

INTRODUCTION 引言

Have you ever been put on the spot in public? Some people are natural speakers. They do not mind being asked to say something unprepared. Perhaps they even enjoy the attention. But if you are a shy person like me, you need some planning before you can present a speech. It will be nerve-wrecking if you are given a last-minute assignment. But whether you are an extrovert or an introvert, no one likes to receive criticism in front of people. That is what happened in our story today. A woman had to deal with an agitated crowd. This is a unique passage in the Bible. There may be a horizontal line or some special punctuation marks in your Bible before and after the section. There may also be a footnote that says this story was not included in some of the early Bible manuscripts. Some scholars question whether the story was written by apostle John or someone inserted it later. Certain style of writing in this account is different from the rest of the gospel of John. Although the event was not included in some manuscripts, it does not mean that it never happened. Since we are only ordinary believers, we will leave the debate to the experts. Also, Jesus' response in the incident was consistent with how He behaved in the rest of the gospels. Through His interaction with the crowd, Jesus proved that He was the Lord of the Law. He showed us that only the One who underwrites the Law has the right to overrule it.

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Person to be Accused? 指控的對象?

The setting is an accusation. It seems obvious who the person being accused was. A woman was caught red-handed when committing adultery. She was guilty as charged. We can imagine that she was anxiously waiting for her judgment. At that time, Jesus was teaching in the temple. He was possibly in the outer courtyard. Some scribes and Pharisees brought the woman to the scene. They made a request to Jesus in verses 4-5: **4 ...“Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. 5 Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?”** Very likely, they had witnesses to verify her sin. Adultery is a direct violation of the 7th of the Ten Commandments. The Law says the offense is punishable by death. It is based on Leviticus 20:10 – **“If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.”** Those religious leaders had a legitimate case. But did they miss something here? First, the Law says both parties should be punished. Where was the man? Did he run away or did the religious leaders let him go? Second, if those prosecutors believed that death penalty was the proper judgment, why did they not carry it out themselves? Why did they ask Jesus for advice? Verse 6 tells us their true motive: **This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him...** The religious leaders were not trying to check Jesus' knowledge of the Law. The fate of the lady was not their primary concern either. She was only a bait to trap Jesus. If Jesus said they could go ahead and execute the lady, then they would accuse Him for a lack of mercy. Jesus would also be accused of overriding the authority of the Roman government. On the contrary, if Jesus said the woman should be spared, the religious leaders would accuse Him of violating the Law. Jesus would be condemned in either case. You see, Jesus, not the woman, was the real person they wanted to accuse. Rather

than answering the question directly, Jesus started writing on the ground with His finger. The passage does not say what He was writing. Meanwhile, the teachers kept pressing Jesus with the question. Then He stood up and said in verse 7: ...**“Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.”** Jesus replied by bouncing a question back to His opponents. He often used the same tactic when He was tested by His critics. But this time He challenged everyone on the scene. He then resumed writing. We can expect that the yelling of indictment instantly turned into a dead silence. The suspense gave people time to examine themselves. We see their reaction in verse 9: **But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.** The spectators became offenders. It was true that they might never have committed adultery. But everyone was guilty of some other sins. The older people might be more aware of their sins because of their life experience. Therefore, they left first. But eventually, everyone was gone. The religious leaders wanted to trap Jesus in His words. At the end, Jesus exposed their hypocrisy. They accused others while excusing their own sins. Have we not been self-righteous like them? For example, it may happen when we discuss scandals in the news. We are shocked to learn that some famous people lead a double-life. We believe that they deserve to be punished. On other occasions, the people in question can be our brothers and sisters in the church! We say to each other: “How can a mature Christian did those things?” We should be careful when we harbor such mentality. It is easy to overlook our sins by pointing out others’ sins. God loves sinners and hates sins. In our case, we often hate other sinners but love our own sins. We should not condone sins but we should not condemn sinners either. After all, there is only one righteous Judge. He is our God. We all need His grace and mercy. That was how Jesus treated the woman.

