

The Universality of Sin

It is normal when one is on a trip to a different city to stay in the home of a friend. Jesus lived in the north of the country, in the province of Galilee, and from there he often traveled for ministry reasons to Jerusalem and stayed in a neighboring village called Bethany, where his friend Lazarus lived.

One of those days, the Scribes and Pharisees, with the purpose of causing him problems, brought him a woman surprised in adultery, a crime which according to the governing laws deserved stoning. Jesus bent over and wrote on the ground with his finger. At the insistence of the agitators he stood up and said to them:

"If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

Then stooping down again, he continued to write on the ground.

Conscience stricken, they began to leave one by one, beginning with the oldest down to the youngest, leaving only the woman taken in a sexual sin. Jesus said to her:

*"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"
"No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."*

John 8: 3-11

The masterly reaction of the Carpenter from Nazareth to this dilemma teaches us on one hand the essence of the good news, the forgiveness of our rebellions, the need to change our conduct, and to stop doing what is forbidden. On the other hand, it clearly teaches the principle of mercy when acting in this world.

Those who came full of indignation with their pockets full of rocks in order to participate in this public stoning were left with their pebbles in their pockets and rocks in their hands: all of them, without exception.

The interrogation smote the conscience of the very ones who had set themselves up as judges of this woman, as they were faced with the reality of their own lives and transgressions. None of them could survive it.

Without doubt, the main reason for separation and divorce is breaking the commitment to conjugal faithfulness. When there is genuine repentance we see that forgiveness is possible and the family can be restored. It is always preferable to restore a family than to begin another with the broken pieces of the previous ones.

Sometimes it is difficult to take the Word of the Lord to older persons, considering that it was not the children but the older ones who began to withdraw first. Many have been overcome by the pain in this world and remain anchored to the roots of this world, usually having religious habits or pre-established forms of spirituality.

Nevertheless one must recognize that for others the fact of having crossed large stretches of desert, the passing of the years, and the nearness of death, makes them more willing to understand and sense the need for significance. When given opportunity to remember their past they are more conscious of and open to recognize the crimes and transgressions they have committed.

In this episode and with the axiomatic phrase “*if any one of you is without sin,*” the universality of sin becomes evident.

There is only one among all who have breathed on this planet in all of history, who has not been a sinner.

For some these terms are disconcerting, but it seems necessary to deliberately use them for the effect they produce in the conscience to understand this subject: everyone is an outlaw, everyone is born a delinquent, and everyone comes from his mother’s womb with a depraved nature.

I don’t want to offend you, but the Word of God is very clear and classifies the human nature as corrupt, since every man is born with a contaminated, egocentric heart, destitute of the glory of God. The human being emerges excommunicated from the kingdom of heaven, outside paradise, which is why he needs a Redeemer to reconcile his soul in order to enter eternal life. How difficult it is for man to recognize this situation.

The universality of sin is recognized, as is original sin. It is worth saying that this transgression, this perverted nature, distorted from birth, comes directly from Adam. Every human being needs a reconciler, a restorer, a Savior who is Jesus Christ, the Lord. No one is good, not even one.

Only He had the moral authority to throw the stone instead of offering forgiveness. The extraordinary actions of Jesus remained expressly recorded for us. Not only does it speak of mercy, of love and of pardon, which are superior to homicide, adultery, or whatever transgression or sin, but it also certifies the universality of sin, the reality of the original transgression. Notice who remained alone with the woman. Why did not even one remain? There were scribes, priests, experts in the explanation of the scriptures among the accusers, Jews who claimed to comply with the entire law, but not one of them could withstand the test of the truth in their conscience and were left with the stones in their hands, disqualified from throwing them at the woman.

Eye-witnesses certify these facts that Jesus remained alone with the woman. Thus we all need this forgiveness, this redemption, this salvation. There is nobody who does not need it; sin reaches to all humanity.

