

The Gospel of John

The Adulterous Woman

John 7:53-8:11

INTRODUCTION:

You may notice in your Bible that our text this morning is enclosed in brackets. This indicates that this section of scripture is probably not original. This is because the earliest (and many would say the most reliable) Greek manuscripts **do not** include the story of the adulterous woman.

The Greek manuscripts show fairly clear evidence that John 7:53-8:11 was not originally part of John's Gospel. Among the later manuscripts that **do** contain the section, either wholly or in part, they vary in the placement of the passage. Some manuscripts put the story after John 7:36, John 21:25, Luke 21:38, or 24:53. But the early manuscripts eliminate it entirely.

God said, after creating man, "It is not good for man to be alone." And that's still true. Man needs companionship. Man needs a friend. A true close friend not only cares for your welfare, but he will tell you the truth, even if it hurts.

Jesus Himself described a true friend.

John 15:13 (NASB)

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his (what?) **life** for his friends.

The truest of true friends would have such a strong love for you that he would be willing to even wound you, if for your good. He would be willing to die for you, if necessary, to protect you. Do you have many friends like that? If you have one, you are very fortunate.

ILLUSTRATION:

Who is the one person in this world that you would really like to meet? Someone that you have a fascination for? Someone that you are certain would not even know you existed. What if that person would walk up to you out of the blue amongst all of his/her friends and followers and say, "I have been observing you and I think you are very special. I know you do not know this, but I consider you as one of my best friends. I want you to know that if anyone were ever to try to harm you in any way, I would be willing to fight to the death for you, if necessary."

What would be your reaction? A superhero of yours that you were certain knew nothing about you telling you that he/she would be willing to die for you? Whatever that heightened reaction, I would suggest to you that you should consider the friendship of Jesus as **infinitely** more valuable than **any** friend we could ever have on this earth.

All Stand and Read Scripture.

John 7:53-8:11 (NASB)

⁵³ [Everyone went to his home.

⁸ But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² 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. ³ The scribes and the Pharisees *brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center *of the court*, ⁴ they *said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. ⁵ Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?” ⁶ They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. ⁷ 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.” ⁸ Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ 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*. ¹⁰ Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” ¹¹ She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.”]

Prayer

BODY:

I. JESUS: THE FRIEND OF SINNERS.

Although it is doubtful that this was actually written by John in the original manuscript. The message seems to be consistent with other New Testament scripture. He was the friend of sinners. One place we see evidence of this is early in His ministry.

Luke 4:16-18 (NASB)

¹⁶ And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. (This is Jesus defining the parameters of His own ministry...to preach the Gospel to the poor.) He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovery of sight to the blind, To set free those who are oppressed, (Did you notice that all those are the down and out, the poor, the brokenhearted, the captives, the blind, and the bruised...the hurting, the friendless, the lonely, the left out were those to whom He came.)

Now this is stated again and again...

Matthew 9:10-12 (NASB)

¹⁰ Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining *at the table* in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw *this*, they said to His disciples, “Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?” ¹² But when Jesus heard *this*, He said, “*It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.*

Tax collectors in those days were extortioners and criminals, by the way. When Jesus

heard them murmuring about Him, He said unto them, that those who are well do not need a physician, but those who are sick do. For I have not come to seek the righteous but...**what?**...sinners to repentance."

That was a blast at them. They thought they were **so** righteous. Jesus said, "I can't help people who won't admit they are sinners." Jesus met with sinners because they were the only ones that knew they needed a friend.

Matthew 11:28 (NASB)

²⁸ "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

What is the biggest burden that any man carries? Sin. If you have had it with your sin, if you have had it with trying to fulfill the law of God on your own, if you are weary and exhausted, then come to Me.

You see, Jesus came to the people who couldn't carry the load anymore. He came to the people who were hurting; the people whose spiritual backs were broken. He could not help people like the scribes and Pharisees who did not think they were sinners. They did not think they had any need of a Savior.

Let's look at the parable of **the lost sheep** together in Luke 15:1-7. You may gain a new perspective of this parable.

Luke 15:1-7 (NASB)

¹⁵ Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. ² Both the Pharisees and the scribes *began* to grumble, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." (I sure they did not realize this at the time, but this was one of the best compliments they ever paid Him!)

³ So He told them this parable, saying, ⁴ "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵ When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' ⁷ I tell you that in the same way, there will be *more* joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

When you first hear this parable, your first instinct might be that the man had 100 sheep, representing 100 saved people, and one of them falls away. So he goes searching for it.

But I believe the parable is painting a different message. It appears to me that the 99 are not true followers. Jesus is using irony to say that the scribes and Pharisees were self-righteous and did not consider themselves as needing repentance.

The parable is this: I am looking for the people who know they are lost. I'm looking for the people who are tired of the life of sin and want to repent. I am not seeking for those who think they do not need Me.

II. PRESENTING THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY.

This is all drawn into perfect contrast in our text this morning in John chapter 8.

John 8:3 (NASB)

³The scribes and the Pharisees *brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court,

The scribes and the Pharisees always wanted to pin Jesus to the wall with some theological question that they felt He could not wiggle out from. And, therefore, discredit Himself in the face of the people. They were always trying to trap Him in His words.

