

Sunday Morning Message

July 24, 2022

The Woman Taken in Adultery

The Gospel According to John

Text – John 8:1 - 11

Congregational Reading – John 8:1 – 11

Introduction

The story of the woman caught in adultery is found only in this gospel account, the others do not even mention it. It is one of the more familiar stories in the Bible. Many lost people who know little about God or His Word are somewhat familiar with this story. It is a beautiful story of the mercy and grace of God as Jesus forgives this woman who was so blatantly caught committing one of the “big sins,” meaning one of those things that is universally accepted by even the lost world as being wrong.

The first thing that I would like to say about this wonderful passage of Scripture is that it should very definitely be regarded as a genuine part of the Bible. I say this because some of you are studiers, which is good. The Bible tells us to study:

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

Now when you study this portion of the Bible and you read some of the comments by good men from their study Bibles or from their commentaries, you are going to see comments about this story that are going to cause you to wonder if the Bible that you hold in your hands is perfectly accurate. Some of the commentators state that this story is not found in the more ancient manuscripts, and therefore it is doubtful that it really should be part of the Scripture.

The manuscripts that omit this story typically come from the stream of manuscripts, like Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, that are the supporting texts behind the modern English versions of the Bible. The NIV Bible, for example, puts a footnote in this section that states: “The earliest manuscripts and many other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53–8:11. A few manuscripts include these verses, wholly or in part, after John 7:36, John 21:25, Luke 21:38 or Luke 24:53.”

Ryrie states: “This story, though probably authentic, is omitted in many manuscripts and may not have been originally a part of this gospel.”¹

It is very interesting to me that most of the commentators that doubt whether this story was actually part of the original Gospel of John are not willing to remove it, just in case, it might be real.

MacArthur states:

This section dealing with the adulteress most likely was not a part of the original contents of John. It has been incorporated into various manuscripts at different places in the gospel (e.g., after vv. 36, 44, 52, or 21:25), while one manuscript places it after Luke 21:38. External manuscript evidence representing a great variety of textual traditions is decidedly against its inclusion, for the earliest and best manuscripts exclude it. Many manuscripts mark the passage to indicate doubt as to its inclusion. Significant early versions exclude it. No Gr. church father comments on the passage until the twelfth century. The vocabulary and style of the section also are different from the rest of the gospel, and the section interrupts the sequence of v. 52 with 8:12ff. Many, however, do think that it has all the earmarks of historical veracity, perhaps being a piece of oral tradition that circulated in parts of the western church, so that a few comments are in order. **In spite of all these considerations of the likely unreliability of this section, it is possible to be wrong on the issue, and thus it is good to consider the meaning of this passage and leave it in the text,** just as with Mark 16:9–20.²

Phillips states:

The story that begins John 8 has been attacked by the critics. Gallons of ink have been spilled trying to prove that John did not write this story. Editions of the Bible that place it in heavy brackets have appeared, as if these verses were a questionable footnote. Commentaries ignore it, apologize for it, put it in the back of the book. We shall let it stand where it is and treat it as part of the inspired word of God. The story vouches for itself. It rings true. The words in which it is told

¹ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible: King James Version*, Expanded ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 1602.

² John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1597.

harmonize with the gospel narratives. It follows on logically from the preceding events in John.³

Wiersbe states”

Is the story of the woman taken in adultery a part of Scripture? If it is, where does it belong in the Gospel record? John 7:53–8:11 is not found in some of the ancient manuscripts; where it is found, it is not always in this location in John’s Gospel. Most scholars seem to agree that the passage is a part of inspired Scripture (“a fragment of authentic Gospel material,” says Dr. F.F. Bruce) regardless of where it is placed.⁴

Note - It could be that this story was omitted from some of the manuscripts because they thought that Jesus was being too soft on sin here. In other words, they wanted to take a strong position on adultery.

Here is what I believe. Every word in this Bible is exactly what God wanted in it. The *Textus Receptus*, which was produced from the stream of manuscripts behind this King James Bible includes this passage. It belongs in the Bible.

This is a divine Book. It is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, and you can trust it. You and I are not smart enough to start deciding what part of this Bible belongs, and what part does not.

"The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." (Psalm 12:6-7)

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

Folks, if it is in this Bible, you can trust it. This Book is the Word of God.

³ John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Kregel Publications; WORDsearch Corp., 2009), Jn 8:2–11.

⁴ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 319.

