

5

Lord, I will go! ***Forgive Me***

(John 8:47)

INTRODUCTION

A while ago I read the story of a Spanish father who decided to reconcile with his son, who had left for Madrid. Full of remorse, the father placed this ad in the paper: "Paco, meet me at the Montana Hotel Tuesday noon. All forgiven. Dad." As Paco is a frequent name in Spain, when the father arrived at the hotel, he found eight hundred young people named Paco, all of them waiting for their father.

That's right, folks, people desperately need forgiveness. A great preacher and writer wrote a few words that express very well God's longing for each of his children to experience forgiveness:





If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. If our greatest foolishness had been fun, God would have sent us a comedian. But our greatest need was forgiveness, "so God sent us a Savior!"¹

DEVELOPMENT

The book of John, chapter 8, recounts a dramatic incident that occurred one day when Jesus was teaching in the steps of the temple in Jerusalem. Suddenly, a woman who had been caught in the very act of adultery was violently thrown at Jesus' feet. The religious leaders of the temple in Jerusalem were the ones who threw the prostitute at the feet of Jesus. These leaders demanded that Jesus pronounce judgment on the woman's fate, as dictated by the law of Moses. "In the law, Moses" the scribes and Pharisees said, "commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" (John 8:5).

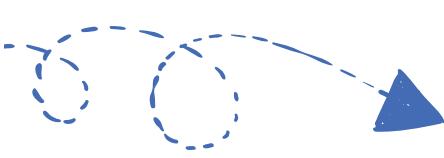
Ellen White, commenting on this story, wrote that:

Their pretended reverence veiled a deep-laid plot for His ruin. They had seized upon this opportunity to secure His condemnation, thinking that whatever decision He might make, they would find occasion to accuse Him. Should He acquit the woman, He might be charged with despising the law of Moses. Should He declare her worthy of death, He could be accused to the Romans as one who was assuming authority that belonged only to them.²

Everyone present looked forward to what Jesus would say. But, to their dismay, Jesus simply crouched down and began writing in the sand with his finger. No one knows for sure what he was writing. The scribes and Pharisees were irritated that Jesus offered no answer to their question. When they pressed him again, Jesus stood up and said, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." (John 8:7). The Master wrote again in the sand;

¹ Charles R. Swindoll. *More than 1001 illustrations and quotes from Swindoll* (Nashville, Tennessee: Nelson Group, 2007), p. 345.

² Ellen White. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 460.



the message he wrote had a strong impact on the accusers of the convicted woman; one by one they walked away.

When Jesus finally stood up and looked around, the accusers were gone. Then he turned to the woman, and said, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" In front of the crowd, the woman answered, full of shame, "No one, sir." Jesus looked at her then, and said, "Neither do I condemn you, go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:10-11).

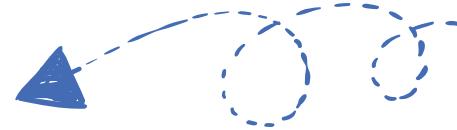
This wonderful story has a message of hope for each of us. Clearly, we notice how Jesus forgave and restored the life of that woman who had been caught in the "act of adultery." Through the words "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more," Jesus gives the woman a second chance, an opportunity for forgiveness, to start a new life in purity and holiness.

On the other hand, the act of Jesus writing "on the ground with his finger" (John 8:6) also contains a lesson of grace and mercy for each of us. It is very interesting to note, that on two previous occasions God is presented writing with "His finger" on stone tablets (Exodus 31:18) and on the surface of a wall (Daniel 5:5). On stone tablets God wrote His law, which is eternal; and on the surface of a wall God wrote the death sentence against a wicked king named Belshazzar.

We can then conclude that God writes in stone what He wants to remain forever. That which is eternal and irrevocable. Then we ask ourselves, what does God write on the ground? We can say that on the ground God writes what He wants erased; because whatever is written on earth, wind, and rain, time is responsible for erasing it forever.

