

# A meaningful response

**Reference: SHM-S10-001-Mw-R00-P2**

(Originally spoken on 28 September 2014, edited on 3 October 2014)

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Let us turn to **John 8: 1-8**

## **John 8: 1-8**

- 1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.
- 2 Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and *began* to teach them.
- 3 The scribes and the Pharisees \*brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center *of the court*,
- 4 they \*said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act.
- 5 "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?"
- 6 They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.
- 7 But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, **"He who is without sin among you, let him *be the first to throw a stone at her.*"**
- 8 Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

The life, the character of the Lord Jesus can often be appreciated more deeply when we see Him in contrast with the life and character of others around Him. As we look at the life and responses of people and we compare with the Lord Jesus how He responded, it can help us to understand the basis upon which we live our lives, the basis upon which the Lord Jesus lived His life, and what we should do about our lives.

Here, we can see the way two groups of people responded to a situation: one group of people we can say the scribes and the Pharisees; the other group consists of one man: the Lord Jesus. First, let us look at the Pharisees and the scribes. They were responding to a situation. Why were they responding? What was their response?

We are told that it was early in the morning and the Lord Jesus came again into the temple and... the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and *began* to teach them. That was the setting. The Lord Jesus, the Teacher, coming to the temple early in the morning to teach the people and people were eager to listen to Him; they wanted to hear what He had to say. Then we see: The scribes and the Pharisees \*brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center *of the court*, they \*said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?"

Why did the scribes and Pharisees do this? We are told specifically, "They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him." Why did they choose to do that?

The Scriptures tell us in general terms the scribes and Pharisees had various problems within them, within their heart, their attitudes and character. It was not that all of them – every single one of them – were like that, but there was a general characteristic among them. Many of the scribes and Pharisees could be classified as "hypocrites" and the Lord Jesus denounced them very strongly: they pretended to love God but in reality they loved themselves, not truly loving God. The Lord Jesus said the scribes and Pharisees, they honoured God with their lips but their heart is far away from Him.

We are told that various of these religious leaders, they wanted to have chief places, they wanted to be greeted, they were lovers of money. They wanted people to praise them; they wanted to have authority.

Basically they were self-centred, they lived by the flesh, they looked for the things of this world, and they were not happy with the Lord Jesus because the Lord Jesus exposed their sinfulness, the Lord Jesus was able to draw many people to Himself because of the things that He taught, the things that He did. And we are also told that these religious leaders were jealous of Him. They could not command the same kind of respect, the kind of authority that the people could see in the Lord Jesus. They were jealous of Him.

And so we see that they were testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. Look at the motive: was it a good motive? Obviously not: They were not sincerely seeking to understand who the Lord Jesus was so that they could do the right thing. Their purpose was to destroy Him. They wanted to find something whereby they could accuse Him and destroy Him. So they thought this was a good idea: They brought this woman before the Lord Jesus and they said, "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?"

What could the Lord Jesus say? What would be a problem? We are not told exactly what they had in mind, but it is quite possible that in their way of thinking, they thought: The Law of Moses commanded this. If the Lord Jesus said, "Do not do that; be gracious to this woman. Don't stone her..." Then they could accuse Him, "You do not keep the Law of Moses; You do not respect what God has commanded through Moses. We all know that Moses spoke on behalf of God." So they could accuse Him of going against what God had commanded.

What if the Lord Jesus said, "Yes, stone her according to the Law of Moses"? That might seem to be the right thing to say. After all, the Lord Jesus should uphold the Law of Moses.

Would that then bring Him into conflict with the authorities, the Romans, who were ruling over them? Could the Lord Jesus just command these people to stone this woman to death and not to bring her into the Roman law and their justice system? This could be somewhat similar to the situation where they asked Him, "Is it lawful to pay tax to Caesar?" and the Lord Jesus said, "...render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's."

Why were the Pharisees so intent on destroying the Lord Jesus? Basically it was because they were insecure, they were jealous, they could not have what they wanted to have; and so they had to find a way in which they could establish their security in society, to live the way they wanted to live.

And this is common as we look around us and even as we look at our own lives, there are times when we may also respond in that kind of way. We are insecure: we live in this world, there are many threats; there are many problems; we are afraid. And so we may plot, we may plan, we may scheme to get things our way, so that we can be comfortable, we can go through life happily and more secure.

Let us look at the Lord Jesus: how did He respond? I find it very remarkable that the Lord Jesus responded this way - it is such a beautiful picture! To me, it is marvellous; it is a very meaningful response.

The Lord Jesus was under threat: so many people were seeking to kill Him. And amongst these people were very intelligent people, knowledgeable people, people who had certain degree of authority and power in society - many planning to kill Him. And here they have a very good plan. It would seem that He might not be able to get out of it.

What could He say? How could He answer such a question: What do you say to this; what are you going to do?

Many people in such a situation may be very afraid, frantic; trying to see what answer could be satisfying. And they probably would try very hard to answer in a way that may be more acceptable to people.

What then do you say: stone her or do not stone her?

Notice the Lord Jesus did not do that. He neither said, "Stone her" nor "Do not stone her". We read in **verse 6**: They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.

"But" tells us the Lord Jesus did not do what they expected Him to do. They expected Him to answer: "Stone" or "Do not stone". But He did neither. He stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.

This gives a picture of someone who is not disturbed by the situation.

The Lord Jesus was not afraid of them even though they could kill him, they could accuse Him, they could frame Him; they could do many things in this world. But the Lord Jesus was calm; He was very peaceful. He just stooped down and... wrote on the ground.