2. Person to be Acquitted 被赦的罪人

The religious leaders wanted to use the woman to accuse Jesus. As it turned out, Jesus indicted everyone on the spot. After all the people were gone, only the woman remained. Jesus showed grace to her and acquitted her. Listen to the conversation in verses 10-11: **10 Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” 11 She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”** The crowd had dispersed. There was no one to accuse her. Not even Jesus! Jesus dismissed the charge not because there was not enough evidence to prosecute the woman. He chose to acquit a sinner out of grace. Jesus gave her a command before she left: “Sin no more!” Jesus did not condemn her for her sin. But He urged her to use the pardon as a turning point in her life. She might not fully understand the significance of Jesus’ words. But at least she knew that Jesus wanted her to have a new beginning. Jesus showed His authority in judgment by acquitting the woman. Jesus’ forgiveness of the lady points to His forgiving grace through the cross. When Jesus forgives us, it is not just about one sin or many sins, but all of them. That include the sins in our whole life – past, present and future. Paul says in Romans 8:1 – **There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.** We are in Christ Jesus when we received Him by faith into our hearts. When Jesus shouldered our sins on the cross, our sin debt was paid in full. From then on, no one can bring those charges and condemn us. Brothers and sisters: do you want Jesus to remove only some of your sins? Or do you want Him to wipe you all clean? Suppose someone treats you a \$100 buffet at a five-star hotel. Everything has been paid for. Any food item you can think of is right before your eyes. Your friend reminds you that you can eat whatever you like. You walk to the salad bar and fill up a small plate of veggie. You said to the host after you

finished: “Thank you for your invitation. I’m done.” Your friend will be upset, because you fail to appreciate his generosity by eating so little. God has more grace than the money that person has. He has the power to forgive all of our sins. But how come we often live like Jesus only washed away some of our sins? We do so by intentionally repeat the same sins over and again. That should not be the case. We loved to sin when we did not know Jesus. Now we should love Jesus by pursuing holiness. Indeed we will continue to stumble in this life. We live in a fallen world full of temptations, and we still live in a fragile body. We can never fight against sin by ourselves. Only by relying on the Holy Spirit in us can we live a victorious life. God’s forgiveness encourages us to obey Him. But we do not submit to God reluctantly as if we join a military bootcamp. Rather, we freely choose to love God back because He loves us first. As a result, although we can never be sinless in this life, we can sin less by God’s grace. As grace recipients, we should also be grace givers. We need to share God’s grace with others. Paul says in Galatians 6:1 – **Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.** The context is a Christian community. It is easy to pass judgment and throw the first stone at the person who sinned. But it takes compassion to receive a wrongdoer without agreeing with the sin committed. We should not ignore the consequence of sin as well. We let the civil authority handle the legal matters if laws are broken. However, we should bring the person back to the fold instead of kicking the person out. Pastor Max Lucado said it well: “God loves us the way we are, but He doesn’t want us to stay that way.” We should extend God’s grace to the offender. Hopefully, it will lead to a repentance, and it motivates the person to pursue righteousness.

