

## The Woman Caught in Adultery

What should our attitude be toward those in open sin?

Should we judge and condemn them?

Should we separate ourselves from them?

John 7:53-8:11

<sup>53</sup>Everyone went to his home. <sup>1</sup>But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

<sup>2</sup>Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them. <sup>3</sup>The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, <sup>4</sup>they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. <sup>5</sup>Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such a woman; what then do You say?"

<sup>6</sup>They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. <sup>7</sup>But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." <sup>8</sup>Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup>When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. <sup>10</sup>Straighening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" <sup>11</sup> She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."

### I. The Test

What began as a normal day in Jesus ministry, was suddenly interrupted as the religious leaders brought him a woman caught in the very act of adultery. While trying to teach the people who had come to Him on the Mount of Olives, the angry religious leaders – the rigid technicians of Scripture – interrupted the Lord's lesson, throwing a woman in front of Him.

They claimed that she had been caught in the very act of adultery.

<sup>5</sup>Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such a woman; what then do You say?"

<sup>6</sup>They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him.

It wasn't about justice or righteousness but it was about getting something to accuse Jesus. She was bait for the trap they had set.

**A thorny question:**

“The Law of Moses condemned adulterers to be stoned publicly (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22-24), but Roman law reserved execution for Roman courts. The Jews did not have the authority to stone the woman without Roman permission. It seemed a perfect setup. To honor God’s law, Jesus would incur the wrath of Rome. To submit to Roman law, Jesus would have to ignore the law of God.”<sup>1</sup>

It was a “no win” situation. If He said to let her go then they could say that Jesus had violated the Law of Moses. If He said to stone her, He’d have to deal with the Romans. Either way Jesus would be wrong, caught by His own words.

## II. The Answer

### Jesus responds to the Religious Leaders:

Jesus seemed at first to ignore them.

<sup>7</sup>But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” <sup>8</sup>Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

What was Jesus doing?

He **wrote** on the ground. *katagrapho* - lit. “to write against”

It seems that Jesus was accusing His accusers.

### According to Matthew Henry,

Some Greek copies here read, He *wrote on the ground, enos hekastou autōn tas hamartias—the sins of every one of them*; this he could do, for he *sets our iniquities before him*; and this he will do, for he will *set them in order* before us too; he *seals up our transgressions*, Job 14:17. But he does not write men’s sins *in the sand*; no, they are written as with a *pen of iron* and the *point of a diamond* (Jer. 17:1), never to be forgotten till they are forgiven.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus’ Answer -- ...He who is without sin among you...

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<sup>1</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll’s New Testament Insights: John*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), pp. 163-164.

<sup>2</sup> Henry, M. (1994). *Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume* (p. 1965). Peabody: Hendrickson.

**Without sin** – “means not only without sin, but without a sinful desire”<sup>3</sup>

Oswald Chambers said,

“Sin enough and you will soon be unconscious of sin!”

As these would-be judges and executioners were faced with their own sinfulness they could no longer point the finger at the woman.

What started out as a trap against Jesus had turn on them.

**Who among them had never sinned?**

At first the older ones began to leave, until no one was left.

<sup>9</sup>When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court.

**Their sins were secret, but they had them.**

**Alan Redpath**, former pastor of the Moody Church, wrote,  
“Secret sins here become heaven’s scandals.”

Jesus knew the hearts of men.

The worthless judges had no right to condemn,  
and the sovereign Judge refused to condemn.

**Augustine** put it, “There remained a great misery and a great pity.”

<sup>10</sup>Straighening up, Jesus said to her,

“Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” <sup>11</sup>

She said, “No one, Lord.”

And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either.

Go. From now on sin no more.”

**The voice of sin may be loud, but the voice of forgiveness is louder**

D. L. Moody

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<sup>3</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of John, Vol. 2*, (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), p. 4.

### III. The Results

<sup>10</sup>Straighening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” <sup>11</sup> She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.”

**The response of Jesus stood in stark contrast to that of the Jewish leaders.**

The Scribes and the Pharisees knew the Law, but were critical and condemning of others. They felt they had the right to condemn and the duty to punish. They saw their role as moral watch-dogs trained to tear sinners to pieces.

The Scribes and the Pharisees weren’t looking at the woman as a person, but as a tool to use in order to formulate a charge against Jesus.

Someone has defined immorality as the sin of using people.

“To them she had no name, no personality, no heart, no feelings, no emotions; she was simply a pawn in the game whereby they sought to destroy Jesus.”

Jesus “came to seek and to save what was lost.”

(Luke 19:10)

**How should we respond?**

#### Restoration

“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass,  
 you who are spiritual,  
     restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness;  
 each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.  
 Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”  
 (Gal. 6:1-2)

If someone is **caught** in a sin – overtaken by a sin.

Sinful behavior is a *pattern* – cannot be overcome by himself.

The responsibility of the spiritual is to help bring about repentance.

**Restore** – katartizdo – term used for setting a dislocated bone back into place.

(inflicts pain but it is a healing pain)<sup>4</sup>

To restore is to heal – like a doctor who diagnoses a problem with someone.

He doesn't say, "That's disgusting, what a terrible person you are."  
He does say, "We need to fix this problem."

Confront in order to prompt a change of life and heart.

Rebuke and restore Vs.  
Or ...Reject and condemn and tell everyone

If we don't restore we are either unspiritual or rebellious.

When we restore we must be careful because we could fall into the same sin.

Hymn: "*Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it...*"

When George Whitefield saw the criminal on the way to the gallows, he uttered the famous sentence: "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

One pastor penned these words,

*I cry over friends who have fallen ...  
as I wonder why it was them instead of me.*

### **Having the attitude of Jesus:**

Jesus doesn't condemn, He restores.

Why does He do this? Because of Who He is.

In Chapter 7 Jesus is the Living Water.

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38)

Following this section (8:1-11), Jesus says,

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<sup>4</sup> Timothy Keller, *Galatians for You*, (The Good Book Company, 2015), pp. 166-167.

“I am the light of the world;  
he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness,  
but will have the Light of life.” (John 8:12)

The Water of life and the Light of the world came to bring life not judgment.

“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world,  
but that the world might be saved through Him.”  
(John 3:17)

The Scribes and Pharisees acted just like the Law, which can only condemn but cannot save and deliver. Only Christ, who is the light, can shine on the darkness, expose and cleanse from all sin.

Awake O sleeper and arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you.  
(Eph. 5:14)

The sin which is born in darkness results in death. The Law which has no power to save, shows the sin to be utterly sinful, brings the sinner to Christ, the Savior.

Restoring others begins within us.

Be restored.

Become a restorer of others.

Bring others to Jesus, not to be condemned but forgiven and restored.