

"A WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY"

John 8:3-11; Galatians 6:1-2

8:3 Then the scribes and the Pharisees -- Luke 5:30; 6:7; 15:2, etc., but this is the only time the scribes are mentioned by John in this book. The scribes were the chief teachers of the people. They were the rabbis, the interpreters of the law, but in teaching they quoted the opinions of other doctors of the law. Therefore, "When Jesus finished these words (the Sermon on the Mount), the people were amazed at his doctrine; for he taught them as one in authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:28, 29).

Remember that the scribes and Pharisees justified themselves because they physically complied with the ceremonies of the law and with dozens of human traditions whose purpose was to make them holier and more pious, that "on the outside, in truth, you show yourselves righteous to men," but Jesus described them as hypocrites, as whitened sepulchres, who on the inside were full of hypocrisy and iniquity (Matt. 23:28). These are the men who brought this woman to Jesus.

-- they brought him a woman caught in adultery; and putting her in the middle, -- If these men were sincere and loved righteousness, why didn't they bring the man also, for she was caught in adultery? Why would they take her to Jesus instead of taking her to the Sanhedrin to be officially judged?

These scribes and Pharisees were only looking for occasion against Jesus, but here is in the middle a person, a human being. Apart from hating Jesus, these leaders -- devoid of compassion and mercy -- looked down on this woman. On another occasion Jesus told them, "You leave the most important of the law: justice, mercy, and faith" (Matt. 23:23). This is why Jesus said that He had not come to judge (condemn), but to save. He was the Good Physician who came to heal the sick (sinners).

8:4 They said to him, Master, this woman has been caught in the very act of adultery. Why did they care about this case? They wanted to leave the impression that for them the sin of the woman was very offensive, that, being very pious men, they simply could not tolerate such behavior. In reality, "they were using it, as one would with a tool, for their own purposes. For them, this woman had no name, personality, heart, feeling, or emotions; she was but a piece in the game with which they tried to destroy Jesus" (W Barclay). This same author quotes a book titled "A Doctor's Casebook" by Dr. Paul Tournier: "If I forget the names of my patients, if I say to myself, 'Ah! There's that ulcer or tubercular one I saw the other day,' I'm worried more about their ulcers or their lungs than about them as people." Jesus Christ did not treat anyone as if they were a mere object, but always treated everyone as persons.

What is our attitude toward those who sin? It seems that what first comes to mind is to criticize, condemn and punish and have nothing to do with them. But what should our attitude be? "Therefore, whatever you would that men should do unto you, so do ye also to them" (Matt. 7:12). I must ask myself what I can do to bring about their repentance and change of heart and life, so that they may be saved or restored.

8:5 And Moses commanded us in the law that such should be stoned. They knew that for many centuries the Jews had not practiced such a thing. Where was the *man* who committed adultery with her? Did the woman commit adultery alone? Deut. 22:22 says, "If anyone is caught lying with a woman married to a husband, both shall die, the man who slept with the woman, and the woman also; thus thou shalt remove the evil from Israel."

"You, then, what do you say?" "They were not in the least interested in this woman's case. Their sole purpose was to trap Jesus. But what happened to their accusation that Jesus had broken the Sabbath? They did not abandon the plan to arrest him and even kill him. There was only a change of tactics.

These men dared to judge the Son of God, but they soon realized that they themselves were judged by Him. It seems that proud modern intellectuals are no smarter than these Jews, because neither do they recognize that by rejecting Jesus they do not judge Him, but that they themselves are judged by Him.

8:6 But this they said tempting him (Mark 8:11; 10:2; Luc. 11:16), **so that they could accuse Him.** -- They wanted to trap Jesus in a dilemma: (1) if He had set aside the law of Moses, they would have accused Him of being a lawbreaker, so that the people would lose their trust in Him; but (2) if He had approved the plan to stone her, he would have been in serious trouble for He would have lost the reputation of being a friend of sinners. The Jews thought themselves very cunning. They believed that the plan was perfect, that now they really had it between a rock and a hard place. Compare Matt. 22:15-22. Every time the scribes and Pharisees tried to trap Jesus in a dilemma, they themselves were embarrassed. Every time they dug a hole in the hope that Jesus would fall into it, they themselves were the victims.

-- But Jesus, bent down to the ground, wrote on the ground with his finger.
-- The text does not explain what Jesus wrote, but what he said.

8:7 And as they insisted on asking him, He straightened up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw the stone against her. Again Jesus leaves us the example of quoting Scripture to refute his adversaries. He didn't say anything, but instead of catching Jesus in a dilemma, they themselves were judged by Him. He demanded action from them. The accusers

forgot this detail of the law: "The hand of the witnesses shall fall first upon him to kill him, and then the hand of all the people; so you will remove evil from your midst" (Deut. 17:7). To have the right to carry out God's justice in that way, it was necessary that they -- as judges and executors -- be exempt from all sin that would merit the same punishment. In this way Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of the accusers, but at the same time supported the law of Moses about stoning. Jesus (Matt. 7:1-5) and Paul (Rom. 2:21-24; Gal. 6:1-3) emphatically teach that unbelievers do not have the right to judge others. Do children respect parents who punish them for doing what their parents do? "You, then, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?" (Rom. 2:21).

8:8, 9 And leaning down again to the ground, he went on writing on the ground. But they, hearing this, accused by their conscience, went out one by one, -- Their plan failed. They were caught in their own trap. -- beginning from the oldest to the last; and there was only Jesus, and the woman in the middle.

8:10, 11 Straightening up, and seeing no one but the woman, said to her, Woman, where are those who accuse you? Did none condemn you? She said, None, Lord. Not only did they no longer condemn the woman, they also did not want to continue tempting Jesus.

Then Jesus said to him, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and sin no more" (5:14). It is interesting to note that Jesus, who knows the heart, did not say, "Repent," but "Go, and sin no more." Compare 5:14. The witnesses, accusers and executioners had already disappeared. The matter was over, because Jesus was not a witness to the act; therefore, he said, "Nor do I condemn you."

"In Jesus we find the gospel of the second chance. Jesus always showed an intense interest, not only in what a person had been, but in what he could become. He did not say that what they had done was unimportant; broken laws and broken hearts always matter, but Jesus was convinced that all men have both a future and a past" (W Barclay). **Who hasn't needed a second chance? (Luke 22:30, 31; 2 Sam. 12:13; 2 Chron. 33:12, 13, etc.)**

Jesus' words cannot be used as an excuse to tolerate sin. What Jesus did and said does not minimize the seriousness of any sin, much less the sin of adultery.

Marriage is a divine arrangement. It is one of the most precious blessings for mankind and adultery is the number one enemy of marriage. It destroys love and trust. It is a way of betraying and stealing. It is commonly called "deception."

But what is our attitude towards the person who has been caught in sin? Galatians 6:1-3.

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