CONCLUSION 結論

God who underwrites the Law has the right to overrule it. Jesus did not cancel the Law. He has never changed God’s standard either. God always treats sin as sin. There has to be a compensation when we violate His holiness. Jesus suffered the penalty we deserve. God could have dealt with us harshly by His Law. Instead, He treats us with grace. If we do not see the holiness of God and the seriousness of our sins, then we will not realize the weight of God’s grace. Moreover, only those who cherish God’s grace will be willing to extend grace to others. Let me illustrate with a true story. Samuel Colgate, whose company makes the toothpaste brand many people use, was a devout Christian. He was even a Baptist! Once there was an evangelistic meeting at the church he attended. At the end of the service, the pastor invited those who wanted to accept Jesus to come forward. He emphasized that Jesus could forgive any sin big and small. A woman who was well-known in town for her sinful lifestyle walked down the aisle. She wept as she knelt before the podium. Moments later, she stood up and testified. She firmly believed that God had forgiven her sins. She wanted to become a member of the church. There was a complete silence. Colgate then rose from the pew. He said: “I guess we messed up when we prayed that God would save sinners. We forgot to specify what kind of sinners we want Him to accept. We need to ask the Lord for forgiveness of our negligence.” Immediately, another member proposed to accept the lady into the congregation. The motion was approved unanimously. Brothers and sisters: we are that woman in Colgate’s story and in Jesus’ story. Jesus could have prosecute you in the court of heaven. But He willingly forgives you. Jesus is saying to us today too: “Sin no more!” For those who do not know Jesus, His salvation grace is for you too. Come receive Jesus!

INTRODUCTION 引言

你有沒有體驗過在公共場合被推舉出來的經歷？有些人天生就會演講。他們不介意被要求在沒有準備的情形下講話。也許他們甚至喜歡受到眾人的注目。但如果你像我一樣害羞，那麼你在分享之前需要做準備。如果你接到臨時任務，那將會使你緊張。但無論你是外向還是內向的人，沒有人喜歡在人們面前受到批評。這就是我們今天故事中發生的事情。一個婦人要面對一些激烈的群眾。這是聖經中比較獨特的經文。這段經文的前面和後面可能有一條直線或一些特別的標點符號。可能你的聖經還有一個附註，說這個故事沒有包括在一些早期的聖經手抄本之中。一些學者質疑這個故事是使徒約翰寫的還是後來被人加插的。這段記載的寫作風格與約翰福音的其他部分有點不同。雖然有些手抄本沒有記載這一事件，但這並不等於它從未發生過。由於我們只是普通信徒，我們就把爭論留給專家吧。此外，耶穌在這件事中的反應與祂在其他福音書中的表現是一致的。耶穌通過與群眾的互動，證明了祂是律法的主。祂告訴我們唯有製定律法的神才有權柄否決律法。

EXPLANATION 解釋

1. Person to be Accused? 指控的對象?

經文的場景是一個指控。被指控的對象似乎很明顯。一個婦女在行淫時當場被抓，證據確實。我們可以想像，她焦急地等待著自己的判決。那時，耶穌正在聖殿裡教導人。祂可能是在外院。一些文士和法利賽人把女人帶到了現場。他們在 4-5 節中向耶穌提出要求：4 ... 「夫子，這婦人是正行淫之時被拿的。5 摩西在律法上吩咐我們把這樣的婦人用石頭打死。你說該把她怎麼樣呢？」很可能他們有證人來證實她的罪。姦淫是直接違反十誡中的第七條誡命的行為。律法規定，這種罪行可判處死刑。它的根據是在利未記 20:10 – 「與鄰舍之妻行淫的，姦夫淫婦都必治死。」這些宗教領袖有充分的理由，但他們是不是忽略了一些細節？首先，律法規定雙方都應受到懲罰。那個男人在哪裡？是他逃跑了還是宗教領袖放了他？第二，如果那些指控的人認為死刑是正確的判決，為什麼他們自己不執行呢？他們為何問耶穌的意見呢？第 6 節告訴我們他們的真實動機：他們說這話，乃試探耶穌，要得着告他的把柄...。宗教領袖並不是要考耶穌對律法的了解。這位女士的結局也不是他們最關心的事情。她只是誣告耶穌的餌。如果耶穌說他們可以處決那位女士，那麼他們就會指責祂缺乏憐憫。耶穌也會被指控凌駕於羅馬政府的權柄之上。相反，如果耶穌說應該饒恕那個婦人，宗教領袖就會指責祂違反了律法。無論哪種情況，耶穌都會被定罪。耶穌，而不是那個女人，才是他們真正想要指控的人。耶穌沒有直接回

