

# How Can We Cast the First Stone?

Rick Railston

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Before we get to the actual subject today, there is going to be a long introduction. I think everyone knows that on May 24 this year in Uvalde Texas, nineteen students and two teachers were killed at the elementary school. They were murdered by an eighteen-year-old who had earlier shot his grandmother in the face. Texas has the death penalty for capital murder, as do twenty-six other states. That's coming up in this young man's situation. There's a lot of controversy in the United States about capital punishment. Many states have abolished it, calling it cruel and unusual punishment. But that was not true for ancient Israel. God Almighty—Yehovah—instituted the practice of capital punishment. Let's go back to Exodus 21:12 and refresh our minds that capital punishment was part of the judicial system in ancient Israel. We're breaking into where Yehovah is giving His judgments to Moses.

**Exodus 21:12** *He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.* (KJV)

Then in verse 16 we see another instance of it.

*16) And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.*

*17) And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.* (KJV)

With that in mind, let's go to Leviticus 20:10 and see another instance of capital punishment being used in that society. Yehovah is speaking directly to Moses here.

**Leviticus 20:10** *And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.* (KJV)

So capital punishment was part of the Torah. It was part of the teaching to us today along way back timewise, but it was the teaching—the law—of the land in ancient Israel. In addition, here in the U.S., there is a great controversy about how to administer capital punishment for those states that have it. In the past, capital punishment was administered by firing squad, by hanging, by the electric chair and now lethal injection is the most common. Although that is now under increasing scrutiny and under attack. In ancient Israel capital punishment was administered by stoning. Let's see that in Deuteronomy 17:2. Yehovah is speaking to Moses and giving him instruction.

**Deuteronomy 17:2** *If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing his covenant,*

- 3) *And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded;*
- 4) *And it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, and, behold, it be true [found out that this actually happened], and the thing certain [no doubt], that such abomination is wrought in Israel:*
- 5) *Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die.*
- 6) *At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death;*

So Yehovah tells us that there are those who deserve death in this physical life because of what they have done. They actually deserve to die. They're not worthy of living after having committed those acts. Going on in verse 6.

*6 continued) ... but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. (KJV)*

We get into the administration in verse 7.

*7) The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you. (KJV)*

This is the point. Don't tolerate evil. Those who commit such things should be removed from the society. But there is a biblical safeguard by having at least two witnesses. Then the accusers—the two witnesses—were made to cast the first stones. They had to first execute the judgment. The message to society is, you better be sure before you accuse, because you are going to be casting the first stone if you make that accusation and it proves to be true. It's not like today where capital punishment is done in relative secrecy, off in some prison, somewhere in a room off to the side with very limited witnesses and executed by others who were not involved at all in the committing of the original crime.

In Israel the guilty were stoned outside the camp by the local townsfolk or those involved in witnessing or had been affected by whatever the crime was. Let's go to Leviticus 24:10. You see how well thought out this is by God Almighty and His thinking in instituting capital punishment and how to administer that capital punishment.

**\*\*Editor's note—does not mean to go to Deuteronomy\*\***

**Leviticus 24:10** *And the son of an Israelitish woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel: and this son of the Israelitish woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp; (KJV)*

In other words, they got into a fight. So this man whose mom was an Israelite woman and his Egyptian dad, got into a fit with an Israelite.

*11) And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the LORD, and cursed. And they brought him unto Moses: (and his mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan:)*

*12) And they put him in ward [the New King James says custody], that the mind of the LORD might be shewed them.*

*13) And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,*

*14) Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him. (KJV)*

So the point is, the guilty individual was either taken outside the camp during their wandering in the wilderness. Or later, in the Promised Land, he was to be taken outside the village or the hamlet where they lived. So then the memory of this man or woman's death would not be associated with the camp itself or with the village. Every time you walked by you would be thinking about that; it was done outside the camp. It was done by those who directly were affected by the sin of the individual.

