

THE REVEALING LIGHT
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April 20, 2008

JOHN 8:12

Here is a story that is not in the oldest and best manuscripts of the New Testament. But no one doubts that it is authentic, an example indeed of how Jesus dealt with sin and the sinner. If one did not believe that Jesus was the Eternal Word, one would still have to be amazed at the way he handled people. He would be considered nothing less than an unparalleled moral leader, a man of infinite wisdom, a man of outstanding compassion, a man whom we should follow as a teacher. But, obviously, we Christians believe that Jesus was the Son of God/and God the Son. And we believe that only God can forgive sins the way Jesus forgave sins, even as He forgave the sinful woman her sins. Kyle Yates, a Baptist scholar, writing about this story, labeled the story simply, *Amazing Grace!* The story truly does show God's grace in an amazing way, as the Son of God meets and forgives a sinful woman. It is also amazing how He did it. Let's look at this story together. The first thing we notice in the story is:

I. JESUS KNOWS ALL ABOUT OUR SINS.

Kyle Yates says that Jesus had spent the entire night on the Mt. of Olives, and has just come to the Temple for a Bible class with the eager listeners, but is interrupted in the midst of His teachings by the Pharisees who are trying to find something, anything, by which to legally condemn Him.

These so called "holy" men rudely interrupted the Teacher! Notice also how they interrupted Him. There is nothing holy or righteous in their efforts. They come to the Temple dragging a poor, embarrassed, distressed, confused, frustrated, weeping, bedraggled, largely undressed young woman, thrust her before the Teacher, and accuse her of her lawlessness which should receive the death penalty, or, stoning.

- A. Jesus Knew About Her Sin.** The Bible says that Jesus knew what was in the heart of every man, so we can safely assume that He knew about her sin. I am sure that He could look into anyone's eyes and know what they had done. Remember how Peter had cried to Him, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." In the Holy Presence of Jesus men knew, men knew, their sins. This woman was not only interrupted in a likely "setup sex trap." She was no doubt bruised and abused by these Pharisees; and roughly pushed down to the ground before Jesus. Most of all however, she was treated as if she had no humanity. She was a nothing. A piece of flesh for man's use, misuse, or disuse. Oh how her self-concept was battered by this whole episode. But what she didn't know was that Jesus already knew about her sins even before she was brought to him in her humiliation.

B. Jesus Knew About Their Sins Also. These men knew the Law. Moses had clearly commanded that such should die by stoning for such heinous sins. But their sins were equally heinous. Not only did they know the Law of Moses, they also knew about Adultery. They should have known it, for they were themselves probably guilty of it. Their disgust for her sin was sheer hypocrisy. They show amusement and lightness about her sinfulness by the way they shamed her in Jesus' presence. And they declared that "she was taken in the very act." In a word, "we witnessed it." Yates writes, "Their malignant hatred drove them to behavior that was unspeakable. To add insult to injury, they declared that she had been 'taken in the very act.' Some commentator has called it 'a brutal indelicacy.'"

Jesus knew their sins. They were hypocrites. They were insensitive and brutal. They were heartless and conniving. In their pride they had lost all their humanity. They were indeed religious, but they were lost souls whose sins Christ knew well.

II. JESUS KNEW THEIR SINS—HE ALSO KNEW THEIR MOTIVES!

A. He Knew the Motives of The Woman. None of us are able to know always why people do what they do. We speculate, but we don't know. Even in court, where lawyers have to establish a motive, the motive can be quite elusive. That is why we should not be judgmental towards our fellow man, whose sins we may see, whose weaknesses may be obvious, whose crime may be apparent. The big question is always, Why? In fact, in court, lawyers bring expert witnesses in motivation and psychology to answer that question, so that they might establish motive.

Without question, Jesus knew the motives of the woman, and He had mercy. She had sinned. Lev. 20:10 said, "The man that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." In the Jewish Mishnah the penalty for adultery was strangulation. But Jesus had mercy. He knew her motive. We can assume that if this woman was without a husband, she had no way to make her livelihood, and the need for money might have been paramount. We don't know her motive, but we do know from reading about the Holy Land, that a woman had a much more difficult time than the man, and that a woman's identity depended on the man. For the most part, and especially with the religious leaders of that day, a woman was nothing. His love for every human being might have elicited Jesus' sympathy for this poor woman. He knew her motive.

B. He Knew the Motive of These Men. If they had really been serious about the woman breaking the law, they would have taken her case to the law courts. But no! They come instead to Jesus. They seek to embarrass her, and they try to embarrass Him. The game they play is to expose Jesus! Show people that He is a lawbreaker! Demonstrate that He is no friend of Moses! Get him to act as a judge, and get Him in trouble with the Romans.

But Jesus knows their motives. He bends down and writes in the dust. Yates writes, “The Master could look through them and discern every thought and purpose. He knew their plan to catch him and to bring him into collision with the Roman law...The Master refused to argue with His enemies. He did not classify himself as a judge. He caught these accusers with a sudden move that floored them immediately. He began to write on the ground with His finger.”

III. JESUS ALSO KNOWS OUR SECRETS.

A. The Woman’s Secret Was Exposed to the World. But Jesus already knew her secret. The Bible says: (Deu 29:29 KJV) “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Also: (Psa 19:12 KJV) “Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.” (Psa 90:8 KJV) “Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.” (Prov 9:17 KJV) “Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” Also: (Prov 27:5 KJV) “Open rebuke is better than secret love.”

What the Pharisees did was worse than ‘open rebuke’. It was downright humiliation. What if someone did you that way? How dehumanizing this would be!

Be assured that God never does us this way. He knows our secrets, but they remain secrets with Him, and He will never reveal them. And when we confess these secret faults to Him, He says, “I Forgive! I Forgive!”

Jesus knew the secrets of this woman.

B. But He Also Knew the Secrets of the Pharisees. He wrote on the ground. What did He write? No one knows. Jesus kept their secrets secret. A tenth-century manuscript reads: “Wrote on the ground the sins of each one of them.”

IV. FINALLY, JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY TO GOD.

A. She Took His Way—Had the Light of Life; Went to Heaven. In a Peanuts comic strip, there was a conversation between Lucy and Charlie Brown. Lucy said that life is like a deck chair. Some place it so they can see where they are going; some place it so they can see where they have been; and some place it so they can see where they are at present. Charlie Brown's reply: "I can't even get mine unfolded."

I wish that life was as easily explained as that great philosopher of the comic strips, Charlie Brown, once deduced that it was.

Lucy is saying to him, "Life is a mystery Charlie Brown -- do you know the answer?" Charlie Brown answered, "Be kind. Don't smoke. Be prompt. Smile a lot. Eat sensibly. Avoid cavities and mark your ballot carefully. Avoid too much sun. Send overseas packages early. Love all creatures above and below. Insure your belongings and try to keep the ball low...." Before he can get out another platitude, Lucy interrupts: "Hold real still," she says, "because I am going to hit you a very sharp blow upon the nose!"

*To laugh often and much;
To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children;
To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false
friends;
To appreciate beauty;
To find the best in others;
To leave the world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a redeemed
social condition, or a job well done;
To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived -- this is
to have succeeded.*

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson.

B. They took Their Way—And Walked in Darkness; and went to Hell.

Some men die by shrapnel,
Some go down in flames.
But most men perish inch by inch
playing little games.