答問題，而是開始用手指在地上寫字。經文沒有說祂在寫什麼。與此同時，老師們不斷地逼耶穌回答問題。然後祂站起來，在第 7 節中說：...「你們中間誰是沒有罪的，誰就可以先拿石頭打她。」耶穌以一個問題來回應祂的對手。當祂受到批評者的試探時，祂經常使用同樣的策略。但這一次，祂是向在場的所有人發出挑戰。然後祂又繼續寫字。我們可以想像，指控的呼喊聲馬上安靜下安。懸空的時間讓各人審視自己。我們在第 9 節中看到他們的反應：他們聽見這話，就從老到少，一個一個地都出去了，只剩下耶穌一人，還有那婦人仍然站在當中。觀眾都變成了罪人。也許他們從來沒有犯姦淫罪，但是每個人都一定犯過其他罪。年長的人可能因為生活經歷而更加意識到自己的罪。於是，他們就先離開了。但最終，所有人都散去了。宗教領袖想用耶穌的話來陷害祂。但結果耶穌揭露了他們的假冒為善。他們一邊指責別人，一邊姑息自己的罪。我們不也像他們一樣自以為義嗎？例如，當我們討論新聞中的醜聞時，就可能會那樣做。我們震驚地發現一些名人過著雙重生活。我們確信他們是罪有應得的。在其他情況下，犯錯的人可能是我們教會裡的弟兄姐妹！我們互相談論：「一個成熟的基督徒怎麼能做這些事呢？」當我們懷有這樣的心態時，我們要小心。通過指出別人的罪，我們很容易忽略自己的罪。神愛罪人，但是祂恨惡罪。我們卻常常討厭其他罪人，但是愛自己的罪。我們不應該縱容罪，但也不應該定別人的罪。畢竟，只有一位公義的法官。祂是我們的神。我們都需要祂的恩典和憐憫。這就是耶穌接下來對待那個婦人的方式。

2. Person to be Acquitted 被赦的罪人

宗教領袖想利用那個婦人來指控耶穌。結果，耶穌指控現場的所有人。等他們都離開之後，只剩下那個女士。耶穌向她施恩，赦免她的罪。請聽第 10-11 節中的對話：10 耶穌就直起腰來，對她說：「婦人，那些人在哪裏呢？沒有人定你的罪嗎？」11 她說：「主啊，沒有。」耶穌說：「我也不定你的罪。去吧，從此不要再犯罪了！」人群已經散去，再沒有人指控她，連耶穌也不定她的罪！耶穌取消指控並不是因為沒有足夠的證據來起訴那個婦人。耶穌是出於恩典選擇釋放一個罪人。在她離去之前，耶穌給了她一個命令：「不要再犯罪了！」耶穌並沒有因她的罪而責備她，但祂敦促她將這次赦免作為人生的轉折點。她可能不完全理解耶穌的話的意義，但至少她知道耶穌希望她有一個新的開始。耶穌宣告那位女士無罪，藉此顯示祂審判的權柄。耶穌饒恕這位女士指向祂在十字架上的赦罪恩典。當耶穌赦免我們時，祂不只是消除一項罪或多項罪，而是所有的罪。這包括我們一生中的罪—過去、現在和將來。保羅在羅馬書 8:1 中說：如今，那些在基督耶穌裏的就不定罪了。當我們憑信心接受基督進入心中時，我們就在基督耶穌裡了。當耶穌在十字架上擔當我們的罪時，我們的罪債就被完全償還了。從那時起，沒有人可以再提出這些罪來指控我們了。弟兄姐妹們：你希望耶穌只除去你的一些罪嗎？或是你希望祂把你一切的罪都洗清？假設有人在一家五星級酒店邀請你享用 100 美元的自助餐。他已經付了帳。你能想到的食物都在你眼前。你的朋友提醒你，你可以吃任何

