

God of A Second Chance

時間: 30 minutes

Although in your bible you can find a sentence, saying that these verses do not appear in many of the original manuscripts. Many early commentators bypass this session. However, I do think it is a valuable passage, from other early church literature, it is likely that this event did occur. Therefore even this is not part of the canon, or inspired text, but I could say that this story does not have contradictions to the scripture and some of the evangelical theologians do include them in their commentaries. Therefore I still choose to preach this passage, but I will read it more into the context and dig out biblical principles for us to follow.

1. Caught in the Act (v.1-5)

<p>7:53 Then each went to his own home. 8:1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 8:2 At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. 8:3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group 8:4 and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 8:5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?”</p>

Let's look at the setting of this event. Verse 2, the time is in the morning and Jesus was teaching in the temple court in Jerusalem. All the people gathered around him. While Jesus was teaching the crowd, some of the leaders of the Jews brought in a woman caught in adultery. I am not sure have you been caught in the act, but I have.

Driving fine

This happened several years ago. Once I was driving in Strathfield. I went through a roundabout. There was a stop sign when entering into the roundabout. But in the past I saw many people didn't really stop, but just slow down rather than stop, when entering into the roundabout. I have to admit, it was dark I didn't see the stop sign probably, therefore I didn't really stop, I only slow down. It maybe that I actually saw it but didn't take notice. There was a police car parking besides the roundabout, and immediately the police waved at me and stopped me. He gave me a fine because I didn't fully stop before entering the roundabout. I could have argued with him, saying that all other people did the same. But I said to him I was a theological student and I wouldn't do it again, but he still fines me. I could understand that he has to fine me, because it doesn't matter who you are, breaking the law is breaking the law, and there is a good

reason for the stop sign to be there. I couldn't argue otherwise, because he saw me not stopping, just slowing down. I was caught in the act. It is not something I can argue.

Woman was caught in the act

This woman cannot argue for herself too, she was caught in adultery. We are not sure what the exact situation was. You see, caught in the act while speed driving, or like me who didn't stop at the stop sign, is quite embarrassing. You also can't argue as well, because your sinful act was shown in public, and there is no ground for you to argue it. How embarrassing it will be, for anyone who is caught in adultery. Perhaps she was naked when she was caught, or perhaps the guy ran away quickly, I think it must have been dramatic. There is a TV show, I can't remember its name, video taped the crime scene, how the police catches those who commit crimes. Often the scene is quite dramatic, the police has to go and chase after people, and it was nerve breaking. I think this is a quite similar situation, the woman must be very embarrassed to be caught in public, and she must be aware of the law, therefore there is no ground of argument. Worst of all, it must be very shameful for her because what she has committed is a sexual sin. I think the police fined me \$100 + dollars, but this woman knows she needs to face the death penalty.

<p>⌈ 22:22 If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel. 22:23 If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, 22:24 you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death—the girl because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man's wife. You must purge the evil from among you." ⌋ (Deuteronomy 22:22-24)</p>
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Not only the death penalty, worse, To be standing in front of the whole crowd, when every pair of eyes are staring at her, she must be feeling shameful, and fearful, perhaps a bit feeling unfair, as the man who committed the exact crime is absent from the scene. Perhaps there is certain male chauvinism exists in that society.

You see brothers and sisters, sometimes we are caught in the act. We feel shameful, and the public opinion almost kills us. We often heard some famous singers or actress commit suicide because they care too concerned about how others view them. But in this case, it is not just how others view them, but how she

has sinned against God. I am sure, many of you, may have sinned against God in your life, and only you or a few people know it. You may try to hide these sins in the dark, and try not to expose them, in order to live a peaceful life. But we know this peace is simply a lie. When the sin is exposed, when we have nowhere to hide, maybe we will choose to stay away from people, trying to find somewhere nobody knows us, and wish to hide there for the rest of our life. But, we cannot hide against our conscience or God who is watching us. This woman has been exposed of her sexual sins, but our sexual sins are often hidden in secret, only our conscience knows that we are really sinning. She doesn't have a choice, but we pretend we have a choice. But do we really have a choice? Well, I think we will find we constantly not living in peace, but Satan will knock at our doors and remind us how sinful we are. So sinful that we don't deserve any forgiveness, so sinful that the salvation of Jesus sounds so distanced and impossible. I think the woman is in a desperate situation, and she has nowhere to run. Believe it or not, you will also have no way to run, if you think you can really cover up your sin, but sooner or later you will be exposed. Sometimes there just seems to be no hope at the end of the tunnel, what shall we do?

