hung himself. (Acts 1:18) Adam 'passed the buck'. (Gen 3:12) David confessed. (2 Sam 12:7-13) Saul made excuses. (1 Sam 13:11)

Basically though, our reactions show that we all fall into one of two camps -- children of light or children of darkness. You see, men love darkness. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* (John 3:19) On the other hand, the children of God love light for they are the children of light. *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* (Gal 3:26) *Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.* (1Th 5:5) In this life however, both fall short -- some less than others. Nevertheless, both miss the mark.

Now, where ever the Light of Life shines it exposes. (Eph 5:13) When it exposes sin in our lives, we react to it based upon how we perceive God. And we perceive God based upon our relationship to Him.

So how does the light shine? Most of us as believers are not confronted with sin directly by other people because our contemporary concepts of church participation focus us on teaching/preaching and musical worship to the exclusion of sanctification and authentic pastoring. We so much want to be in unity that we can tend to dismiss the notion of loving correction as an endangerment to that goal. And it's true that high-minded criticality will drive wedges between people, but in some cases, we've swung the pendulum so far to the extreme that wayward believers are rarely confronted lovingly with their error on a personal basis.

Consequently, we need to listen individually even more closely to the voice of the Holy Spirit within as He brings conviction of sin. Notice, I did not say condemnation. For the believer, there is no condemnation from God but rather conviction and correction.

Now all of this is important to us because we live in the Christian culture characteristic of Laodecia. (See Rev 3) Observably, the large majority in this culture are spiritually *"neither cold nor hot"* and by comparison to the church throughout the ages, have the sad distinction of acting like we are *"rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing"*. We are coddled in 'country clubs' we boast as churches and

experience the Christian life as not much more than a buffet of choices focused fundamentally on personal gratification. And the sad thing is that we are typically blind to it. Many have left Jesus outside knocking and don't realize it.

When some audacious preacher has the temerity to tell us about our condition even in the most cautious terms, the 'spiritually offended' find another buffet at which to dine, a more amiable country club, a more interesting essay to read.

You may think I'm being harsh, unfair, overly this or that, but we are in this 'soup' together. Like Lot's children when he tried to warn them, you may think I'm not to be taken seriously. You may think, 'I'm not a sinner like this woman taken in adultery.' If so, you've missed the point for indeed you are -- so am I.

On the other hand, you may be standing with me, and like the woman in our story above, before the Lord, ashamed, exposed, unworthy of His defense. If you are truly 'hanging with me' on this, it is likely because you know you're guilty, but you also sense that the One whom you're facing will not condemn. Oh, we could run away. We could try to hide from the awful truth.

This woman stayed to hear from her Savior. She stayed to look into His eyes and know His heart. When He said, *"Woman, where are those accusers of*

yours? Has no one condemned you?" she may have been hanging her head. But, when she replied, "No one, Lord." I'm very much inclined to envision her eyes finding His in hope. The light was shining and she was bathing in it. Jesus washed her with these words, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

Several commentators note that the Greek word used earlier for "without sin" when Jesus answered the accusing mob, can mean without the same sin – whether it was the same type of sin or simply sin in general, the others knew they were guilty too. They had dropped their stones and walked away. Confronted with the fact of their own personal sin, they did not stick around. The light was too much for them. They retreated into their beloved darkness.

Interestingly enough, this story was not read in the early churches generally. It was even left out of most early Greek manuscripts. "Augustine definitely stated that certain individuals had removed from their codices the section regarding the adulteress, because they feared women would appeal to this story as an excuse for infidelity ... asceticism played an important role in the sub-apostolic age." -- William Hendriksen

Most generally, contemporary commentators deal with John

8:1-11 even though the new paragraph mark begins with verse 13. Now, divisions of paragraph magnitude were the first punctuation marks that were added into the New Testament texts so the assumption that this story ends with verse 11 is not based upon something provided by the author in the original language. In fact, early manuscripts place John 7:53 – 8:11 in several places. Those placements, however, cannot be given any more legitimacy than the complete exclusion of the passage. I'm inclined to believe that the text in John 8 from verse 1 – 20 represents a single passage pertaining to what happened as Jesus was teaching in the temple treasury. Notice it begins and ends with those comments.

Having said that, it seems that to those who were watching this whole scene agasp, He continued, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." The word He used here for follow means to follow as a disciple. This was likely a general statement, but it could also be that this woman at one point previously had tried to follow Jesus. In addition, He addressed her kindly, using the general term, *gune*, that denotes a woman, usually a married woman, the same word He used to address Mary his mother and other women who distinctively

had faith in Him. Clearly, we do not know for sure whether that is the case or not, however she found not only a temporary reprieve from her accusers but grace. And that is because, contrary to the rest of the sinful crowd, she stuck around. She welcomed the Light.

In some Christian circles there is a tendency to hide from the light not so much because of what the Lord will think but what we suspect men will think. We believe that men will usually want to 'stone us'. But being 'salt and light' in this world has much more to do with honesty and humility than moral purity. To "walk in the Light" does not mean to walk in such a way that everyone oo's and ah's at your spiritual splendor or achievements but that under the guidance of the Spirit of God you are an **open book** – not pretending or disguised but rather transparent and on display. You see, this is the only way people can really see Jesus Christ working in you and through you. This is how they see your good works and glorify God. (Mat 5:16)

John wrote, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse

us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:7-9 emphasis added)

Paul wrote, "Brethren, if any person is overtaken in misconduct or sin of any sort, you who are spiritual [who are responsive to and controlled by the Spirit] should set him right and restore and reinstate him, without any sense of superiority and with all gentleness, keeping an attentive eye on yourself, lest you should be tempted also.

Bear (endure, carry) one another's burdens and troublesome moral faults, and in this way fulfill and observe perfectly the law of Christ (the Messiah) and complete what is lacking [in your obedience to it].

For if any person thinks himself to be somebody [too important to condescend to shoulder another's load] when he is nobody ..., he deceives and deludes and cheats himself." (Gal 6:1-3 Amplified Version)

Do you love the Light even though it exposes? You will if you're born again. When you know your Father and your Savior as you should, His light is wonderfully welcome. It is truthful, but it is Life. Don't hide from it. Don't just drop your rock and retreat. Don't follow the crowd. Walk in the Light – the shining Light of the bright Morning Star. Hang in there and discover the grace that is in the face of our Savior Jesus (See Mat 17:2 and 2 Cor 4:6).