你喜歡的東西。你走到沙拉吧，盛了一小盤蔬菜。你吃完之後對你的朋友說：「謝謝你的邀請。我吃飽了。」你的朋友一定會很不高興，因為你吃那麼少，沒有欣賞他的熱情。神所賜的恩典比那個人所擁有的金錢更多。祂有能力赦免我們所有的罪孽。但為什麼我們的生活方式，常常像耶穌只是洗去了我們一部份的罪呢？我們故意地不斷重複同樣的罪，就證明了這一點。我們不應該這樣做。當我們不認識耶穌時，我們喜歡犯罪。現在我們應該通過追求聖潔來表達愛耶穌。我們這今生仍然會繼續跌倒。我們生活在一個充滿試探的墮落世界，我們仍然活在軟弱的身體裡。我們無法靠自己與罪惡爭戰。唯有依靠住在我們裡面的聖靈，我們才能過得勝的生活。神的饒恕激勵我們去順服祂。但我們不是像參加軍事訓練營那樣地勉強順服神。相反，我們自由地選擇愛神，因為祂先愛我們。因此，雖然我們今生不可能不犯罪，但靠著神的恩典，我們可以少犯罪。作為恩典的接受者，我們也應該成為恩典的施予者。我們需要與他人分享神的恩典。保羅在加拉太書 6:1 中說：**弟兄們，若有人偶然被過犯所勝，你們屬靈的人就當用溫柔的心把他挽回過來；又當自己小心，恐怕也被引誘。**這節經文的背景是基督的群體。要論斷犯罪的人並向他扔第一塊石頭是很容易的。但是接納罪人而不妥協所犯的罪需要憐憫的心。同時，我們也不應該忽視罪的後果。如果有違法的行為，我們要讓執法的機關來處理。然而，我們應該把那個人挽回過來，而不是把他踢出去。馬克斯·盧卡多牧師 (Pastor Max Lucado) 說得對：「神接納我們的真面目，但祂不希望我們停留在那個光景。」我們應該向犯罪的人給予神的恩典。希望這樣做能引導他悔改，並激勵他追求公義。

CONCLUSION 結論

唯有製定律法的神才有權柄否決律法。耶穌並沒有取消律法。祂也從未改變過神的標準。神一直把罪看為罪。當我們冒犯神的聖潔時，就必須有補償。耶穌承擔了我們應得的懲罰。神本可以按律法嚴厲地處置我們，但是祂卻以恩典對待我們。如果我們輕看了神的聖潔和我們罪的嚴重性，那麼我們就不會體會神恩典的可貴。而且，只有珍惜神恩典的人，才會願意將恩典傳遞予別人。讓我以一個真實的故事來說明。撒母耳·高露潔 (Samuel Colgate) 是一位虔誠的基督徒，他的公司出產許多人使用的牙膏。他而且是浸信會的會友！有一次他參加自己教會的佈道會。聚會結束前，牧師邀請那些想接受耶穌的人到前面來。他強調耶穌可以饒恕任何大大小小的罪。一位女士走出來，她在城市中因為犯罪的生活而出名。她跪在講台前哭泣。過了一會兒，她站起來作見證。她堅信神已經赦免了她的罪，她也想成為教會的成員。接下來一片寧靜。高露潔隨後站起來。他說：「我想當我們祈求神拯救罪人時，我們弄錯了。我們忘記具體說明我們希望祂接受什麼樣的罪人。我們必須祈求神原諒我們的疏忽。」有一位會友馬上動議接納那位女士加入教會。全體會眾一致同意。弟兄姐妹們：我們就是高露潔的故事和耶穌故事中的那個婦人。耶穌本可以在天上的法庭指控你。但祂願意饒恕你。耶穌今天也對我們說：「不要再犯罪了！」對於那些不認識耶穌的人，祂也願意拯救你。快來接受耶穌吧！