

## “Neither Do I Condemn You” By Paul R. Blake

Question: “When the woman caught in adultery was brought before Jesus, He told her He did not condemn her but told her to ‘Go, and sin no more.’ If you’re going to continue to sin, why be baptized because you’ll ‘go down a dry sinner and come up a wet sinner.’ What does this mean?”

John 8:10-11 - “When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you? She said, No one, Lord. And Jesus said to her, Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

The Bible is its own best commentary. Consider another occasion where the Lord told someone not to sin any more. John 5:14 - “Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.”

Consider Matthew 12:43-45 - “When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation.”

In other words, when one chooses to rid himself of a harmful behavior or course of action, he must replace it with another more beneficial activity. Otherwise, he will not succeed in preventing the former behavior from returning and doing him even more harm. One who chooses to stop sinning must find a helpful, spiritually healthy activity to replace it. Otherwise there is a void in his life that must be filled, and will most likely be filled with the sinful activity he is already familiar and comfortable with.

Jesus was not going to condemn and punish the woman while she still had time and life in which to replace adultery with spiritual conduct. The healed man needed to fill his life with righteousness, lest he fall into sinful and self-destructive practices. The man who was saved from the evil spirit needed to have something in place that would leave no available room for the spirit when he returned. The apostle Paul wrote: Ephesians 4:27 - “Do not give place to the devil.” Meaning, do not provide opportunities for yourself to be vulnerable to temptation.

He also wrote in Romans 13:14 - “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.” The two things he said to do and the order in which he said them is: 1) put on Jesus, and 2) do not provide yourself with opportunities to be tempted to sin. If you smoke when you walk to the post office, instead of taking your cigarettes and lighter with you, take a hymnal or a Bible or a tract or a bulletin or anything else but cigarettes and lighters, and read along the way. If you drink when you go play golf, take a bottle of your favorite soda pop. If you like to watch programming that is sexual in nature, have someone block that channel on your TV without telling you the code. You will have “made no provision for the flesh.” However, that is only the second part of Paul’s instruction. The first part is to put on Christ. The second is destined to fail eventually, because the first has not been implemented. Just like the

man who had a void in his life when the evil spirit left, so it will be with one who rids himself of a sinful habit without Christ in his life.

As to the woman of John 8, she lived under the Law of Moses, and therefore would be expected to devote herself to following the law. Jesus did not baptize her converting her to Christianity, because He had not yet died for sins. She would therefore fill the void left by abandoning adultery with a restoration of her service to God under the law.

There is a difference between one who is baptized all the while intending to continue in a particular sin versus one who is beset with a strong temptation but is baptized anyway, resolving to overcome the temptation in Christ rather than alone outside of Christ. The first has not repented because he plans to remain in sin. The second knows that he has an area of vulnerability but wants the Lord's help in overcoming it, and so he obeys the Lord trusting that He will help. And he does so knowing that it is possible to stumble in his resolve to go and sin no more, but also knows that he would be less successful alone and that should he stumble, he has a Lord who loves him and will forgive him in spite of his weakness.

Christ has never called us to perfection on our own power, nor are we saved on our works and results alone. We are called to strive against sin. Permit me to illustrate this with a story. A member of the church stands before the judgment bar of God. He says, "I was baptized into Christ following belief, repentance, and confession." God replies, "Well, that's ten percent of what you need to get into heaven." The man says, "I was faithful in my attendance, I gave generously every week, I was active in worship and in reaching out to the lost, I studied my Bible at home every day, and I taught Bible classes." God answered, "Wonderful, that's another ten percent. You now have 20% of what you need to get into heaven." The man was beginning to sweat, now. "I was kind and loving toward my wife, I took care of my parents when they were old, I raised my children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and I was a good citizen." God said, "Yet another ten percent. What else?" The man began trembling, realizing this was going to be harder than he thought. "I lived a moral life. I didn't dance, drink, smoke, lie, cheat, steal, murder, fornicate, or use bad language." God said, "Ten percent more; almost half of what you need to go to heaven. What else do you have?" The man in resignation said, "Well, I guess I must rely on your grace and mercy. What else can I do?" God said, "You now have one hundred percent of what you need to enter heaven; go on in." Fictitious, but illustrative.

Romans 13:14 and 1John 1 & 2 supply the answer to your question. Romans 13:14 - "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts." Put on Jesus Christ, do not put yourself in the way of temptation, and appeal to God and trust in His grace and mercy when you stumble.

1John 1:7-9, 2:1 - "But 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... My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (For more help with this, consider the article written by brother Frank Walton on "Right Spiritual Thinking.")

## Right Spiritual Thinking

By W. Frank Walton

“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6). The power of right spiritual thinking is key to right spiritual being! We must remember that the object of our stream of thought affects our eternal destiny, as well as our spiritual well-being. Each of us is in charge of what we think. This “self-talk” arises from the deepest springs of our being.

In context (Rom. 7:7-24), Paul showed that man cannot save himself by perfect, external rule-keeping, as he had earnestly tried (Phil. 3:4-7) but had so miserably failed as a Pharisee under the Law. Imperfect man needs something higher and greater to focus upon than his fleshly efforts. Without faith’s reliance on God’s grace, our best efforts or “works” become a fleshly, failed “body of death” (Rom. 7:24, 9:30-31; Phil. 3:3).

Paul exclaims, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom 7:25). The Spirit reveals the path forward in focusing our faith on the perfect Savior and Teacher of erring humanity (Rom. 8:9-17, 29, 10:4, 13:14). “The mind set on the Spirit” is thinking about the things revealed by the Spirit. In the person of our Lord, we see the source of all spiritual life and peace. This transcends mere, human positive thinking. We have positive faith in the Son of Man, the perfect model of a true human being. It’s well-said: “He became as we are, in order to make us like He is.”

In meditating on and obeying His wonderful words of life, revealed by the Spirit, we can “be transformed in by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:20-24). When “the Spirit of Christ dwells in you” (Rom. 8:9), we have discovered the faith process of letting Christ take over our thinking and actions. This is the spiritual power of inner transformation and lasting change.