Why could the Lord Jesus do that? Why could He be so peaceful and calm in such a situation? Why did He respond in such a way?

From what we know of the Lord Jesus, from what we see in the record of the Scriptures, the Lord Jesus was calm and peaceful basically because He knew who He was and He knew how God looked at His life as the perfect Man.

The Lord Jesus was confident that even if the whole world were to reject Him, it did not matter because God, the perfect omnipotent almighty morally good God, knew who He was, approved of His life: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased". That was sufficient for Him.

Can we live our lives with such peace and confidence because we know who we are and we know how God looks at us and He approves of our lives? And we are prepared to deal with any problem in our life that God is not pleased with, that we maintain a fellowship with God whereby we can go through life in fellowship with Him, in the knowledge that He will be with us?

The Lord Jesus knew that He was one with the Father in everything, in every situation.

He stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. It was something which probably nobody expected Him to do, but He did it very carefully. It could be also that at that time, He was looking to God, praying: What would be the best response in the situation?

The apostle Paul tells us: "...pray without ceasing". The Lord Jesus would have manifested this in His life: constantly in fellowship with God, looking to God; not doing anything by Himself on His own initiative, independently of God, but always in fellowship with God.

And so He was very peaceful. He stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.

Then we have another "But": "But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them..."

So stage by stage He responded to the situation.

First, He stooped down... wrote on the ground but the people were not satisfied; they persisted in asking Him. So He straightened up, and said to them...

And again what He said is not something we could expect of any man to do. Again He did not say, "Stone her" or "Do not stone her". He said, "He who is without sin among you, let him *be the first to throw a stone at her.*"

Such a meaningful statement: "He who is without sin among you..." Was there anyone amongst them who was without sin? The Lord Jesus knew very well there was none. There was no one there who was without sin - except, yes, except the Lord Jesus Himself. He was the only one without sin. So He told them, "He who is without sin among you, let him *be the first to throw a stone at her.*"

All the people knew that they were not without sin. So the Lord Jesus gave them time to think through, ponder about their lives: Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

We do not know what the Lord Jesus wrote on the ground. People may guess, but we are not told. All I can say is that He wrote something meaningful on the ground; what it is I do not know. But it is meaningful; it would have conveyed a message to the people. He wrote something - whether it is a picture or a word - that could help the people think about their lives. "So here you are - you want to stone this woman. How about yourself? Think about it."

And so we find that in life, very often our approach to life is not objective, proper, fair and compassionate as God is.

For many people in general, whenever it relates to something negative, we tend to see it in other people but not in ourselves.

The Pharisee said, "This tax collector and other people are swindlers and so on..." but he himself was not like that - he tithed, he gave, he did the right things.

So it is very easy for us to look at life in that way. We see the chip in our brother's eye but we do not recognize the log in our own eye. However, when it comes to the positive things, it is the other way round: In other people, it is not so positive but in our lives, it is very positive, it is very good.

And so the Lord Jesus wanted them to think carefully: "Do you really understand what this woman is going through? Do you know what is in her heart? When you want to stone her, do you know what that means? How about yourself? How is God going to judge you? Will you come to God for mercy?"

Well, I will not go into these aspects at the moment. For today, I want to concentrate primarily on this aspect of why the Lord Jesus could be so peaceful and why He responded to others without giving in to their demands.

I will just briefly read two other passages without very much comment, so that you can see the principle being expressed in other situations.

**Luke 23: 8-9**

- 8 Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.
- 9 And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.

Herod wanted to see some sign performed by the Lord Jesus; he wanted something unusual. He questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.



Herod was a man of authority in this world. The Lord Jesus was not disturbed. He was not afraid of him; He refused to answer him.

**John 19: 8-11**

- 8 Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was *even* more afraid;
- 9 and he entered into the Praetorium again and \*said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.
- 10 So Pilate \*said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?"
- 11 Jesus answered, "**You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has *the greater sin.***"

Again the Lord Jesus was before a human earthly authority: Pilate the governor. But when He was questioned by him, we are told: He gave him no answer. And when Pilate insisted and said, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" the Lord Jesus answered, "**You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above...**"

The Lord Jesus looked beyond the physical, the visible, the temporal, the earthly in this world, and He saw that all these things that men can have, men can do, it is because God created us and He has not just left us alone to do as we wish; God is watching over the situation.

"**You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above...**" – that authority that Herod had, the authority that Pilate had, were from God. God gave them that authority: so too with Nebuchadnezzar. God could remove them instantly or God could install them just as quickly.

So let us, as we go through situations in life, be very conscious. Let us concentrate on our relationship with God: How does God look at us? Is God pleased with us? If God is pleased with us, if we walk with Him in all sincerity and we know that our hearts are right with Him, then we need not be afraid in this world.

But if we do not do that, then be afraid because even if the whole world approves of your life, even if all the people around you praise you, it is of no use. When you stand before God, they cannot support you. All that they can do and say will crumble to nothing.

So let us learn from the Lord Jesus to respond meaningfully to any situation in life: not seeking the things of this world or the approval of man, but seeking the approval of God, desiring to walk with Him faithfully, praying to Him for guidance, trusting Him for His enabling and undertaking so that we may always rejoice in His perfect will.

Let us come before the Lord and ask Him to help us to ponder over our lives so that we will not live on the wrong basis, with the wrong motive, with the wrong objective, but we will seek for the things that will have value for eternity; that our lives will be approved by God and we can rejoice in walking with Him.