They felt they had really developed the ultimate trap this time. They caught a woman in an act of adultery. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if they actually got the man to do it just to create the trap, because the man doesn't show up. They ripped this woman out of an adulterous relationship, and they shove her in front of Jesus right in the middle of the temple with all the people around Him.

And what did they say?

John 8:4 (NASB)

⁴they *said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act.

They are acting in a holy, indignant, self-righteous manner. They are acting furious about this sin against God. **This woman has been caught in the act of adultery!** This is a very serious charge. The law of God was very clear about that.

Leviticus 20:10 (NASB)

¹⁰If *there is* a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

So according to the law, when a man and a woman are caught in adultery, they were both supposed to be put to death. I want you to notice that they were not really keeping the law. The man and woman were caught in the act of adultery, but only the woman was brought to Jesus. The man was not there. They just kept the part they wanted.

But, nonetheless, the law **does** say she should die. So they slam this woman in the midst of the crowd and in the face of Jesus.

John 8:5-6a (NASB)

⁵Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?"

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

Stop there.

They weren't concerned with the woman. Nor were they were really concerned about the law, they were just trying to trap Jesus.

III. THE DILEMMA.

So, what is the dilemma in this trap? The dilemma is simply this. Jesus claimed to follow the law.

Matthew 5:17 (NASB)

¹⁷"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

If Jesus were to say "**Don't stone her,**" they would have said, "Aha, He is not of God, for

He defies the law of Moses, and we all know that God gave Moses the law." So if He says, "Don't stone her," then He violates the law.

On the other hand, if He says, "**Stone her**,"...then He's going to lose His reputation as a friend of sinners. Then they are going to say to Him, "Why didn't You stone all the rest of those sinners that You were eating with? Why do you pass yourself off as some great humanitarian and pick the sinners to stone? You are supposed to help the bruised and the brokenhearted and the poor? If You want to stone her then what kind of love is that?"

You can see the dilemma. They hit it right on the nose. They felt they had Jesus in a dilemma that He could not wiggle out of.

It is this: **How does God harmonize His justice with His mercy?** It is the epitome of all theological dilemmas.

- If God is a God of righteousness and a God of justice and a God of judgment by His holy nature, then **she must die**.
- If God is a God of love and grace and kindness and mercy and forgiveness, then **she must live**.

But how in the world can you harmonize those two things? That's the dilemma! The Old Testament says that God is a just God." He will punish you for all your iniquities. But at the same time it says He forgives our transgressions.

That is a paradox: **How can God be a God of justice and at the same time forgive sin?** And the reversal is true also: **How can He be a God of love and punish sin?** You know what the answer is? Human wisdom has none. I just want to set you at ease with that.

IV. THE RESPONSE.

But watch how He responds.

John 8:6b (NASB)

⁶...But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.

Do you know what He wrote? **No, you don't!**..Nobody knows what He wrote. I think He just moved His hand through the sand. It **was** their moment. The rocks were poised. They were ready to throw them. "**What are you going to do with this woman? We caught her in the very act.**" Then Jesus shifts the moment to Himself. He allows all their fury to be vented. He just moves His finger through the sand.

John 8:7 (NASB)

⁷ 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."

This was the perfect response! Do you remember what He did next?

John 8:8 (NASB)

⁸ Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

He wrote in the sand and let them fry...They knew each other very well and they knew what each other were like. They were convicted by their own conscience.

Now, let me ask you a question...If you were convicted of sin by your conscience in the presence of Jesus Christ, what would you do? Would you run to Christ for forgiveness? I would! But they chose to run away. That was the problem with the Pharisees. They never wanted to face the reality of their sin.

John 8:9 (NASB)

*⁹ 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.*

As soon as they were convicted, instead of asking for forgiveness, they went out one by one starting with oldest.

And who stayed? The woman. Wouldn't you think that she should have ran away with everybody else? This had to be a very embarrassing moment! No, she stayed!

John 8:10-11 (NASB)

¹⁰ Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" ¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."]

When Jesus called her "Woman" it was a term of respect. You don't get His respect by thinking you are righteous. You get His respect by admitting you are a sinner. He respected her over the scribes and Pharisees who had just run away.

CONCLUSION:

Now listen to this! Do you understand what Jesus taught the scribes and Pharisees that day? He said, "The question is not how do you harmonize the **judgment of God** with **the grace of God**. The question is what right do you have to be this woman's judge? You are all sinners yourselves. In other words, this is God's business, not yours.

So Jesus chose **grace over justice** for the woman. But how could He do that?" How can a holy God just say, "**Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more**". Does that mean that God is soft on sin? **NO!** Our sin has separated us from God and we **MUST** have that relationship restored. The crime has been committed, somebody has to die.

And that is just it! You know what Jesus knew as he stood there? **I believe this with all my heart!** When He said to that woman, "**Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more**", He knew full well that **He** would die on the cross for **her adultery**. No one else could do that. He was her only hope. This was the only reason He could give her forgiveness.

That answers the question of grace and judgment, doesn't it? He suffered the **judgment** in her place and gave her **grace and mercy!** Christ's death on the cross was the ultimate price that had to be paid for our sins and the means by which His grace could forgive us of those sins!

There is no greater friend than one who will lay down his life for you! And I would add: especially when that friend gives you eternal life. The friendship of Jesus is infinitely more valuable than any friend we could have on this earth even if they should die for us.

God Be With You.