Jesus' act of "writing on the ground with His finger" showed the accusers of that ashamed woman, that forgiveness, restoration, and a second chance to start over was available to them as well. I once heard the story about a pastor³ who as a young man had committed what he felt was a grave sin, and although he had asked God for forgiveness, he dragged the burden of this sin with him his whole life. He just wasn't sure God had truly forgiven him.

³ This illustration was taken from Alice Gray. *More stories in refreshing waters* (Miami, FL: UNILIT Publishing House, 1999). pp. 228-229.



One day he was told about an elderly woman who had visions. He heard that during these visions she had frequent conversations with the Lord. After a while, the pastor finally mustered enough courage to visit that woman.

She invited him in and offered him a cup of tea. Towards the end of the visit, he rested the cup on the table and looked the old lady in the eye.

"Is it true that sometimes you have visions?" He asked.

"Yes," she replied.

"Is it also true that during these visions, you often speak to the Lord?

"Yes," she said again.

"Well..., the next time you have visions and talk to the Lord, could you ask him something for me?"

The woman looked at the pastor a little curious. She had never been asked that before:

"Yes, it would make me very happy," she replied. "What do you want me to ask him?"

"Well," the pastor began, "could you ask him what sin your pastor committed when he was young?"

The woman, very curious now, agreed.

A few weeks passed and the pastor visited the woman again. After another cup of tea, cautiously and shyly, he asked:

"Did you have visions again?

"Yes, I did," the woman replied.

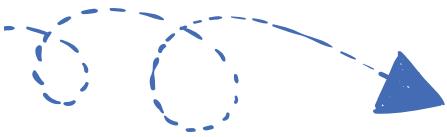
"Did you speak to the Lord?

"Yes."

"Did you ask him what sin I had committed when I was young?"

"Yes," the woman replied, "I did."

The pastor, nervous and afraid, hesitated for an instant and then asked:



"Well, what did the Lord tell you?

The woman looked at her pastor's face and gently retorted:

"The Lord told me he did not remember."

God forgives completely. The prophet Micah, writing about divine forgiveness, asked himself:

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:18-19)

Let me tell you that the same Jesus who extended his mercy to that troubled pastor and to that ashamed woman, today reaches out to you and says, "Neither do I condemn you; go away, and sin no more." Divine forgiveness is available to you in these very moments. Today the Lord invites you with these words: "Come now, let us settle the matter," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." (Isaiah 1:18)

CONCLUSION

What happened to the woman in our story? Did she go back to her life of sin? Well, let me share with you what Ellen G. White tells us about her:

FORGIVE ME

This penitent woman became one of the firmest friends of Jesus. She repaid his forgiveness and compassion, with a self-sacrificing love and worship. Afterward, when she stood sorrow-stricken at the foot of the cross and saw the dying agony on the face of her Lord, and heard his bitter cry, her soul was pierced afresh; for she knew that this sacrifice was on account of sin; and her responsibility as one whose deep guilt had helped to bring about this anguish of the Son of God, seemed very heavy indeed. She felt that those pangs which pierced the Saviour's frame were for her; the blood that flowed from his wounds was to blot out her record of sin; the groans which escaped from his dying lips were caused by her transgression. Her heart ached with a sorrow past all expression, and she felt that a life of self-abnegating atonement would poorly compensate for the gift of life, purchased for her at such an infinite price.⁴





We can see that after being forgiven, this woman experienced a complete change in her life. Her gratitude towards Jesus was such, that she chose to be His follower, and one of her most loyal at that. But one thing we should not overlook is that she followed Jesus to the cross. When most people abandoned Jesus, she courageously bore witness to her faith!

This woman that one day found forgiveness, ended up being a faithful follower of the Lord! She didn't stay where He found her. She chose to live a life devoted to God! She chose to give it all up, to leave it all behind and walk in the way of righteousness and purity.

When we experience forgiveness, we will be willing to give everything up for the Lord, but above all we cannot be silent. Like this woman, you too will leave it all to follow Jesus and say, "Lord, I will go."

I WILL GO

