

Spiritual Growth Lessons from Christian Ambassadors

Lesson 56 – Freed by Forgiveness

By Sharon K. Griffiee

Scripture Lesson: John 8:1-11 (KJV)

Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and He sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not.

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. And again He stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

The theme for our Spiritual Growth Lesson is **“Freed by Forgiveness”**. To be free means to be released from something that has been restraining us or controlling us. As we study our scripture lesson we learn that the woman caught in adultery was freed from at least two things when Jesus stepped in to forgive.

First - she was freed from the unjust punishment of her accusers. The scribes and Pharisees had set themselves up as her judge. She had done wrong according to the Law of Moses and they were prepared to stone her to bring about that punishment. It never occurred to them to restore her to the community or to bring healing through forgiveness.

Second - she was freed from immediate condemnation by Jesus. We must not get the wrong impression here that Jesus simply patted the woman on the back, saying, ‘It’s okay, don’t worry about a thing, I’ll take care of those bullies for you!’ No, what Jesus was really saying is, I’m not condemning you *at this time*. Viewing her through the eyes of love, Jesus

didn’t see her as a hopeless person. He had faith in her potential, the person she could become. Key to our understanding is to know that with every promise Jesus gives us, there is a condition placed in front of us. The condition He placed in front of the woman caught in adultery was this, *“Go and sin no more!”* Jesus was not going to pass final judgment upon her at this time, because he was offering her the chance to go and demonstrate she would live a righteous life. His requirement was repentance; turning away from her sinful life.

The basic difference between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees is that they wanted to condemn her on the spot. Jesus wanted the woman to experience his forgiveness. They enjoyed the idea of making her suffer for what she had done. Jesus delighted in challenging this woman to change her ways and live the higher life He was calling her to. He did not stand there and call her names; He stood by her, calling her to repentance. With her life spared, Jesus gave the woman a clear choice on that day. She was either to go back to her old ways or to go on to a new way of life, *freed by His forgiveness*.

Believing that Jesus not only has the power, but the willingness to use that power to forgive sins is what sets us on the path to freedom. That is why it is so important for us to come boldly to the throne where Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. There He is acting as our merciful and faithful High Priest.

Hebrews 4:15-16 (KJV) - *For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

We have the God-given right to go to Jesus, repent of our sins and have the assurance we will obtain mercy and find grace to help in times of need. If on the other hand, we think that we have done something so terrible that Jesus won’t have anything to do with us, then we have totally misunderstood his sacrifice on the cross. At that point, we need to truly grasp why Jesus came into the world in the first place.

JOHN 3:17-21 (KJV) - *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him*

is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

Jesus sacrificed dearly for those who want to walk in the light of truth. As Christians we have decided that we want to be where the light is. We want to make sure that the deeds we do are in accordance with God's will. Therefore, we should not be afraid to have our deeds *reproved* before God. The Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines the word *reproved* to mean; to scold or correct usually gently or with kindly intent. Now if we thought that Jesus was going to punch us out every time we came to him to confess a sin, then we certainly would have good reason to avoid going anywhere near Him. What we need to realize is that Jesus doesn't want to punish us. His desire is that we repent, so He can freely help us get back on the right track - back into the light. But He cannot help us if we don't allow him to. He will not override our will.

I recall an incident several years ago when an oral surgeon removed one of my wisdom teeth. He sent me home with pain pills and instructions to call him if I had any problems whatsoever. My wisdom tooth had been removed on a Friday and the doctor was not in his office on the week end. As it turned out the pain pills were not working and I started experiencing excruciating pain. Alan wanted to call the doctor, but I didn't want to bother him. I didn't want to interfere with the doctor's week end, with his time off.

So I foolishly put up with the pain until Monday when the doctor was back in his office. I could hardly wait to get in there to get some relief for my pain. When I told the doctor that I had been in pain for two days, he gently scolded me and said, “Why didn't you call me? That's what we're here for, to help with any problems you might have. You should have called; our patients comfort is top priority with us.”

The doctor diagnosed that I had developed a dry socket. That meant the gum had not healed over the bone as it should have. The exposed bone was causing the pain. And so it took several times of repacking the socket before it would heal properly. What I learned from this experience is that the doctor was not only

able, but he was *willing* to help me anytime I needed help. But, I mistakenly thought he would be annoyed with me, if I called him on the week end.

This is how we act with Jesus sometimes. We endure needless suffering, because we think we might be bothering him if we went to him for help. Make no mistake, Jesus is always eager for us to come to him. He is not only *able*, but He is *willing* to offer mercy and grace to help us in our time of need.

But we must make this distinction: Having God's forgiveness does not free us from the *ability* to sin. We still live in a flesh body and sin is still in the world. Put another way, when we made Jesus Christ the Lord of our life, it wasn't sin that went away. Rather, we went away from sin. Praise God! Having God's forgiveness frees us from the *desire* to sin. Consequently, having the slate wiped clean does not set us free, unless we *simultaneously* turn to Jesus Christ for a new life in Him. That new life requires letting go of the past, in order to move forward into newness of life. It involves a mighty change of heart, so we no longer have a disposition to do evil, but to do good continually. Once again from **John 8:11**; “*And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more.*” Due to the woman's encounter with Jesus, I believe she had a mighty change of heart and went forth glorifying God from that very hour!

Questions for Personal or Group Study

(Please do not mail to CA for grading):

1. In our lesson the woman caught in adultery was freed from at least two things when Jesus stepped in to forgive. What were they?
2. With every promise Jesus places a condition in front of us. What condition did Jesus place in front of the woman caught in adultery?
3. What is the basic difference between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees, in how they treated the adulterous woman?
4. **Hebrews 4:15-16** tells us that Jesus was “*in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*”. Knowing that Jesus understands our weaknesses; does this give you the boldness to approach His *throne of grace*?
5. As Christians we should not be afraid to have our deeds *reproved* before God. Are you willing to seek God's help and/or correction in your time of need?
6. Explain how God's forgiveness can free each of us from the *desire* to sin.