By coming to the cross of Christ we are restored, we are reconciled with God, and once again we obtain that peace and forgiveness and are inserted into eternal life. It is the new birth of which the Scriptures speak extensively, the new nature through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, in our hearts.

Every human being longs for liberty and fights for it. There are two relevant things that war against liberty: sin and ignorance. The ignorant man is a slave to his spiritual

poverty. Many mistakes and many crimes are committed because of spiritual illiteracy; hence the importance of knowing the Scripture. On another occasion while teaching, Jesus said, *"You err not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God."* Hence every human being has the responsibility of looking into the mirror, which is the Word of God, and being able to distinguish what is good and what is wrong so there is no excuse when we appear before the judgment seat of Christ and argue that we did not know. Even if it were so, we must answer for the sins committed in ignorance, without conscience, without knowledge, for the so called mistakes.

We are not going to enter into an investigation at this time of that aspect of theology, but that's how it is: even those sins that you commit in ignorance or that are hidden from your reason, you must give an account of these also before the Lord. You may read more on this subject in Leviticus six from verse 14 on and in Psalm nineteen verse 12. Our responsibility is to come out of our ignorance, to get to know the Word, in order to obtain liberty and to act in a way that we don't fall prisoner to error again.

Jesus spoke again to them, saying:

Here in John chapter 8 between verses 12 and 20 another concept is clarified – the differences and the similarities between God the Father and Christ the Son.

I have noticed, and you probably have too, that if I invoke God a great many persons in the world will agree with that invocation. If you ask how many people believe in God, of the six billion human beings alive today on earth, a great multitude would stand indicating they believe in God.

The second question that one must ask is "what God do I believe in?" Who is God to me? There you will begin to note the fundamental differences. Not all roads lead to God. The god of Muhammad is different from the god of the Buddhists, and the god of the Buddhists is different from the Zoroastrian god of the Persians, and different from the gods of the Greeks, from the gods of the Egyptians, and from the gods of the Chaldeans. Not all roads lead to the true God.

Following this episode, Jesus makes clear the identity that there is between God the Father and that humble carpenter who in a masterly manner is giving a thousand-year-old teaching, revealing things that were hidden from the foundation of the world, explaining these concepts in a very illustrative manner. Thus the verse says:

¹⁹Then they asked him, "Where is your father?" "You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also."

If you knew who I am you would simultaneously and immediately know who my Father is, who God is. Therefore He said *"I am the way, the truth and the life: no one comes to the Father except by me."*

Doctor Luke ratifies this, arguing in Acts *"there is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved"* and all this explanation, this dialogue, this discourse that He has here with the Jews points in that direction.

²¹Once more Jesus said to them, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come." ²³But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.

We see here the reality of two different worlds: the earthly world below and the heavenly world above. Mankind, the human being, needs to transcend to the higher world. He who remains trapped in ignorance and sin, be it because his eyes are closed to the faith, or because his heart is hard as stone, or because he does not recognize his sin, he is not going to transcend to the heavenly spheres and will simply live throughout eternity separated forever from God.

²⁴I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins

If a person does not accept Christ and does not recognize him as the Son of God, then he is going to die in the blindness of his heart as a result of his sins and foolishness.

³⁰Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.

Reviewing this passage last night, my attention was called once again to verse thirty. These things may seem a little dry or complex: the union of the trinity of persons, the Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit. It says that speaking of these things, many believed in him, and that gave me confidence, thinking that although it is a difficult subject and that supposedly it is a complicated subject, but if it is difficult and complex, it is no less certain that it is possible to understand and accept it. Here we read that many believed in Him when He spoke of the identity of the Father with the Son.

