

Compassion For Adulterers?

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Families in America are under relentless sexual assault as in ancient Judah. The Lord denounces Judah's prosperous citizens because they "committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. ... as fed horses ... every one neighed after his neighbour's wife" (Jeremiah 5:7-8). Yet, when Judah is marched into Babylonian Captivity because of these sins, Jeremiah declares "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. ... For the Lord will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies" (Lamentations 3:22-23;31-32).

God directs his aggrieved exiles, to "Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens ... Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters ... that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of [Babylon] ... and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace" (Jeremiah 29:5-7). Similarly, Jesus, in interest of their prospective families, directed young Jewish hotheads, under Roman occupation, to "resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also" (Matthew 5:39-40). Christ's disciples were directed to flee from one city to another when persecuted (Matthew 10:23). They uprooted their families when Saul's persecution began. "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word"(Acts 8:4).

God's Law sets a protective hedge around young families. Young married men are granted exemption from military service to "be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken" (Deuteronomy 24:5). Further, most capital crimes under Mosaic Law are in fact treasonable assaults against the family: murder, abortion, kidnapping, rape, etc. Sadly, capital sexual crimes are commonly discounted as "victimless crimes" in American society which worships the "god of sexual convenience" and the "Almighty Dollar." But whole families are destroyed by "victimless crimes" resulting in divorce or worse. God's Law still mandates death for many sexual sins.

Wait a minute! Jesus clearly did not sentence to death a prostitute caught "in adultery, in the very act" whom Moses commanded "should be stoned [to death]" (John 8:4-5). This objection, however, overlooks the fact that "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). Further, Jesus rejects a request to arbitrate in an inheritance dispute. Jesus "said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luke 12:14). Likewise Jesus now deftly sidesteps adjudicating a case in a "kangaroo court" convened by hypocritical Pharisee clients of a prostitute. In this show trial, the woman takes the fall. The Pharisees do not indict the adulterous man and drag him to an anomalous, lawless court. Only the woman faces peril of death by stoning. Yet, the Pharisees and everyone in the crowd of potential executioners knows, "it takes two to tango!"

Christians believe with Paul "that the law is [still] good, if a man use it lawfully" (I Timothy 1:8). Yet the Pharisees here seek to justify their unlawful traditions that Jesus denounces as "making the word of God of none effect" (Mark 7:13). If Jesus refuses to condemn this woman to death as required by Moses, Pharisees believe He can no longer criticize them for their unlawful handling of God's Law. Jesus can no longer righteously denounce Pharisees as hypocrites. "Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin [of spices], and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel" (Matthew 23:23-24).

So, the Pharisees have set a trap for their relentless religious enemy. If Jesus fails to join in this choreographed lynching of a pathetic woman, He thereby abandons His stand for "every jot and tittle" keeping of God's Law (Matthew 5:17-20). Pro-life activists have faced a similar hard case in their questionable efforts to stave off President Bill Clinton's threatened repeal of the "Hyde Amendment" banning federal funding of abortions.¹ But, Jesus does not use God's Law unlawfully, as did Saul when he began his persecution of Christians by "consenting unto [the Martyr Stephen's] death" (Acts 8:1). Besides the fact that Jesus is not yet the final Judge (Revelation 6:16), Jews cannot legally impose a death penalty under Roman law. Thus, the Jews, demanding Christ's crucifixion, complain to Pilate, "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7).

Jesus skillfully avoids the Pharisees' trap. "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" (John 8:7-8). Some may argue that since, all are sinners, Jesus has just declared an end to lawful executions. This certainly is not the meaning that Jesus intends or the Pharisees understand. Rather, the one to begin execution by stoning of an adulteress must not be an adulterer or *the adulterer* in question.

Each adulterous Pharisee knows he runs a risk being the next to be stoned for adultery. So accusing Pharisees convicted by conscience, maybe unnerved by Jesus writing in dust of the Temple, drop their charges and leave "one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst [of a crowd of volatile Jews]" (John 8:9). Jesus gets up and asks 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**" (John 8:10-11). Christ has compassion for adulterers, but he does not excuse their treasonous sexual sins against the family. Americans must repent of their worship of Sex and Mammon and so deliver our families from wrenching heartaches of modern idolatry. If we do not, we look in vain for pro-life help from Supreme Court nominees. We remain a "generation of vipers" ... warned of God's wrath by legal abortions, legalized same sex marriage, school shootings and terrorist attacks by Islamic radicals.

1. The URL below links to Richard Cohen's compelling expose of "pro-choice" logic inherent in the compromised "Hyde Amendment," Daily Herald 7-24-1993.
http://www.somepilgrimsinprogress.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/_Henry_Hydes_Choice_ma_7-24-93.230141424.pdf