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- Part: 52 [Are you marked in the Ear and the Foot by the Good Shepherd?](#)
- Part: 51 [Blind Eyes Made to See by Jesus](#)
- Part: 50 [Listening to the Master](#)
- Part: 49 [Jesus the Evangelist](#)
- Part: 48 [Believers are Worshipers](#)
- Part: 47 [Are We Like the Woman at the Well?](#)
- Part: 46 [Snakes, Sinners and the Savior](#)
- Part: 45 [Starting Life Over Again](#)
- Part: 44 [What a Wonderful Change has been Wrought in Your Life](#)
- Part: 43 [DO YOU BELIEVE AND HAVE THIS LIFE?](#)
- Part: 42 [Triumphant Living](#)
- Part: 41 [Where Are You On The Spiritual Map of Your Life?](#)
- Part: 40 [Are You Enjoying an Endless, Overflowing, Victorious Life?](#)
- Part: 39 [How to Have the Endless Joy-Filled Life](#)
- Part: 38 [Jesus Is the Lamb of God?](#)
- Part: 37 [Jesus Is the Son of God](#)
- Part: 36 [Jesus in All the Gospels](#)
- Part: 35 [Hearing the Voice of Jesus](#)

Listening to the Master



Part 50 (020526AM)

[Return to previous Page](#) | [Print](#)

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This morning ^[1] we are going to read one of the most touching passages of the Scriptures to anyone who has ever sinned, that should include all of us. These inspired words from God's through His Spirit written by John capture for us one of the clearest scenes of how Jesus looks upon sinners. You remember the scene:

Its early morning, the sun is already warming the air as it glistens off the marble and gold of Herod's Temple.

Jesus who had no place of His own comes into the Temple from across the Kidron, He had slept with the Twelve on the Mount of Olives probably in the common area known as the Cave of Gethsemane where anyone could stay free of charge near those olive presses.

As He finds a place on the steps of the courtyard to sit and teach many eager followers gather to listen and learn. As He starts to open His mouth a group of religious leaders come clamorously across the great colonnade. They march up to where Jesus sat and thrust contemptuously forward a nameless woman who falls to the ground face down and trembling before Jesus.

Then with eyes full of hatred they spew out the venom of their accusations. With knuckles white with their grip they hold rocks for stoning. With hearts as hard as those stones they coldly demand the immediate death by crushing for this sinful, adulterous woman. In a pitiful heap the woman in torn clothing, tangled hair, and trembling shoulders never looks up. Dirt from the streets mingles with tears from her eyes and drips to the Temple pavement as she refuses to even lift her head before the accusers, the Master, and the crowds.

Looking up Jesus casts His gaze at the woman with eyes filled with compassion, then at the religious leaders with eyes of fiery, righteous indignation. With calmness and boldness unmoved by the hatred and anger of the well known and recognized men who stood panting with hatred before Him, Jesus stands, walks down the steps and stoops down to His knees on the courtyard between the accusers and the accused. With every eye upon Him Jesus begins to write on the ground tracing His fingers over the dust on the pavement.

At first the men continue to shout the accusations and demand she be stoned waving their rocks menacingly in the air, as they demand a response from Jesus. But He speaks not a word; acting as if He didn't even hear them He continues writing. As he writes He pauses and looks up directly into the eyes of the circle of accusers, one by one.

Then it begins to happen, shouts slowly die out, voices fall to mutters, their eyes become riveted to the ground as Jesus write out an indictment against each accuser. God the Son marks their iniquities, as He shall on Judgment Day. The circle of robed and bearded men begins to change. Looking at the eldest of the accusers with his white hair, and manicured hands – Jesus writes at his feet COVETOUS and with His piercing eyes looks directly into that man's soul. With a thud the rock that he held so tightly falls to the ground as he turns and rushes away with downward eyes.

Then Jesus looking up into the faces of the other men standing in the circle, and steadily-with eyes that never blink- speaks to them: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

Moving now to the feet of the next oldest accuser Jesus writes out his besetting sin. Up and down Christ's finger moves, one by one the men begin to tremble. Their eyes are painfully glued on the man who reads their hearts like a billboard and who writes their sin so devastatingly in the sight of the crowd. Seeing into their souls that moving finger writes on-

Part: 34 [ARE YOU READY TO STAND BEFORE CHRIST'S THRONE?](#)

Part: 33 [Do Troubles Push you Toward God?](#)

Part: 32 [Are You Pushed Toward God?](#)

Part: 31 [Is It Chastening or Pruning?](#)

Part: 30 [Our Father the VINEDRESSER](#)

Part: 29 [Fruit Bearing 101](#)

Part: 28 [Are You Cleansed, Clipped and Christ-like?](#)

Part: 27 [Secrets of Fruitfulness-2](#)

Part: 26 [Secrets of Fruitfulness-1](#)

Part: 25 [A Life Useful for Jesus](#)

Part: 24 [Starting Over in Newness in Jesus](#)

Part: 23 [Jesus: I Am the Vine](#)

Part: 22 [Secrets of the VINE](#)

Part: 21 [How to Get Christ's Well Done](#)