*15) And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin.*

*16) And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death.*

*17) And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death. (KJV)*

So this whole process of taking someone outside the camp or outside the village, having the whole group there and then stoning an individual with stones, is a graphic demonstration. It is a physical demonstration to all of the people of the ultimate end of sin. We know that *the wages of sin is death*. For that physical nation of Israel, when somebody sinned—killed another individual, blasphemed God, committed adultery, whatever the sin was worthy of death—the whole community saw the results of that in a very short order after the crime was committed.

The exact method of stoning is not revealed in the Bible. My supposition is that God Almighty told Moses how it should be done so that the Israelites, as I said, would graphically see the results of this evil. The Talmud, which is the Jewish oral law and which has evolved over centuries, and has been modified and changed down over the centuries. Let me paraphrase the Talmud teaching regarding stoning, about the time of Christ; within a couple hundred years of the time Christ lived on earth. This is a summary written about the Talmud teaching.

*After the Jewish criminal has been determined as guilty before the great Sanhedrin, the two valid witnesses and the sentenced criminal go to the edge of a two-story building. From there the two witnesses are to push the criminal off the roof. The two-story height is chosen as this height is estimated by the Talmud to affect a quick and painless demise, but is not so high that the body will*

*become dismembered. After the criminal has fallen the two witnesses come down from the roof and they go down and examine the body. If the man is still alive, the two witnesses are to drop a large boulder on the criminal, requiring both of the witnesses to lift the boulder together [indicating this is not a small boulder]. If the criminal did not die from the fall or from the crushing of the large boulder then any people in the surrounding area are to quickly cause him to die by stoning with whatever rocks they find.*

This is the teaching out of the Talmud—the oral law. You can see how much it's changed since it was instituted by Moses. At the time of Christ this was the law of the land.

As we know, there is evidence of stoning in the New Testament. Remember the Sanhedrin had Stephen stoned in Acts 7 and Paul was stoned at Lystra and left for dead in Acts 14. Then the historians, Josephus, and writing later, Eusebius reportedly both agreed on the historical accuracy of the fact that James—the half-brother of Christ—was stoned by the Pharisees. Shortly before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. he was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple and then stoned after that, in the manner that I just read. So stoning was practiced all through until the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and today, stoning is still practiced in some Muslim countries. I did some research to see which countries still practiced stoning and Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Cutter, United Arab Emirates, Brunei, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen; to a degree still practice stoning. Sometimes the government doesn't approve of it but it's done in the tribal areas outside of the control of the government.

With all this in mind—this is still the introduction—let's look at an incident that happened to Jesus Christ in John 8, I think you know where we are going. This is the background we need, to come to this occasion.

**John 8:1** *Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.*

*2) 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.*

*3) And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery;*  
(KJV)

Let's just stop and take a look at how adultery was viewed at the very time Jesus Christ had this encounter with this woman. Due to Greek and Roman influence for the last couple hundred years at least, until Christ's birth, adultery was tolerated or it was winked at by the Jewish leaders. Similar to our day today. Let me read from Jameson, Faucet and Brown's commentary:

*It is allowed that adultery was exceedingly common at this time. So common that they (referring to the Sanhedrin), that they had ceased to put the law in force against it. It's similar to today. There are some states that still have a law against adultery but it's totally ignored or winked at.*

The way it occurred in Christ's day, was not true here in the United States 100 to 150 years ago. Back then in the U.S. adultery was viewed as a sin. Until the mid-twentieth century, most U.S. states, especially those in the southeast and the northeast had laws against adultery—it was a crime. My father told me a story about my grandfather, Cole Railston who was a foreman on a large ranch in central New Mexico. He would go to Albuquerque, the nearest largest town, two, three or four times a year to do ranching business, and banking was one of the things he did. He became friends with the president of one of the largest banks there. Because of the cattle business he had financial transactions and he and the banker became friends. They used to share a meal when my granddad would come to town and they liked to play poker together. My granddad told my father, who told me that this banker was probably in his early seventies at that time. This was in the late 1890's and he was married to a much younger woman; a woman thirty or forty years younger than him. There were rumors that she was being unfaithful to her older husband. I don't remember the exact details but the banker was suspicious enough that he had someone tailing his wife. At any rate, he found her in a hotel in Albuquerque and in bed with a guy. So the banker walked in on them and he promptly took out his gun and shot the man in the chest, killing him and then took out his knife and stabbed his wife through the heart, killing her. Then he calmly (they had a sink in the hotel rooms in those days) went and washed his hands, walked down to the sheriff's office, told them what he had done and that was the end of it. That's how adultery was viewed in that day. But today, in the United States, it's obviously totally different. And in the time of Jesus Christ, it was totally different. My how times have changed since the late 1800's, early 1900's to this day in the United States.

