**More Like the Master**

In His Condemnation of Sin and Error

Lesson 12

*“Think not that I came to send peace on the earth:*

*I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34)*

**We Strongly Condemn…**

We often hear world leaders say, “We strongly condemn…” when there has been something devastating like a terrorist attack. But, few people enjoy being condemned or rebuked for the sin and error in their personal lives. We live in a society that promotes the condoning of improper behavior, not the condemning of it. Yet, God does not want us to overlook the sin and the error in our own lives or in the lives of others. We must condemn the sin and error in a person’s life in order to encourage them to leave it behind and be right with God. Sin hides the face of God from all those who commit it (Isaiah 59:1-2) and it brings reproach upon all those who practice it (Proverbs 14:34).

Some have a mental picture of Jesus as one who was tolerant of everything and never condemning of anyone. However, when Jesus first began to preach, his message was: *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:14-15). He wanted people to change and leave their sin, not remain in it. He condemned sin and preached repentance – two very unpopular practices then and now. Jesus said, *“For judgment came I into the world…”* (John 9:39). Jesus judged the word as he condemned the sin in the world. Jesus divided families as he upheld the truth and as he condemned the error in their lives (Matthew 10:35; Luke 12:49-53). With a burning love for truth, Jesus despised and condemned all that was false and erroneous. At no time was Jesus ever indifferent toward sin or error. What can we learn from Jesus about condemning sin and error?

**Jesus and His Condemnation**

Jesus condemned by his actions. Jesus “cleansed” the temple and cast out the moneychangers at the beginning of his ministry (John 2:13-22) and again at the end (Matthew 21:12-17). He condemned the Jewish misuse of the temple and reminded the people that his Father’s house was to be a place of worship, not a place of business. Jesus continued to gain followers even though he condemned the Jewish authorities on this occasion (John 2:23-25; Matthew 21:15). Jesus also engaged in continual debate with the religious leaders of his day and condemned their many errors and falsehoods (Matthew 22-23). He did not retreat from battle, but was the greatest controversialist who ever lived.

Jesus condemned by his statements. Jesus was plain in his condemnation of sin. He called sin by name. Jesus told the lame man whom he had healed, *“Sin no more…”* (John 5:14). He told the woman caught in adultery the same thing (John 8: 11). Jesus warned his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount saying, *“Beware of false prophets…”* (Matthew 7:15). He also pronounced his “Woe” upon Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum and upbraid them for their unbelief (Matthew 11:20-30). Jesus described the scribes and Pharisees as an *“evil and adulterous generation”* who seeks after sign that will not be given. These people will be condemned by the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South in the judgment day because they did not repent (Matthew 12:38-42; Luke 11:29-32). Jesus condemned the Pharisees for their traditions, making void the commandments of God, and hypocritical worship (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13). On this occasion, Jesus listed several sins by name: murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witnesses, and railing (Matthew 15:19). When Jesus came into the borders of Magadan (Dalmanutha), he was once again tested by the Pharisees and Sadducees who asked for a sign. He condemned them for being able to discern the weather but not the signs of the times. Again, he charged them with being an *“evil and adulterous generation”* (Matthew 16:1-4; Mark 8:10-12). Mark records that Jesus *“sighed deeply in his spirit”* on this occasion showing that he was disappointed in their unbelief (Mark 16:12). Jesus condemned the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem of being bondservants of sin, in need of truth, and being children of the devil (John 8:31-58). They did not like Jesus’ condemnation of them so they ridiculed him (John 8:48) and took up stones to cast at him (John 8:59). Jesus later condemned them again of their after healing the man born blind (John 9:39-40). He said, *“If you were blind, you would have no sin: but now you say, We see: your sin remains”* (John 9:41). When Jesus answered the Sadducees concerning their erroneous views of the resurrection, he said, *“You do err not knowing the scriptures…”* (Matthew 22:29; see also Mark 12:24,27). Jesus said that the Pharisees would receive greater condemnation for their insincerity, hypocrisy, and unauthorized practices (Matthew 23:14; Mark 12:40; Luke 20:47).

Jesus condemned by his questions. Jesus condemned the Pharisees on one occasion by asking, *“How can you, being evil, speak good things?”* (Matthew 12:34). After being questioned about ceremonial cleansing, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and scribes for their hypocritical, man-made tradition (Matthew 15:1-10; Mark 7:1-13). He asked them, *“Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?”* (Matthew 15:3).

Jesus condemned by his teaching. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus condemned self-serving religion (Matthew 6:1-18) and hypocritical judging (Matthew 7:1-5). He also condemned the wicked thoughts of the Pharisees and their charge of casting out demons by Beelzebub. He condemned them by teaching them about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, the tree that is known by its fruits, and the judgment of one’s words (Matthew 12:30-37; Mark 3:28-30). He said one’s words would condemn (Matthew 12:37). Jesus also taught them about the importance of taking the right stand (Matthew 12:43-45; Luke 11:23-26) and removing the evil eye (Luke 11:33-36). Jesus condemned the teaching of the Pharisees and the Sadducees by describing it as the *“leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees”* and he even condemned his own disciples on this occasion for their hardened hearts (Matthew 16:4-12; Mark 8:13-21).

