

## LAMPLIGHTER

### AUGUST 2008

**THEME: JESUS SAID... “Neither Do I . . .”**

**JOHN 20:30, 31**

*"No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (John 8:11 NIV)*

Dear Fellow Believers in Jesus,

There is a lesson to be learned in the architectural design of Versailles, that elegant abode of French monarchy outside Paris. Separating the War Drawing Room from the Salon of Peace is the Hall of Mirrors. This arrangement of rooms might well symbolize what people must do in their personal lives to pass from war (or quarrel) to peace: They must examine themselves in the mirror. The mirror reflects back our own mistakes that may have contributed to the conflict. Paul Speratus writes in verse three of his hymn, “Salvation unto Us Has Come:” “The Law is but a mirror bright To bring the inbred sin to light That lurks within our nature.” For this reason, as the cliché says, “It takes two to tangle.” In other words there is no completely innocent party, so we must take responsibility for our part – “he who is without sin may cast the first stone.”

Just like passing the mirror in a hallway, we see how dirty our faces have become by toiling in the hot sun, so in the second use of the law, we see how dirty we have become by sin. Paul said in Romans 3:20, “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.” Or in Romans 7:7 Paul states, “What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, ‘Do not covet.’”

Some might rationalize that the crowd was doing only what the Law demanded of a person caught in adultery. We may even rationalize that they were doing what they thought was best and perhaps even with the best of intention. Here is where we struggle. Does every thought, especially those that are judgmental and condemnatory, need to be uttered? Since I hope the muscle of my brain is bigger than the muscle of my mouth, I should think before I speak and ask: “Is this comment beneficial or harmful to my relationship with this individual?”

Jesus shows us another way of dealing with conflict. He demonstrates a God who will not deal with us by dishing out what the Law demands, but a God who reaches out to us with grace, mercy, and forgiveness. Instead of casting stones with the others, Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn thee”- to judicial punishment, such as your accusers demand. Our Lord’s gentle dealing with the woman was due to His desire not to break a bruised reed. She had already suffered much and (we may suppose) was bowed down under the burden of sin. He perceived that in her case a warning to “sin no more” would suffice. Jesus said in John 3:17-18, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. {18} Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.” Paul reminds us in Romans 8:1, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Surely, thorns and thistles grow in the garden of our relationships. In our relationship with others, we discover many points of friction. Like two sticks rubbed together things can get hot, because getting along with others is not always easy. There will be, at times, disagreements. Let us however follow Paul’s directions in Ephesians 4:32 “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Jesus says to you and me, “Neither do I condemn you.”

**Close with prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, Benediction, and Song – #80 “Oh, That The Lord Would Guide My Ways”**