

28. Jesus Forgave the Woman Caught in Adultery

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children that we accept others, including those who disagree with us. Christ showed that He accepted us by dying for us while we were still sinners. In contrast, we saw that the Pharisees mocked and made fun of those who disagreed with them. In our topic today, we will see that they attempted to trap Jesus so that they could destroy Him.

We see how the scribes and Pharisees tried to trap Jesus. John 8:1-6 says, “But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 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. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?’ This they said, testing Him, that they might have *something* of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with *His* finger, as though He did not hear.” Here, we see that the scribes and Pharisees tried to trap Jesus the next day.

Jesus spent the night out on the Mount of Olives. This is the place where Jesus usually went at night when He was at a feast in Jerusalem. Luke 22:39 says, “Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him.” Then, early in the morning, Jesus returned to the temple to teach the people who wanted to hear Him. In fact, we see that He sat down as He taught them. While Jesus was sitting there teaching, the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman to Him.

The word translated “when they had set” means *to make stand in the presence of others*. This word is used in Acts 4:7 when Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin. That verse says, “And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, ‘By what power or by what name have you done this?’” In Acts, Peter and John were set in the middle so that they could be questioned by the Sanhedrin about the man who they had healed. Here, in John, this woman was placed in the middle where everyone could see her so that the scribes and Pharisees could use her to trap Jesus in His words. Then, the scribes and Pharisees said, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.” The fact that this woman was caught in the very act shows that it was a trap because it takes two people to commit adultery.

In order to catch her in the very act, the other person was probably a part of those who were standing there accusing the woman. Then, the scribes and Pharisees said, “Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?” These men thought that they could accuse Jesus either way He answered. If Jesus did not say, “Stone her” then they would have accused Him of breaking the Law of Moses. Leviticus 20:10 says, “‘The man who commits adultery with *another* man’s wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.’” If Jesus said to stone her, the scribes and Pharisees would have immediately told the people gathered there that Jesus did not practice what He taught about forgiveness or compassion.

Instead of answering the question of these men, Jesus just bent over and started writing in the dust on the ground in front of Him. He acted as if He did not even hear the men. John 8:7-9 says, “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.’ And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 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.” The Pharisees thought that they had caught Jesus in a trap because He did not answer them. As a result, they just continued to ask Jesus their question.

Finally, Jesus stood up. He looked at the scribes and Pharisees and said, “‘He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.’” Jesus just told these men to follow the instructions of Deuteronomy 17:6-7. Those verses say, “‘Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness. The hands of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from among you.’” This meant that the witnesses had to identify themselves as witnesses of the fact that they had caught this woman in adultery as well as identifying the other person that was guilty.

Then, Jesus had said that the one who was not guilty of the same sin had to be the first one to begin to throw stones at the woman and the other person. Once Jesus had spoken these words to the men, He bent down and starting writing in the dust again. Suddenly, the men realized that they had to be innocent before they could throw a stone at the woman. It was no longer a question to trap Jesus. Instead, their question had become a question that forced each man to examine his own heart. People try to avoid examining their own hearts because Jeremiah 17:9 says, “‘The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?’” That day, each of these men was forced to examine his heart.

The scribes and Pharisees claimed that they kept the law. 1 Timothy 4:2 tells what they had really done. That verse says, “Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.” They had lied to themselves and accused others so many times that they had seared their consciences. Suddenly, Jesus had forced them to listen to their own conscience before they did anything to the woman. They had been caught in their own trap. The oldest man condemning this woman was the first to move. If he was like people today, he probably took two or three steps backward, then six or eight more. Finally, when he was far enough away from the crowd, he turned around and walked quickly away. He was quickly followed by all of the others from the oldest on down to the youngest one who had accused the woman that day.

Many people had asked the question through the years, “What did Jesus write in the dust on the ground?” We do not know, but it may have been the Ten Commandments. Whatever it was, Jesus allowed these men time to think so that their own consciences became the thing that convicted them. Finally, there were only two people left standing there. That was Jesus and the woman. John 8:10-11 says, “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?’ She said, ‘No

one, Lord.’ And Jesus said to her, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.’” Jesus was the One who had committed no sin. However, Jesus chose to set the woman free from her sin instead of condemn her.

Jesus asked two questions but only one required an answer from the woman. The first question was, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours?” This question caused her to look around her. She may have been so ashamed that she was just looking at the ground waiting for the first stone to hit her. Since it would have taken a few minutes for all of the men to leave, the woman also had time to think. She knew that she was a sinner. She also realized that Jesus was filled with love and compassion for her. She fully understood why Luke 15:1 says, “Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him.” As the woman looked around, she saw that all of her accusers were gone.

Then, the woman was able to answer the second question that Jesus asked. The second question was, “Has no one condemned you?” The woman answered, “No one, Lord.” The word translated “Lord” means *the one to whom a person or thing belongs*. In the Roman Empire of that day, about half of all of the people were slaves who were owned by a master. These slaves used the word “lord” as a title of respect for their master. As a result, the title “Lord” with a capital L is used either for God or for the Messiah in the Bible. When we recognize Jesus as Lord, we are saying that He is the person to whom we belong. This woman recognized the compassion and acceptance of Jesus that day. As a result, she responded to that love and recognized Jesus as Lord.

We see that Jesus accepts all who come to Him in repentance and faith. In Matthew 11:28, Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” This woman had a heavy burden that day. She knew that she was guilty of adultery. She had been caught in the very act. She had been publicly humiliated in front of a large group of people. She had observed that those who had condemned her were convicted by their own consciences. Now, she was standing in front of the only person that was without sin and could have cast that first stone. Instead, Jesus gave this woman spiritual rest. By saying, “Neither do I condemn you,” Jesus forgave her sin. By saying, “Go and sin no more,” Jesus gave her a new life for the future. This woman left Jesus that day with a life that had been changed for eternity.

We want to show our physical and spiritual children how to show the love and compassion that Jesus showed to this woman. Many people like this woman feel that their lives have been so sinful that they could never be forgiven. Jesus still says, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” We want to help our children clearly learn to share this message from the Word of God with all those who feel that their lives are too sinful to be forgiven. Many such people are ready to see Jesus change their lives for eternity. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to share the love and compassion of Jesus.