Back to our story in John 8, we'll pick it up in verse 3. This woman is brought to Christ.

*3 continued) ... and when they had set her in the midst,  
4) They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.  
(KJV)*

We have to stop and ask; how did that happen? This looks a bit contrived. Had they been tailing her or what was going on? But obviously there was a motive behind it all.

*5) Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? (KJV)*

We read in the introduction that Leviticus 20:10 tells us that if a man or a woman is caught in adultery, both should be put to death. This was an obvious set up and if it was totally serious and since both should be put to death, then where was the guy? Why wasn't he there also? He wasn't. This is a contrived issue and we'll see why here.

*6) This they said, tempting him, [the Greek means to "test or try Him"] that they might have to accuse him. (KJV)*

What was happening here was that the Scribes and Pharisees wanted to put Christ in a no-win situation. By that time the Romans had taken away from the Jews, the authority

to administer capital punishment. The Jews could not administer capital punishment unless the local Roman government approved of it. Roman law did not condemn adultery. It wasn't against Roman law. If Christ had said she should die, then they could have accused Christ to Pilot saying He had taken to Himself, the power of Rome. So they would have him there. On the other hand, if Christ said she should live, then the Scribes and Pharisees could have accused him or would have accused him of deciding contrary to the law of Moses and promoting the crime of adultery. Irrespective of the fact that it wasn't enforced at that time, they could go back to the law of Moses and say, Christ is telling you not to do this or this doesn't apply. So, the folks who brought this woman were, I'm sure, gleefully thinking we have Him now because no matter which way He decides, He's going to be a dead man.

*6 continued) ... But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. (KJV)*

Verse 7 I'll read out of the New Living Translation.

*7) They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" (NLT)*

That caught them up short, I'm sure. Then verse 8 back to the King James.

*8) And again, he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. (KJV)*

My guess is He was probably writing a series of names and sins and maybe even dates. We don't know that for sure, that's just pure speculation. My suspicion is that's the case, otherwise notice verse 9.

*9) And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience ... (KJV)*

If their sins were hidden and not out in the open, why would they walk out? If their sins were being written in the sand then their sins are exposed.

*9 continued) ... 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.*

*10) 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? (KJV)*

My guess is, by now she knows that this man standing in front of her is no ordinary man.

*11) She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. (KJV)*

This is one of the most beautiful examples in all of God's Word about mercy and forgiveness. With a simple admonition, "*Don't do it again.*" Don't repeat the same behavior. The fact is, all of us have sinned. We know that. Just as a reminder let's go back to the Old Testament and look at Ecclesiastes 7:20. Sometimes we all need to be reminded that we all sin, even with God's Holy Spirit residing in us—we all still sin. Solomon is writing here.

**Ecclesiastes 7:20** *For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. (KJV)*

So, no matter how good we try to be, even with God's Holy Spirit in us, we are imperfect humans and we fail, we stumble, and we still sin. Let's go to Romans 3:23—you probably don't even need to turn there because we know it by heart—Paul restates this.

**Romans 3:23** *All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. (KJV)*

So, we have an Old Testament acknowledgment of this fact, a New Testament acknowledgment of this fact and then the last remaining apostle at this time reiterates it also in 1 John 1:8. The Apostle John also reiterates the fact that every one of us has sinned—all of us have sinned. Our Father knows this, we know this.

