

30. The Gospel of the second chance

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There is a ballastic armor company called "Second Chance". The company was the first one to use kevlar for body armor in the early 1970s. This company has a very exclusive club. To be a member, first you have to wear their body armors and secondly, you have to be law enforcement officers, and thirdly, you have to be shot by a criminal and survive because of their body armor. To this date, their body armors have saved 1000 police officers' lives. In other words, these body armors literally gave them the second chances.

We all love to hear stories of the second chance physically as well as spiritually, because all of us know that we goof up badly whether we'd like to admit it or not.

This morning we are going to encounter one of the most familiar and beloved stories of Jesus – "Jesus and an adulterous woman" in John chapter 8. We've heard it so many times from churches and other places that we can pretty much recite the story without any problem. You may even come up with some of the important points from this incident.

But this incident is more than a sinner encountering with the Savior face to face. It is the basic elements of the reason why Jesus came to the earth – to save the wretches like us through His compassion, but still satisfying the holiness of God the Father.

A. THE SETTING

John 7:53 And everyone went to his own house.

John 8:1-2 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2 Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.

Some of your Bibles say, "The most ancient Greek manuscripts do not include John 7:53-8:11," before chapter 8 starts. What it means is that this story does not appear in the earliest Greek manuscripts. But many Bible scholars believe that it is an authentic story from Jesus' life and without this portion, the transition from John 7:52 to 8:12 would be too abrupt.

It was the day after the Feast of Tabernacle that lasted seven days. The festive mood finally started to settle down, but there were still plenty of evidences of the Feast in the temple as well as on the streets.

Early in the morning, more like dawn, the city was still damp with dew as purple shadows were falling among the temple columns. Echoing through the temple was the very clear voice of Jesus, who, in rabbinical fashion, sat down to teach whoever chose to hear Him. This serenity was about to be rudely interrupted by a demonic plot.

B. THE INSIDIOUS ATTACK BY THE RELIGIOUS DOGS

John 8:3-6a Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, 4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" 6 This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him.

During the time of the Feast of the Tabernacle, instead of rejoicing and worshiping the gracious God who provided everything their ancestors needed in the wilderness, these Jewish religious attack dogs planned everything down to the last detail methodically. They were so insidious that they were willing to entrap and execute a woman in order to discredit Jesus and ultimately kill Him.

The scribes and Pharisees dragged, like a squirming dog on a leash, a disheveled woman, hastily clothed, barefooted, and humiliated. She was taken abruptly from the bedroom, where she was some man's sexual object, and insensitively dragged to the temple, where she now became a political expendable pawn used to bait the trap set for Jesus. These Jewish rulers really thought that they had Him cornered – "Check" they declared in their hearts.

When we treat people as things, we dehumanize them and destroy something precious inside of them. Whether we use people for our own pleasure or to prove our point, even a religious point, we are treating those people as things to be used instead of human beings to be loved. And this greatly dishonors the One in whose image they were made.

The leader who led this vicious self-righteous mob against the Lord Jesus who was teaching in the women's court of the temple, pointed his finger to the woman at his feet with a smug on his face and popped a question that was a totally hone of a dilemma for anyone to answer, of course, except God.

The seventh Commandment of the Ten Commandments is "You shall not commit adultery." In Leviticus 20 and Deuteronomy 22, the Mosaic Law clearly told the Jewish people to stone both adulterer and adulteress. If Jesus said, "Don't stone her," then He would go against the Law that was given to them through Moses by God.

But if Jesus said, "Execute her according to the Law of Moses," then He would be against the Roman authority, because the Roman governor of Israel stripped the Jews of having the right to take anybody's life in capital punishment.

An air-tight case? Hardly. If they were able to get the woman who was in the very act of adultery, where is this adulterer Joe Blow? Whatever happened to him? Why did they not bring him here with her? Obviously, it was a set up.

C. HE WHO IS WITHOUT SIN AMONG YOU

John 8:6b-9 But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. 7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." 8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

There have been several different commentaries as to what he wrote. Some scholars say he may have started to make a list of the sins of those who stood in front of him by fulfilling Jeremiah 17:13:

Jeremiah 17:13 O Lord, the hope of Israel, All who forsake You shall be ashamed. "Those who depart from Me Shall be written in the earth, Because they have forsaken the Lord, The fountain of living waters."

All of them are nothing more than speculations. None of Jesus' disciples said anything about His writings on the ground. So, we don't know. I've been teaching you guys about this kind of thing: If the Bible is silent, you be silent as well. Don't go there with your wild imagination. Agree?