Here, He is just teaching. The people are sitting and listening, soaking up whatever He has to say. They are sitting at the feet of Jesus, which is where we should all be.

II. A Perplexing Problem (vs. 2 – 6a)

The troublemakers come back – the religious leaders. This time we are specifically told that it was the scribes and Pharisees. The scribes were originally employed because of their ability to read and write. They were given the responsibility of copying Scripture, which was all hand produced in that day. There was no printing press. These particular scribes associated with the Pharisees were also experts in the Law, which means they were more than just mere penmen. Luke refers to the scribes as “lawyers” (Luke 7:30; 11:45, 46, 52; 14:3). The Pharisees were the legalistic branch of the Sanhedin, which was the ruling body of Judaism. They were strict adherents to the Law of Moses, and even added many rules of their own. They tended to be extremely judgmental. Jesus’ harshest rebuke came to these religious leaders:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." (Matthew 23:23-28)

These religious leaders come to Jesus with a perplexing problem. They think they have Jesus trapped. They bring to Him a clearly guilty woman who, according to the Law of Moses, should have been executed for her crimes.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14)

"And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." (Leviticus 20:10)

I find it interesting that these scribes and Pharisees do not bring the man to Jesus, only the woman.

Here is Jesus' problem. If He lets the woman go, He is ignoring His own Law. If He condemns her to death, it will seem that He is going against the compassion, grace, and forgiveness that He has been offering people who come to Him in faith.

III. A Penetrating Statement (vs. 6b – 9)

Jesus does something very interesting. He stoops down and begins to write on the ground. What did He write?

Some say He wrote the name of the man.

Some say he wrote the names of other women that the accusers had slept with.

Some say that He wrote other sins that these accusers were guilty of.

Maybe, He was just writing the names of the accusers and by so doing, He was showing them that He knew their sins also.

"O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters." (Jeremiah 17:13)

"And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." (Exodus 31:18)

I don't know exactly what He wrote, but I do know that the same finger that wrote the Law was here writing on the ground.

I like what McGee said:

Perhaps He wrote the name of a woman living in Rome. One old pious Pharisee had had an affair in Rome when he was a young fellow. His wife didn't know about it; no one in Jerusalem knew about it; but our Lord knew that old rascal. As He just wrote the name of the woman, the old Pharisee came over and saw it—and suddenly remembered that he had another appointment. Perhaps one of the scribes made regular trips to Ephesus, a great sinning place, to a certain address over there which Jesus wrote in the sand. The scribe looked at it and said, "Oh, my gracious!" He left hurriedly. Another scribe may have left a girl in Galilee who was pregnant. He didn't

marry her, and he didn't think anyone knew. Our Lord wrote the name of the girl and the scribe's name with it.⁵

Jesus then gets up and says:

*"So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, **He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.**"* (John 8:7)

By the way, the accuser was supposed to be the first to cast the stone (Deuteronomy 13:9:

"At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you." (Deuteronomy 17:6-7)

One by one, the accusers all left; everybody left. Why? Because they were all guilty before God, and they knew it; and they knew that He knew it.

IV. A Penitent Sinner (vs. 10 – 11)

When Jesus got back up there was nobody left but the woman. Jesus stated that He didn't condemn her. He didn't just forget about her sin, though. He paid for it herself. That woman did deserve to be punished, but Jesus was going to the Cross to take her punishment for her.

Notice also that Jesus says: "go and sin no more." Jesus does not condone sin, and He does not allow forgiven sinners like this woman, and like you and me, to continue in sin.

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2)

"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which

⁵ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary*, electronic ed., vol. 4 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 415.

ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:15-20)

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:1-2)

" Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

You and I have been forgiven by God. Let's act like the new creatures that we are in Christ. "Go and sin no more."

Conclusion

- 1. Receive the forgiveness that Christ offers you.**
- 2. Act like a forgiven sinner**

You and I are also worthy of death, just like this woman.

Christ suffered our death for us so that we don't have to die and go to Hell.

We are forgiven. We are now God's children through faith in Christ.

Let's act like the children of God that we are.

- 3. Don't be like the scribes and Pharisees. They were just as sinful as this woman, but they thought they were better than her. We all deserve judgment. There is none righteous, no not one. Stop looking down your nose at lost people. You were once lost yourself. Stop being judgmental toward struggling saints. Just thank God that you have been forgiven, and be a source of grace and forgiveness toward those who are struggling.**