**1 John 1:8** *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (KJV)*

If we get to the point where we think, I'm getting close to perfection here and I'm right at God's level or close to it, we deceive ourselves, which is what Satan did. With the fact in mind that all of us have sinned—now we're getting to the point of the sermon—and we can add to that what Christ said in John 8:7, *let those who have never sinned, cast the first stone*, which begs a question for us today. This is the title of the sermon.

### How Can We Cast a First Stone?

We'll examine this through four points. We could say:

*"Me cast a first stone? How can that be? How can I cast the first stone?"*

Let's see—maybe there are ways we can cast a first stone that we are not aware of.

#### **1. We can cast a first stone by ignoring or by diminishing our own sins.**

If the Scribes and Pharisees had ignored their own sins when they had this set up with Jesus Christ, they would have gone out and stoned the woman. But Christ would not let them ignore their own sins. Somehow, He put into their minds or wrote in the sand or whatever—reminding them of their own sins and they began one by one to walk out. Their conscience was bothering them. When we focus on the sins of other people, it becomes so easy to ignore our own sins. As our mind is focused on what other people

are doing and not what we're doing wrong. Let's go to Matthew 7:1; this is the latter part of the sermon on the Mount, Christ's first recorded sermon. I'm going to read this out of the New Living Translation as it translates it more into modern English and easier to understand in that regard.

**Matthew 7:1** *"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged.*

*2) For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.*

*3) "And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own?"*

*4) How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye, when you can't see past the log in your own eye?"*

*5) Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye. (NLT)*

When there is a problem between individuals and one or both of them are converted, the converted mind looks at the self first. If there is a dust up between two church members, a converted mind will say, "what's my part of the problem? What have I done to create this problem? How have I caused my brother to react this way? Or my sister to think this or feel this?". The converted mind looks at the self because the converted mind knows it can sin and we can very much be a part of a problem. It is so easy to ignore or minimize our sins when we focus on the sins of others. We have all sinned and we cannot forget that, as we've just read.

It's so easy to ignore our sins when somebody offends us. When we get our feelings hurt—somebody offends us—then all of a sudden, our mind is focused on that offense and not on our own sins. It's so easy to ignore our sins when we're so busy condemning somebody else for what they have done; maybe done to us even. We are so consumed with that, that we blow off the fact that we have sinned and we're guilty and our Father has forgiven us and maybe we should behave in that way toward this way that just offended us.

When you think about it, when we ignore our sins we become just like Satan. There's a philosopher and author named George Santayana. He lived from 1863 to 1952 and he is quoted often—not often attributed to him—but he made this statement:

*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*

If we get in the habit of ignoring our sins and focusing on other people's sin, nothing gets solved. If we aren't focusing on our sins and changing, then we will never change. If we ignore or minimize our own sins then we are more likely to repeat them, aren't we? We have to learn from our sins and then not repeat them; just like Christ said to the woman. He said, "*OK I forgive you but don't do it again. Don't repeat it.*"

What is the solution to ignoring our sins? It's a scripture—we won't turn there, there's no need to, we know it by heart—it's the scripture we quote right before the month or six weeks or two months to Passover. In 2 Corinthians 13:5. Paul says what?

*“Examine yourselves.”*

He doesn't say *“Examine others.”* He says to *examine yourselves* and what is the criterion? *Whether you be in the faith.* Am I really with it? Am I really a Christian? Do I really behave like Christ? Do I really have the mind of my Father in me? He says prove your own selves, examine yourselves whether you be in the faith.

So we can cast a first stone by ignoring our own sins.

## **2. Judging our brothers and sisters.**

James 4:11; this is the same James who wrote this—the half-brother of Christ who was thrown off the top part of the temple and then stoned by the Pharisees. This was obviously, going from memory, fifteen or twenty years before that even occurred.