2. Accusing the Accusers (v.6-9)

^{8:6}They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ^{8:7}When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." ^{8:8}Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. ^{8:9}At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.

This story also tells about why these people want to bring the woman to Jesus, because in verse 6 it says they were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. Elsewhere in the bible we saw this group of leaders tried different ways to accuse Jesus but was not successful. How can they accuse him using this woman? Well, it is in the Law of Moses, which was passed down from God to Israel through Moses, that if a man or a woman commits such sin will need to be stoned to death. ^{22:22}If a man

is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel. ^{22:23}If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, ^{22:24}you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death—the girl because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man's wife. You must purge the evil from among you." 」 (Deuteronomy 22:22-24)

Those who didn't participate in the sin can initiate the sentence. If Jesus said, No, you can't stone her, it will be viewed against the law of Moses and people may look down on his teachings and perhaps give these leaders a ground saying Jesus has broken the law God has given us. But If Jesus said Yes, they could have argued it is contradictory to the reason why Jesus comes – to save the sinners. Jesus can get into trouble with the Roman government too, because public stoning at the time was not common and death sentences can only be issued by Roman government. You see, man can be very smart, they can use the political situation and religious background as the means to trap Jesus.

What did Jesus do? He bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. What was he writing, of course we can speculate, but perhaps it is better to also view from its principle. Whatever he is writing must have made these leaders quite impatient, therefore they kept on questioning him, perhaps they don't want to give him time to think for a solution. I can also see how Jesus seems to ignore their question, perhaps he knows their heart and didn't really want to answer them. But when Jesus answered, it is full of wisdom. ^{8:7}When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."

This event is part of their testing, trying to trap Jesus. However, once again we see the wisdom of God is higher than the wisdom of man, he can see through people's hearts, and he has full wisdom to deal with any such situations. Now they can't accuse of him. Jesus has initiated the sentence, it is just no one righteous enough to carry it out.

Is Jesus referring to a particular sin or sin in general? In context it could mean that these men also commit certain sins in some way, perhaps more likely to be sexual. Or it is possible that their wickedness to trap Jesus is sinful. They try to trap Jesus before in the temple court with the woman who were caught in adultery. But now Jesus' accusation is more in-depth, Jesus accuses them right in their heart, in their conscience. They cannot stone this woman, because none of them is sinless, or it could be none of them is without sexual sin. Human accusation on God will only turn to our own shame. Speculations apart, the word of Jesus challenged their behaviour, their motives, and their life in the sight of God, and they failed the test. One by one they left. The bible says until no one is left. Jesus didn't say a lot, he didn't say why he is greater than Moses, or point out their sin in public, he let their conscience accuse them. He knew what they were like. Those who accused Jesus now being accused by their conscience. Therefore they all left, perhaps even those who were listening to Jesus at the first place.

3. A Second Chance (v.10-11)

^{8:10}Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ^{8:11}"No

one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”” (John 7:53-8:11)

So Jesus is the only one who is left, and in fact, he is the only one who is able to stone her, because he is God and he is sinless. Did he stone her to death? He didn't, but instead he asks the question, “woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”” (John 7:53-8:11)

She is now forgiven. I am not sure what she thinks, but she must be full of relief, because Jesus has forgiven her. Jesus gives him a second chance. I am not sure about you, but I constantly need to ask God for a second chance.

Friend's kid

Once I fell on the floor with a friend's son. He was 3 years old when this happened. I was playing with him and perhaps we played too violently, I carried him around like this, and run around in the house. I was wearing socks at the time and the floor was quite slippery, and I fail. My elbow, and his head hits the ground at the time. I couldn't care too much about my bruises, because in front of me the kid was covered in blood. The parents rushed in, and hold the kid in their arms, press hard, trying to stop blood coming out from the wound. I was frightened, and shocked, sitting there helplessly. Everyone who sees me at the time thought I was like dead man, I couldn't even focus probably, and don't know what I can do. I was completely lost my mind, because I knew how serious a mistake that was. My heart was pumping, when a doctor friend at the time did some emergency preparation, and the kid was sent to Westmead Children's Hospital. After I regain a bit of my breath, I drove to the hospital, and the kid was being admitted to the hospital. I waited outside when he was in operation, ashamed of myself, not daring to face the parents and the kid. When I saw the kid, he was in bandage, but he was still high in spirit. He didn't blame me for what I have done to him. He is a good kid, he forgives me. But still I couldn't forgive myself. I know God's mercy is enough, I know God has forgiven me, but I simply couldn't forgive myself. It is slowly through reading his scripture, praying and preaching his word, I slowly cling onto God, for his forgiveness of his particular guilt. Even when I wrote this sermon, I still feel certain guilt in my heart, but this woman's story is also an encouragement to me. God did forgive us. God gives us a second chance. God is merciful.