Jesus condemned his own disciples. Jesus was no respecter of persons. If Jesus’ own disciples needed condemnation and rebuke like the others, they received it from Jesus. When Peter told Jesus that he should not go to Jerusalem to suffer, Jesus said to Peter, *“Get behind me, Satan … for you mind not the things of God, but the things of men”* (Matthew 16:21-23). Mark records that Jesus rebuked Peter for his actions (Mark 8:31-33). On another occasion, Jesus said to his disciples when they could not cast out a demon, *“O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?”* (Matthew 17:17; Mark 9:19; Luke 9:41). On two different occasions when the disciples questioned who among them was the greatest, Jesus corrected their thinking (Luke 9:46-48; 22:24-30). When James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, Jesus *“turned and rebuked them”* (Luke 9:51-55).

Jesus was forgiving of the condemned. Not all of the condemned who came to Jesus came with a hardened heart. There were those who were condemned of sin but who were also penitent and repentant. When Jesus was in the presence of the penitent, he was willing to forgive them. He did this with the woman at the well (John 4), the sinful woman in Simon’s house (Luke 7:36-50), the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11), and Peter (Luke 22:31-32).

**The Christian and Condemnation**

Contrary to what many today think, it is not “unloving” to expose sin and error and condemn it using the word of God. When a Christian reproves the *“unfruitful works of darkness”* (Ephesians 4:11-12), he will be engaged in condemnation. The Christian must *“contend earnestly for the faith”* (Jude 3) and this will involve condemnation of sin. Like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day (Matthew 15:12-14), many today will not like to be condemned, but it must be done. Paul condemned sin (Romans 1:29-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-4; Colossians 3:5-9; 2 Timothy 3:2-4), James did it (James 2:11; 3:14-16; 4:1-4), Peter did it (1 Peter 2:1,11; 3:10; 4:3; 2 Peter 2), Jude did it (Jude 5-19), John did it (Revelation 21:8, 27; 22:15), and we must do it.

The “positive only” approach that we see today in religion in general and preaching in particular has no place among God’s people. Now, more than ever, is the time to *“preach the word; reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering”* (2 Timothy 4:2). Our condemnation of sin comes from love (Revelation 3:19) and it is based upon the authority of God’s word (2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 2:15).

We must tell the lost that they will be condemned if they do not repent. All who are lost in sin will be condemned because sin brings condemnation upon all who sin (Romans 5:16-18). The lost need to hear, believe, and obey the gospel. Jesus said, *“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieves shall be condemned”* (Mark 16:16). When the lost are baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27) and have their sins washed away (Acts 22:16), they can be free from condemnation. Paul wrote: *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus* (Romans 8:1). We all need to do what we can to tell the lost how to be freed from the terrible condemnation of sin.

We must tell erring Christians that they will be condemned if they do not repent. Sometimes a Christian may sin and fall back into the condemnation of the devil. When this happens, we need to go to that Christian and try to encourage that one to repent and come back to Christ. Paul did this with Peter on one occasion. Paul wrote, *“But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned”* (Galatians 2:11). Peter (Cephas) was acting hypocritically and Paul spoke the truth to him to correct him (Galatians 2:11-14). Christians who sin, *“fall into the condemnation of the devil”* (1 Timothy 3:6; see also 1 Timothy 5:12,20; Titus 1:13; 3:11). These erring Christians need our help. Jesus taught, *“Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him”* (Luke 17:3).We all need to do what we can to restore the erring Christian by speaking to them the truth in love (Galatians 4:16; Ephesians 4:15), by going to them in the spirit of gentleness (Galatians 6:1), and by trying to turn them back from *“the error of his way”* (James 5:19-20; see also 2 Peter 2:18-22).

**More Like the Master in His Condemnation**

Admittedly, it is never popular to condemn sin and error. When John the Baptist reproved Herod and Herodias for their unlawful marriage, he lost his head (Matthew 14:4; Luke 3:19; Mark 6:14-29). There are people in this world who simply do not want the light of truth in their lives. They do not want to change. But, we must do what we can to take the light of truth to a dark and sinful world. Some will run from the light and others will run to the light. John wrote: *“And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that does evil hates the light, and comes not to the light, lest his works should be reproved. But he that does the truth comes to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God”* (John 3:19-21). Paul wrote: *“But all things when they are reproved are made manifest by the light: for everything that is made manifest is light”* (Ephesians 5:13). Let us all be “More Like the Master” in our condemnation of sin and error.

**Questions**

1. What was one purpose for Jesus coming to the world (Matthew 10:34-35; John 9:39)?

2. What were some of Jesus’ actions that demonstrated his condemnation of sin and error?

3. What were some of Jesus’ statements that demonstrated his condemnation of sin and error?

4. What were some of Jesus’ questions that demonstrated his condemnation of sin and error?

5. What were some of Jesus’ teachings that demonstrated his condemnation of sin and error?

6. What occasions did Jesus condemn his own disciples?

7. What did Jesus do with condemned people who were penitent?

8. What do Christians need to do about the lost and their condemnation?

9. What do Christians need to do about erring Christians and their condemnation?

10. What attitude should a Christian have when condemning sin and error and what does a Christian use to condemn sin and error?