**James 4:11** *Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. (KJV)*

The Greek for *judges* is Strong's #2919. It's the Greek word *krino* and it means “judging from the standpoint of condemning or sentencing somebody”. In other words, you've passed judgment and they are guilty and you are sentencing or condemning them because of what they have done. When we do that—when we judge our brothers and sisters—guess what also happens. If we judge and condemn our brothers and sisters, we are diminishing them and we are elevating ourselves. When we judge we are saying, “I wouldn't do that, but look what they did”. We may not say it outwardly, “I wouldn't do that”, but by mentioning their faults and their sins and not saying anything about ourselves, then we are tipping that balance in favor of ourselves.

I remember the parable of the Pharisee and the publican—we won't turn there—in Luke 18 and they both went to the temple to pray and the Pharisee says, “I thank God I'm not like him, this publican.” and that's judging the publican. He is elevating himself. He says:

*“God I'm not like this guy, I'm much better than this guy. Look at me, let Your light shine on me and by the way send a thunderbolt on him and turn him into cinders because he is such a sinner.”*

Let's go to 2 Corinthians 10:12; Paul is writing about this very thing. He is writing his third letter to Corinth—it's the second recorded one. I'll read this out of the New Living Translation. It's interesting how the New Living phrases this.

**2 Corinthians 10:12** *Oh, don't worry; we wouldn't dare say that we are as wonderful as these other men who tell you how important they are! But they are only comparing themselves with each other, using themselves as the standard of measurement. How ignorant!* (NLT)

When we're busy condemning or judging our brothers and sisters, it takes our minds off of our own sins and our own faults and our own shortcomings and weaknesses because we are focusing on somebody else's sins. We have to be mindful of that and very careful of that and that's why Paul says the job is not to compare yourself with another human being because both human beings are full of faults and sins. What you need to do is compare yourself with our Father and His Son. Notice what Christ said—we won't turn there—in Luke 14:11. Remember what Christ said? *"If you try to exalt yourself, I'm going to abase you—you're going to be abased. If you humble yourself you're going to be exalted."* We always need to keep that in mind.

The second way we can "cast a first stone" is we do so by judging and condemning our brothers and sisters. We have to be careful about that. Sometimes, it's sad to say, in the church in years past, it's become a blood sport almost. Hopefully we have grown to realize that we don't deserve to be here, we don't deserve to be called, we don't deserve to have the Father and Son make Their abode in us. We don't deserve to have the power of the Holy Spirit. We don't deserve to be offered salvation so who am I to judge another human being? Who am I to judge and condemn my brother and sister in the church.

The third way we can cast the first stone.

### **3. Holding a grudge and not forgiving our brothers and sisters.**

That happened and it was ongoing at the time the New Testament was written. In James 5:9. James, the half-brother of Christ was addressing this in his epistle to the church at large. I'll read this out of the New King James.

**James 5:9** *Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge [who is Jesus Christ; remember the Father has passed all judgment to the Son] is standing at the door!* (NKJV)

This was written almost 2000 years ago. If the judge was standing at the door, then, how much closer is He to the door today? He is right at the door. We have to be aware of the fact that when we grumble and when we complain and when we cast aspersions at others, there is a danger in that because it is associated with becoming bitter. That's something we have to be very, very careful about. Let's look at Ephesians 4:31. Paul is telling the church at Ephesus, and by extension to us today, about how grumbling and bitterness are associated with each other.

**Ephesians 4:31** *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking [that's grumbling], be put away from you, with all malice:* (KJV)

Malice is the motive behind evil speaking or grumbling or why you're angry at somebody. We see that evil speaking is linked with anger. It is linked with bitterness. We're going to come right back here but let's quickly go to Hebrews 12:15. The author of Hebrews is giving us a warning.

**Hebrews 12:15** *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God [we don't want to do that, we don't want to fall away from God's mercy and grace]; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; (KJV)*

The Greek word for *bitterness* is Strong's #4088 and it has an interesting primary meaning; it means to "actually bite somebody". That's the literal meaning. It means "irritating to the feelings, especially poison". So then he is saying:

"Don't let a root of poison get into your system because it will irritate your feelings, it will irritate you, cause you to say and do things that shouldn't be done"

As the man said,

"It's not the snake bite that kills you, it's the venom circulating through your system that kills you."