Maybe you are like me, who has hurt people physically and feel quite guilty about it. Or you may emotionally hurt someone's feelings, or you just simply can't face yourself how sinful you are. Well, I believe there is only one solution, trust the blood of Jesus is enough to cover your guilt, apologize to those you hurt and say sorry to God. God is righteous, therefore any sin is sinning against God. we need to repent in front of God first.

Last Sunday I went to their place, I still has this fear in my heart, even when I carry a plate across the dining room, I was so careful that I was already of falling again. You see, even if you know from your heart that you are forgiven, sin will still knock at your door and Satan will still use it to accuse you. Therefore, it is important for us to have a spiritual partner. Someone that is willing to walk with us. This year our main goal for everyone of this congregation is 1-1, to find spiritual partners and spiritual advisers who can help us. When we are in trouble, and unable to forgive ourselves, our fellow Christians will seek God together with us, and come to God for help together.

The woman maybe crying in her heart, God, give me a second chance. Jesus' reply. I will, by dying on the cross for you, you are forgiven. We may have cried to God, give me a second chance, and what is his reply now? I did. I have died on the cross for you. Jesus will say: forgive yourself, because I am not condemning you. How our soul can be at peace? Only when we realize God has given us a second chance. We Christians are good at accusing each other. We are also good at harming each other. We are good at putting the constraints of regulations on each other. So much that we can't forgive ourselves. I wish all of you whose souls are troubled, realize that God has given us a second chance. I don't know whether you are like me. Life is full of things that you regret, some of them you can never turn back. When you come to God for forgiveness, he can forgive any mistakes you have in the past, even those you find very hard to forgive yourself. But we should not just stop there, Jesus also said leave your life of sin. The proper response to God's love is repentance and gratitude. We should not only repent of our sins, but continue walking in the right path that God prepares for us.

You see God can really turn things around. When we decide to leave our life of sin, God's blessings are everywhere in our life. Even this disaster I had, God can use it to honour his name. He can help me to illustrate how his love is enough for me, and for you. Jesus has turned the evil intensions of these leaders to become blessings and forgiveness for this woman. Like the woman at the Samaritan, her brokenness in life has turned into blessings for many, to become followers of Christ. God can turn your brokenness into blessings too. "Go now and leave your life of sin." It seems the woman has a lifestyle that is sinful. God wants us to live a godly life, that is how he can turn our life into blessings. Therefore, once you truly realize God has forgiven your sins, don't stop there, keep walking in his path. You will find his blessings are everywhere in your life, and his love will flow to others through you.

Perhaps you may think your sin or guilt is so great, that even the love of Jesus cannot forgive. But let me tell you, if God can forgive this woman who are facing a death penalty, he can forgive you too. I am not downplaying the seriousness of sin, but there is something greater than sin. It is God's love. Love is can cover our sins. When you come to Jesus, there is nothing he cannot forgive.

If you look around in our congregation, you will find God is changing us. You may see that we have an increase in number, but I am not sure if you have also realized, that our hearts have been transformed too. As the pastor of this congregation, I have realized that God has changed many of our hearts. He has challenged us to be more open and people are more willing to pray for one another. Remember the sermon I preached before about Unity in Diversity, our congregation has grown from mainly second generation Taiwanese migrants to include people from different countries and ethnic groups. Some of you came last night for the steamboat and live music. A few of our brothers and sisters form a band, their name is “broken chord”. Honestly, I thank God for giving Ian this name and he shared with the band members, because I really like its meaning. Broken chord is not only a technique to play each string of a chord, it also means breaking up, tattered. Broken, yes, we are all broken. Church is a hospital, where people come and find healings from God. The more we realize we are broken, the more we know we need God. But simply realized we are broken is not enough, we have to let God fix our brokenness. Truth will set you free. There is no fear in love. The love of God is present in the sending of his son to die for us, God himself has paid the price of renewing us. I don’t know what kind of mistakes you have made in your past, and I don’t know how God has changed you, but God knows and he will give you a second chance. Therefore, please come to God today, and cry to him, “God, give me a second chance”. Now, let’s say to God together. “God, give me a second chance.” When God hears our cry, his reply, “I did”.