Being distinct persons, they are yet the same and there is no other way to the Father except through the Son, and this is what I want to leave with you on this occasion: the universality of sin. Let me repeat, every human being needs a Savior. Everyone needs to be reconciled with God through the cross of Christ. Jesus is the way to the Father. In as much as we know Jesus we know the Father, and the way we know Jesus is not by reading a periodical to see what Jesus is like; it is not by reading a tract about Jesus, nor reading peripheral books or anecdotes or receiving cultural information about who Jesus is. The way to know Jesus is by knowing what Jesus said about himself. The way to know Jesus is by knowing what Jesus did, and we find all this in the Scriptures. There we find the Gospels which clearly record His steps, His ways, His words and sayings, His miracles, doctrines, ethics, and concepts, His statutes and decrees. There they are specifically declared and together with them there are the apostolic letters which were gleaned directly from the Master's teaching and the authors were eye-witnesses of the transcendent acts. Therefore the way to know God is to know the Scriptures.

I urge you to search deeply for the knowledge of God through the systematic study of His Word which we find in the Bible. With reason it is the most read book, the most solicited, and the most desired. While the number of Christians in the world is increasing, there is also more need; because there are more human beings. The responsibility of the believer is to know the Word and contribute to making it available to every person.

Today I want to again make you responsible for your salvation. I want to make you responsible for your free will that you may choose to accept Christ, to accept God, or continue to be indifferent and reject Him. That will be your problem, not mine. Until now it was my problem, because I want to presume, in the worst scenario, that you are ignorant of the things of God, I want to start with the worst situation, a person absolutely ignorant, and thus through this explanation, through these words today, I want to make you conscious of who God is and who Jesus is. Now is the time for you to decide what to do with your soul. It is up to you to say: I agree, I will continue here in the world, being under the sentence of death for my sins, or on the contrary, understand that you have an out-of-date nature, morally depraved, spiritually distorted, destitute of the glory of God, separated from that communication with the Lord, and decide to repent of your sins, come to God in confession of your sins, and then He will open the doors of the prison and forgive you, give you the glorious liberty of the children of God, forgive all your transgressions, clean your conscience. From then on there is no one who can accuse you since your sins are forgiven and you have free entrance into eternal life, into the higher transcendent kingdom of God

I finish with the third concept that is found in verses 31 and following.

*³¹To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³²Then you will know the truth, and **the truth will set you free.**"*

³³They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

³⁴Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word.

In fact, there were many Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah, but there were also many who rejected him, who pursued him to death and crucified him on the cross, preferring Barabbas rather than recognizing the Messiah in that carpenter, God made man. So the truth will set you free.

*³¹To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said,
"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.*

He is speaking here of surrender to God, of knowing the truth, of accepting Christ, of receiving salvation, eternal life, but he adds here a fundamental concept: *"If you hold to my teaching"*. We could be two hours and it would be a little. If I say five hours, it is still a little. An entire day is still a little when compared with the Scriptural concept of remaining in or holding to, of persevering, of being constant, disciplined – habits that are required in the spiritual life.

Without me you can do nothing.

Advancing in the same book of John, in the chapters that speak of the branches and the vine, we find an allegory or strategy in view of the need to remain attached to the true vine. Hence the Christian life, dear people, requires habits, permanence, continuity, effort, sacrifice, a conscience that instigates our acts, willingness of heart, and if you are

not willing to do that then you are going to go from one fall to another, from one rock to another and from one obstacle to another.

Listening to and accepting the Word of God is the beginning of spiritual life for each one of us, as happened thirty-five years ago in my life and in the life of everyone who has accepted Christ. You begin a progressive walk as you grow, and in order to become a true disciple, you must remain in the Word of God, day by day, month by month, year by year, developing these healthy habits of studying the Word, of attending church, of participating in the Kingdom, and of serving the Lord.

We are grateful for many of you who are doing so and have understood, not only individually, but with your own families. This is a spiritual principle that is true for every human being. There are no exceptions.

God grant that these words may strengthen you in this step and in this beautiful path. May we never give up until the moment we cease to breathe, when we are called into His presence. We don't know when that will be because death does not respect ages. We must be prepared today to enter into the presence of the Lord.

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