So be careful, don't let that venom circulate through the system. Don't allow that to continue to circulate because it will build and build and causes people to say and do things that they ordinarily wouldn't do if they hold on to an irritation or problem and they become bitter with it.

Holding a grudge is like poison. I remember my wife's mom who was half Swedish, half Norwegian, her name was Gunhild and she died at 102, but we were talking one afternoon and she said—I put it to memory—*holding a grudge is like taking poison and hoping the other person dies*. That is so true.

So what is the solution to holding a grudge and becoming bitter over it? Let's go back to Ephesians 4:30. This is the context of verse 31 that we read earlier.

**Ephesians 4:30** *And grieve [The Greek means "to cause sorrow"] not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. (KJV)*

Don't cause grief to the Holy Spirit. Verse 31, which we read earlier offers the antidote.

*31) Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: (KJV)*

What is the antidote? What do you do instead of that? Verse 32.

32) *And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (KJV)*

Paul continues that same thought, that same theme in his letter to the church at Colossi. Let's go to Colossians 3:13; same thought, same advice to the church, same advice to us as far as forgiving one another, being kind and good to one another.

**Colossians 3:13** *Forbearing ... (KJV)*

When you look that word up in the Greek, it has a very common, down to earth meaning; it means simply "to put up with". He says to *put up with one another*. Why do we have to put up with one another? Because we're all human, we all make mistakes and we all stumble and say things we don't mean and get tired or crabby or grumpy.

*13 continued) ... one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. (KJV)*

What he's saying is, if Christ was willing to come to this earth and endure the scourging and endure the evil speaking and endure the slapping and hitting and finally endure crucifixion because He loved us—if He was willing to do that and He and His Father were willing to forgive us, knowing how human we are—then shouldn't we be willing to forgive our brothers and sisters? Shouldn't we be willing to—as my dad used to say—"*cut them some slack because they are human just like we are.*" The point is, we can cast a first stone by holding a grudge and by not forgiving. People who can't let go. Over the years I've counseled with many people who live in the past because they can't let go of previous hurts by other people. It's like a festering wound that just won't ever heal over. It's always there, it's bleeding, it's weeping, it's oozing and it just won't go away because they will not let it go and forgive.

So we've seen three ways that we can "cast the first stone". As I was working on this and doing research on it I was thinking, we've seen three ways we can cast a first stone. But that leads to the question, what can we do—what should we do—if somebody throws a stone at us? In other words, we are on the receiving end of the stone. So the fourth point is a question.

#### **4. Will we cast a second stone?**

After somebody throws a stone at us, will we cast a second stone? I grew up in West Texas and if you've ever been to West Texas, it is desert, rocks, sand, rattlesnakes, cactus, hot and we as kids grew up and for sport, threw rocks at each other; that's what we did. We did it partly for entertainment and then partly to see who could throw the best. It's amazing that we didn't put one another's eyes out or something like that. We would get into rock fights almost daily. We would hide behind a pile of sand and stick our head up and throw a rock at the kids across the way and then they would do the same and then you would charge them throwing rocks—that's human nature. If you were walking along and all of a sudden, a rock hits right next to you or hits you, what is

human nature going to do? First thing you're going to do is find the nearest rock and throw it right back, only harder. It's human nature to want to strike back, it's human nature to want to get back, it's human nature to want to get even, thereby returning one evil with another evil. Let's go to Isaiah 1:15, we'll just look at this one verse. Isaiah is writing what Yehovah is speaking. He is admonishing God's people of that day and by extension admonishing us today.

