

Going Forward in Forgiveness (John 8:1-11)

By David Soper

John 8:10 Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" 11 "No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."

With these tender words of divine forgiveness (v11), the woman who had been caught in the act of adultery experienced the incredible grace of God through Jesus Christ. She was guilty, yet Jesus Christ declared her forgiven. She was publicly humiliated, yet Jesus spoke to her respectfully. She was used by men with impure motives, yet Jesus loved her with holy purity. She didn't know at the time, but Jesus loved her so much that he would pay the full penalty for her sin so that she wouldn't have to! (1 John 2:1-2) Jesus didn't say to her, "*Oh, it's ok, nobody's perfect, don't worry about it*". He didn't dismiss her actions as being insignificant, instead, he did for her what she couldn't do for herself, wipe the slate clean and give her an opportunity for a completely new life.

Divine forgiveness is a powerful force in our lives. Without it, we can't move forward from sinful habits and destructive behavior. It does more than absolve us of sin, **it empowers us to change**. The greatest motivator to turn our life around is not fear of punishment, but the love and acceptance of a God who is for us in every way. Notice Jesus' response to the woman. First he forgave her, then he told her, "*Go and sin no more*" (v11). What if Jesus had said, "*If you go and sin no more, then I will accept you*"? None of us could do it! We'd give up before we started. Jesus first forgives and accepts those who believe in him (as she did). Then he asks us to respond to that love by living a life that is pleasing to God (Romans 6:16). Our heart changes first, then our behavior.

Divine forgiveness transforms us into forgiving people. When we are forgiven by God, we are much quicker to forgive others. (Luke 7:47) It's as if the DNA of grace is genetically grafted into every true believer. The spirit of Christ is not a spirit of judgment and legalism. Grace does not ignore sin, but deals with it in a Christ-like way – compassionately, directly, and lovingly. The religious leaders who caught the woman in adultery were not zealous for the things of God, nor did they have any compassion for the woman. If they had either, they would have also brought forward the man involved in this tryst! Religion, in and of itself, is not life transforming, but when Jesus speaks grace into our lives, we experience such a deep and radical transformation that we ourselves become a conduit for grace.

The woman was not the only person who changed that day. The crowd, just there to hear Jesus teach, became immersed in this dramatic lesson on divine forgiveness. Do you think those people would ever be the same? Even the accusers, confronted with their own sinful motives, experienced the incredible love of Jesus Christ. How could they go forward from that moment without seeing things completely different? Everyone there was touched by God's forgiveness and love. Is His love and forgiveness fresh in your heart? For us who believe, may we never forget the tender and healing words of Jesus, "neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more".