

WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE SINFUL WOMAN

Jacob Mann

The story of the sinful woman is found in Luke 6:36-50.

This is a really simple story, just Jesus having a conversation over dinner. But whilst it might not have grand miracles in it, it shows us the feature of Christ which is the most incredible, the most powerful, most divine, and most life changing and important for us, which is His grace and mercy.

We don't know much about this woman at all, it essentially boils down to these two attributes:

1. She was an immoral sinner
2. She was remorseful and had a reverence and love for Christ

We all share that first attribute with her, the question is can we have that second attribute also. Remorse is not a nice feeling but the Bible is clear that God hates sin and we are called to hate it also.

(Psalm 11:5; 5:5; Proverbs 8:13; Romans 12:9)

The issue we can have is that sin can be normalised in our lives to a point where even as believers we simply aren't bothered that we are living in sin. In that moment we can look to this woman as a model for true repentance.

True repentance brings humility, we can see this in the contrast between the way Simon the Pharisee treats Christ and the way the sinful woman treats him. (Luke 7:44-46)

Remorse doesn't feel nice but we don't have to live with the shame of sin, we can take comfort that our faith has saved us and go in peace. (2 Corinthians 7:10; Romans 8:1)

It can be hard to have that peace when we might face a social stigma with even other believers judging us for our sin. In those times we should take comfort that it is God's opinion of us that matters and not man's, and God forgives us and loves us unconditionally

We also have to learn from Simon and the Pharisees. They show an attitude of pride, self righteousness, and condescending judgement.

We can speculate that the sins of the woman were stigmatised at that time, something that would make her an easy target for people to look down on, this still happens today. This kind of prejudice more often than not, is not about sin at all but about our own personal preferences and opinions. We have absolutely no right to judge others and when we realise just how sinful we are, the harder it becomes to judge others.

(Matthew 7:1-5; Luke 6:37; James 4:12; Romans 2:1-3; 3:23)

In conclusion, let's not be like these Pharisees thinking ourselves righteous by our own definitions, let's be humble, reverent, and truly repentant like this nameless sinful woman.

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ELIZABETH

Neil Gallagher

'Elizabeth' means in Hebrew 'God is my oath'. She is mentioned only in Luke chapter 1. Famously she is known for being the mother of John the Baptist (the forerunner to the ministry of Jesus Christ).

Elizabeth was both childless and advanced in years, and she gave birth to John as a result of God's miraculous intervention. The Old Testament gives similar accounts of famous godly women who were barren, in whom God likewise visited and intervened, such as Sarah (Genesis 17:15), Rachel (Genesis 30:22-24) and Hannah (1 Samuel 1). These great women by God's grace went on to bear forth sons, who would become great leaders of His people. However, Elizabeth's son, 'John the Baptist' was the greatest amongst them all (Matthew 11:11).

Elizabeth may be not seen as prominent as her son (John the Baptist), or her relative and contemporary, Mary (the mother of Jesus), non the less, her character is rich in godly traits, serving as a real example and inspiration for us to learn from and apply in our own walk with the Lord.

Elizabeth's background:

- Lived in the time of the treacherous reign of Herod the Great (v5)
- Raised as a child of a priest, which would have made her a Levite (v5)
- Married to a priest named Zacharias (Hebrew for 'God remembers') (v5)
- Equally spiritually yoked together with her husband, both of impeccable godly character, who lived and served a life that was devoted to God (v6)
- Was childless and barren, as well as being advanced in years (60 years plus) (v7)
- Her peers would have considered her being childless as a reproach/ disgrace (v25)
- Lived in the hill country, a town of Judah (v39)
- Related to Mary, the mother of Jesus (v36)

Outline of Elizabeth's story:

- v5-7: Elizabeth's introduction and background.
- v8-23: John's birth Announced to Zacharias.
- v24-25: Elizabeth's seclusion for five months.
- v36-45: The visit to her home by her relative the Virgin Mary (the expectant mother of Jesus).
- v57-66: The birth and circumcision of John (Hebrew for 'The Lord has shown favor').

Elizabeth's godly character traits:

- Righteous before God (v6)
- Obedient to the Word of God (v6)
- Blameless (v6)

- Devoted to the Lord (v24)
- Patient in waiting upon God
- A woman of faith who received the miraculous promise of God (v25,45)
- Joyful and grateful (v42-45,58)
- Humble (v43)
- Filled with the Holy Spirit (v41)
- Encourager, comforter, spiritual mentor (v42-45)
- A virtuous woman of God (v58). A crown to her husband, (Proverbs 31:23) nurturer of her son by raising him in the fear of the Lord, and a living testimony of the work of God to her clan and community.

Lessons from Elizabeth's story:

- Unanswered prayer/unfortunate circumstances are not a sign of God's displeasure (Luke 1:6)
- We are never too old for God to bless and come through for us (it's not over until God says its over).
- The importance of cultivating mutual like-minded relationships that provide mutual strength and encouragement that affirm the will of God (Proverbs 27:17 'Iron Sharpens iron').
- We must put the counsel of God above all customs and traditions (Luke 1:36-45; 59-60).
- To stay fully focused, content and devoted to the Lord even in the midst of setbacks and disappointments.
- The importance of waiting upon God in a right attitude of faith and gratitude.