Part: 20 [How To Walk Through The Valley Of Death's Shadow](#)

Part: 19 [The Race and the Crown](#)

Part: 18 [Finishing Well With Christ's WELL DONE](#)

Part: 17 [I Go To Prepare a Place](#)

Part: 16 [In My Fathers House](#)

Part: 15 [Who is the LORD - Jehovah or Allah?](#)

Part: 14 [Are You Secure for Eternity?](#)

Part: 13 [Mormonism Is the Wrong Way to God](#)

Part: 12 [Are You Ready to Die?](#)

Part: 11 [Jesus: I AM the Resurrection and the Life](#)

Part: 10 [Is Your Cup Overflowing](#)

Part: 9 [Following Jesus as My Good Shepherd in the Hard Times of Life!](#)

Part: 8 [Is Your Head Oiled?](#)

Part: 7 [Following Jesus As My Good Shepherd](#)

Part: 6 [I AM THE DOOR: Entering Life Through Jesus](#)

Part: 5 [Have You Given Your Life to Jesus?](#)

Part: 4 [Jesus: I AM the Bread of Life](#)

Part: 3 [Jesus: I am the LIGHT in the Wilderness](#)

Part: 2 [Jesus: I AM the Light to follow](#)

Part: 1 [Jesus: I AM the Light to Trust](#)

- Idolater
- Liar
- Drunkard
- Murderer
- Adulterer

Finally the last stone falls, the last accuser ashamedly hurries away, and all is silent as Christ's finger stops. The quietness is filled with only one sound, the deep sobs of the accused woman.

Jesus stands quietly, and turns toward the trembling, sobbing woman. In an instant He reads her souls also. And then He speaks softly: "Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" ([John 8:10](#)) And she answers, "No man, Lord."

That is all the woman says in this entire scene. She makes no excuses, blames no one, just by her sobbing acknowledges her sin, and sorrows. Knowing her contrite and repentant heart Jesus speaks: "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." ([John 8:11](#))

Jesus doesn't acquit the sinner, He forgives her. Jesus doesn't absolve the sinner of blame, He absolves her from guilt.

We can only guess which of the women who followed Jesus all the way to the Cross this woman taken in adultery may have been. We do not know her name, her background, her family, or her circumstances. But we can be sure of one thing -she was never the same again for Jesus had touched her life, forgiven her sins, and delivered her soul from death.

God is willing to forgive us, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, because the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.

Please stand with me and listen to the entire scene recorded in [John 7:53 - 8:12](#)

- "For Jesus to forgive this woman meant that He had to one day die for her sins. Forgiveness is free but it is not cheap. The Law was given to reveal sin ([Rom. 3:20](#)), and we must be condemned by the Law before we can be cleansed by God's grace. Law and grace do not compete with each other; they complement each other. Nobody was ever saved by keeping the Law, and nobody can ever be saved by grace who was not *first* indicted by the Law. There must be conviction before there can be conversion" [2] .
- By [3] far the most interesting suggestion emerges from the Armenian manuscript which translates the passage this way: "He himself, bowing his head, was writing with his finger on the earth to declare their sins; and they were seeing their several sins on the stones." The suggestion is that Jesus was writing in the dust the sins of the very men who were accusing the woman. There may be something in that. The normal Greek word for *to write* is *graphein*; but here the word used is *katagraphein*, which can mean *to write down a record against someone*. (One of the meanings of *Kata* is *against*). So in [Job 13:26](#) Job says: "Thou *writes* (*katagraphein*) bitter things against me." It may be that Jesus was confronting those self-confident sinners with the record of their own sins.

The Master's Message In John is watching Jesus through the eyes and ears of the Apostle John. We are doing this study because Jesus is the One who sent us to go and preach His gospel.

In John 8: 11,24,30-32,44,47 a believer:

- **Leaves their life of sin**, v. 11 "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and **leave your life of sin.**"
- **Believes in Jesus**, v. 24 I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not **believe that I am the one** I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."
- **Dies sinless**, v. 24 I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed **die in your sins.**"
- **Puts their faith in Jesus**, v. 30 Even as he spoke, many **put their faith in Him.**
- **Hold His teaching**, v. 31 To the Jews who had **believed Him**, Jesus said, "If you **hold to my teaching**, you are really my disciples.
- **Really are Christ's disciples**, v. 31 To the Jews who had **believed him**, Jesus said, "If you **hold to my teaching**, you **are really my disciples.**
- **Know the truth**, v. 32 Then you will **know the truth**, and **the truth will set you free.**"
- **Have been set free**, v. 32 Then you will **know the truth**, and **the truth will set you free.**"
- **Belong to God, and hears God** v. 44 You **belong to your father, the devil**, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 47 He who **belongs to God, hears what God says**. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God." Submarines and ships in harm's way when out over the deep and vulnerable to sinking into the deep blackness of the sea's depths.

[1] Portions of this section reflect ideas first found in the sermon "Letters in the Sand" from the book by Catherine Marshall, *A Man Called Peter Marshall*, p. 310-319.

[2] Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary: John 8*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

[3] Barclay, William, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John - Volume 2 Chapters 8-21 (Revised Edition)*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2000, c1975.

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