Jesus' reply was not something they expected and it put the dilemma back on them. In this particular offense there would normally be no witnesses, since its nature would demand privacy. Either this mob became the witness of the adultery by accident, which would be highly unusual; or they purposely were present at the location where the adultery was happening to create the trap for Jesus, in which case they themselves were guilty by condoning the deed. That means that this would make them partners in crime.

I am sure that, by now, these scribes and Pharisees who brought their own stones to stone her, were looking at each others and thinking about a way out.

According to Jewish law, in any case of capital punishment the witnesses must begin the stoning. Whether Jesus by his statement implied that they were guilty of condoning of committing adultery with this woman, or whether he was speaking about past personal guilt is uncertain. In either case, each one of the accusers would either have to admit that he was guilty or else refrain from demanding the woman's death.

Jesus answered their demand with one sentence, He didn't use one paragraph. He didn't even break sweat.

He said, *"He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."* There was no one in that place without sin with the exception of One – Jesus. The Greek word for 'He who is without sin' is "anamartetos". All of them were disqualified and they knew it. Convicted by their own consciences, the accusers quietly left the scene, and Jesus was left alone with the woman. "Checkmate!" The game over.

D. GO AND SIN NO MORE

John 8:10 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?" 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

Jesus is meek with people; masterful with hypocrites; and merciful with sinners. No one who condemned her was around, she probably, for the first time, had a full view of the merciful Teacher while she was still on the ground. These two verses are the best part of the story. I just love these.

What a contrast! The guilty and the Guiltless, adulteress and Advocate, sinner and Savior. Undoubtly, this has been the darkest moment of this woman's life, until the Light of the World bathed her sin in the radiance of His forgiving presence. The only One who was qualified to throw a stone had none in His hands.

First, Jesus called her "Woman." It is a term of respect, like "lady," or "ma'am" for us. You may remember Jesus called His mother Mary, "Woman" at the marriage supper of Cana. By calling her 'woman', He restored a little bit of dignity back in her life. He didn't call her, "You harlot!" or "Adulteress."

Does this mean that Jesus was getting soft on sin? Absolutely not. Let's go back to v11.

John 8:11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

He wasn't condoning her lifestyle. He didn't say, "I don't condemn you." For Jesus to forgive this woman meant that He had to one day die for her sins. Forgiveness is free but it cost the life of God the Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus did two things as you read. He called sin sin, first of all. He didn't call it a 'hang-up' or a 'disease' or an 'alternate lifestyle' or a 'mistake'. He called it sin. It's offensive to God.

The Law was given to reveal sin.

Romans 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

And we must be condemned by the Law before we can be cleansed by God's grace. Law and grace do not compete with each other; they complement each other. Nobody was ever saved by keeping the Law, but nobody was ever saved by grace who was not first indicted by the Law. There must be conviction before there can be conversion.

Second, He also gave her a command. He said, "Go and sin no more." Not "Go and sin less." Some of you may wonder, "Do we not still have our sinful nature in our bodies? How can God expect us to sin no longer? It is impossible." Yes, it is impossible in practical sense. But if I decide, "Today, I will sin less." We have a couple of situations.

1) What is the standard of "Less"?

Do we count how many times we sin against God within a day? I don't even try, because I would be out of numbers to count before lunch time comes around. My body may not do anything against the Lord, but my mind can run beyond what I physically would do. One day's sin less might be different from another day's sin less as it would be different from one person to another.

2) If we aim low for your goal, we will hit low; but if we aim high, we will come close.

I don't think I need to explain this.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) The practice of confronting wrong calls for humility, not pride.

Jesus exhorts us in the Sermon on the Mount to look closely at our own lives before we look critically at the lives of others.

Matthew 7:5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Paul echoes this in Galatians 6:1

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

If you take the least glimmer of satisfaction in confronting someone else about their sin, that is an indication of pride. Nip it in the bud or it will overrun your life.

2) The privilege of condemning wrong is based on righteousness, not knowledge.

None of us are holy and righteous enough to condemn anyone. None of us are without sin to cast the first stone.

3) The principle of correcting wrong starts with forgiveness, not rebuke.

Notice the pattern in the way Jesus deals with the guilty woman: He forgave her, then confronted and corrected her. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is indeed the Gospel of the second chance.

4) If God really sends you to confront someone for his or her sins, do it according to Jesus' way. After that remember this:

1 Corinthians 10:12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Because we all are wicked and capable to do wrong things like others and even worse. Only God is holy and righteous.