**Isaiah 1:15** *And when ye spread forth your hands [that's implying prayer; you're spreading out your hands down on your face or holding your hands up to God in prayer], I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. (KJV)*

We can say today, my hands aren't full of blood, I haven't gone and slashed somebody or murdered somebody but remember we are under the New Covenant and what did Christ say? You can commit adultery physically but you can also commit adultery in your mind. You can commit murder physically but you can also commit murder in your mind. You can deceive somebody physically but you can also deceive in your mind. Under the New Covenant, rather than our hands being full of blood, our minds can be full of blood. Wanting to get back, wanting to get even, motivating us to cast a second stone when somebody has cast a first stone at us. When we fight back with somebody—get in a fight—it can be verbal or fight without saying a word; they can fight by being cold to each other with cold glances at each other. You can think, “Why is she looking at me that way or why is he treating me this way, looking at me this way?” When we fight with somebody, we can figuratively cast a stone. Don't we do that? If someone throws a stone at us, it could be a barb, it could be an accusation, it could be a look, it could be a piece of gossip—whatever it might be. We cast a second stone when we fight back. Returning evil with evil.

The Apostle James—this is the third time we have quoted him now—let's go to James 4:1. He has a lot to say about the origins of fighting. The origins of conflict between individuals.

**James 4:1** *From whence come wars and fightings among you? [How does that happen?] come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? 2) Ye lust, and have not: ye kill [meaning you do that mentally, you have mentally murdered somebody or assaulted somebody] and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3) Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss [you ask for the wrong thing, in the wrong way], that ye may consume it upon your lusts. (KJV)*

Meaning you are asking in a selfish prayer; the prayer is to get—get our own way.

4) *Ye adulterers and adulteresses [he's talking to church members so the obvious implication is he's talking about spiritual adultery], know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity [the Greek means “hostility”; if you're a friend of the world you are being hostile with God] with God? whosoever therefore will be*

*a friend of the world is the enemy of [the King James leaves out the word “the”; the trinitarians removed that word because it interfered with the concept of the trinity] God. (KJV)*

Referring to the Father, remember in John 17:9, where Christ said *This is life eternal, that you know the true God and His Son, Jesus Christ. The one true God and His Son Jesus Christ.*” So we are the enemy of the one true God if we are a friend of the world.

*5) Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, [now he’s quoting Genesis 8:21] The spirit that dwelleth in us [meaning our human nature and Satan’s provocations] lusteth to envy? (KJV)*

The King James margin says, “*the spirit that dwells in us lusts enviously*”. Meaning we want to take for the self and we get upset when someone has something we want. It could be a physical possession or it could be an award or recognition that we would like for ourselves. Where there is fighting, guess who is right there in the midst of the fight. Satan is right there in the midst of the fight. Remember he started the first fight in Isaiah 14, he said “*I will ascend above the heights, above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High*”. He was going to fight God because he felt he could win and wanted to be higher than God. The results of that fight are still visible in our solar system today if people have eyes to see. Going on in verse 6 now.

*6) But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. (KJV)*

He won’t give grace to somebody who is picking a fight—fighting back, throwing the second stone.

*7) Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.  
8) Draw nigh to God ... (KJV)*

That means we have to take the first step. It doesn’t say God draws near to me, it doesn’t work that way. God is God, He is unchangeable, we need to get near to Him. He’s not going to come to our carnal side, we have to go to His spiritual side.

*8 continued) ... and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. (KJV)*

Verse 10.

*10) Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. (KJV)*

What is the solution to keep us from casting a second stone? When there is a problem, our Father always gives us a solution. A solution is always available. Let’s go to Matthew 5, the sermon on the Mount; this is all basic stuff. The solution to keep us from

casting a second stone, Matthew 5:38. We see that Christ had the power to change an Old Testament law with the coming of the New Testament.

**Matthew 5:38** *Ye have heard that it hath been said [He's referring to Leviticus 24:17-10], An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: (KJV)*

That was the law for carnal Israel who did not have the Holy Spirit of God.

*39) But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: [the Greek for resist means "do not oppose; do not oppose evil", meaning "by fighting"] but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. (KJV)*

Verse 43.

*43) Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.*

*44) But I say unto you, [this is probably the hardest command to fulfill in many ways] Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (KJV)*

Hard to do, but we must.

*45) That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. (KJV)*

Verse 48.

*48) Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (KJV)*

Did the apostles follow that teaching or was that just something Christ said? Was it put into practice in the New Testament church? Let's go to Romans 12:17; we see that Paul absolutely reinforces Christ's teaching on the subject. We're talking about throwing a second stone. Did Paul all of a sudden say, that it's okay if somebody throws a stone at you, pick up that stone and throw it right back at them.

**Romans 12:17** *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*

*18) If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. (KJV)*

If it be possible, live peaceably. It takes two to fight. If one will not stop and is just insisting on fighting and won't stop it, then what's the solution? You just walk off the field of battle. If you wind up in a boxing ring with some guy and he won't stop pounding you, the best thing to do is walk out of the boxing ring. Get away from it, then there is no fight because it takes two to fight. If we put distance between ourselves and somebody who

is insisting on throwing stones, then we are not casting a stone back, we are just getting out the range of this guy's stone throwing ability.

*19) Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, [he's quoting Deuteronomy 32:35] Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. (KJV)*

The beauty of all of this is we don't have to worry. Christ and the Father will take vengeance and they can do it far better than we can. Far more appropriately and timely than we can.

*20) Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. (KJV)*

What on earth does that mean? *Heaping coals of fire on his head*. Let me read briefly from Clark's Commentary about this verse. Clark says this:

*You shall heap coals of fire upon his head is a metaphor taken from the smelting of metals. The ore is put into the furnace and fire is put both over and under the ore that the metal may be liquified, leaving the dross. It may fall down pure to the bottom of the furnace. This is beautifully expressed by one of our own poets in reference to this explanation of this passage. [It quotes these four lines of poetry.]*

*“So, artists melt the sullen ore of lead  
by heaping coals of fire upon its head.  
In the kind warmth the metal learns to glow  
and pure from dross, the silver runs below.”*

*It is most evident from the whole connection of the place and the apostle's use of it, that the heaping of coals of fire upon the head of an enemy is intended to produce not an evil, but the most beneficial effect and the following verse is additional proof of this.*

What's the following verse? Verse 21.

*21) Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. (KJV)*

So, by heaping coals of fire upon the head of your enemy, thereby your relationship with this other person is purified as the metal is purified by having fire above and below.

Let's look at another solution from Paul about casting a second stone. In 1 Thessalonians 5:15, Paul is very clear on this. He said it to the church in Rome and now to the church in Thessalonica.

**1 Thessalonians 5:15** *See that none render evil for evil [there it is again] unto any man [anybody—man or woman]; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. (KJV)*

Then Peter repeats the same admonition in 1 Peter 3:9. Christ said it, Paul said it twice in two different letters and now Peter says it.

**1 Peter 3:9** *Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing [the Greek means “to slander”; someone slanders you so you’re going to slander them back]: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. (KJV)*

When we fight with somebody, we figuratively cast a stone. When somebody throws a stone at us, which is something hurtful, it can be emotionally or mentally hurtful to us. When we fight back, we then are casting a second stone. Christ and the apostles are absolutely clear, we dare not cast a second stone by fighting back. Rather, Christ wants us to return evil with good. Or at the very least, walk away or turn the other cheek.

Let’s conclude now. Christ brilliantly brought the Scribes and Pharisees accusations to nothing when they brought that woman in front of Him. He also taught us some powerful lessons in that account. The big one is, that we cannot, as New Testament Christians, having the Holy Spirit inside of us,

We cannot cast stones, either the first stone or the second stone.

We cannot ignore or diminish our own sins.

We cannot judge or condemn our brothers or sisters.

We cannot hold grudges and we cannot, not forgive—we just can’t do that.

We should not fight back when somebody throws a stone at us. We just can’t do that.

Let’s be thankful for Christ’s example and thankful for this woman who was caught in the act of adultery, because Christ probably changed her life. Hopefully that’s what happened—that she went out and *did it no more*. And was so impressed by talking to the Son of God that she turned her life around. The point is, what Christ’s message to us is, that we should turn our lives around. His words, His actions should certainly change us so that we never, ever “cast the first stone”.