

HE STOOPED TO CONQUER

JOHN 8:3-11 • TV063B

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“And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, 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. 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? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”

I have a message for you today from a controversial passage of Scripture. Now I hope that gets your attention. But there's been a whole lot of controversy over this passage found in God's Word. In **John chapter 8:3-11**; will you take your Bible please and open it to **John chapter 8 verses: 3-11**.

Now, some of the most well-known preachers of the past have refused to preach a sermon from these verses. That's right; they have literally refused to preach from these verses fearing that it would encourage immorality.

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This is true; there are some theologians and early Puritans who have even denied that this Scripture was in the early manuscripts; that these verses were even in the Greek New Testament. They claim that these verses were added in later years. That's how much they strongly felt about these verses.

And then, some of the early churches omitted this passage of Scripture from their Bibles. They just cut it out. When they translated the Bible they left it out entirely fearing that it would encourage adultery, fearing that it would offend people outside the church or outside the faith, and fearing that it would cause weaker brethren and sisters to stumble and so they just left it entirely out of their Bibles.

There's been a lot of controversy on this Scripture. But I think and many other writers believe that it's the most beautiful example of God's mercy to be found in God's Word. That it is a clear illustration of our Lord's grace to the guilty and mercy for the miserable.

I want you to listen to it and if you have your Bible there read it with me, **John chapter 8:3-11.** Now listen carefully while I read God's Word; *"And the Scribes and the Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst; (that is in the circle) they said to Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act, (or before two or three witnesses as required by Moses' law)." "Now Moses in the law commanded us that such people should be stoned but what do you say? They said, tempting Him that they might have to accuse Him."*

In other words, they knew this; if Christ sided with the law of Moses and had this woman stoned; then He would lose favor in the eyes of the people because He had been called the friend of sinners. He'd been called, the one who was gracious to sinners, the friend of Publicans and harlots."

And they knew that if He said, "All right; stone her," that He'd lose favor with the people. They also knew that if He said, "You can't stone her," then He was taking sides against Moses' law.

They thought they had Him. They thought they trapped Him. They had been looking for this opportunity for a long time. They brought Him a woman caught in the very act of adultery and they quoted Moses' law to Him.

They had the witnesses with them and they quoted Moses' law. They said this is what the law says; *"A woman or a man caught in the act of adultery by two or three witnesses was to be stoned immediately."* "Now, that's what Moses said, what do you say?"

"But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground as though He heard them not." So, when they continued asking Him; He lifted up Himself and He said to them, *"He that is without sin; let him first cast a stone at her."*

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“And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it being convicted by their own consciences went out one by one beginning with the eldest, even unto the last.”

Jesus was left alone and the woman in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up Himself and saw no one but the woman He said to her; *“Woman, where are thine accusers? Doth no man accuse thee? Doth no man condemn thee?”* And she said, *“No man Lord.”* And He said to her, *“Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more.”*

Why would anyone object to that Scripture? That’s mercy. That’s why our Lord came into this world to save sinners. He said that Himself; He said, *“I’ve come to seek and to save the lost. The well, (the righteous); they don’t need a physician, (they don’t need a Saviour). It’s the sick who need a doctor. It’s the sinner that needs the Redeemer.”*

This Scripture to me offers encouragement to any sinner to flee to Christ for mercy. *“Our Lord’s plenteous in mercy. He delights to show mercy.”* He delights to forgive.

This Scripture to me is instructive, very instructive to those who would learn the Gospel, who would forsake the sinking ship of good works and the sinking ship of ceremonialism, and find the rock to build his hope upon, the rock of salvation and of mercy in the Gospel.

This Scripture to me is strong in its condemnation of self-righteousness and the whole Bible condemns self-righteousness. It condemns any person who leans upon his own righteousness and morality and good works, *“For all have sinned and come short of God’s glory.”*

And this is strong in its condemnation of that type of thing, resting on our own righteousness and merit which in God’s sight is, *“filthy rags.”*

And then the Scripture is a picture of Christ’s redemptive work. Now let me speak to your heart. Why don’t you lay down that veneer of religion, that false veneer of hypocrisy and why won’t you lay bare your heart before the Spirit of God and say; *“Lord; wound me, break me, humble me, and make me contrite at thy feet and do for me what you did for that proud Pharisee Saul of Tarsus. And do for me what you did for those men in the early days, bring me to know the Saviour’s love as you brought this woman.”*

First of all: In **verse 4** this woman was taken in adultery, caught in the very act by two or more witnesses. According to the law of Moses she was guilty, no question about her guilt, and no question about it. And they brought her and threw her down in front of Christ who was at that time teaching in the temple.

And a crowd gathered and here she was down there on her hands and knees, on the ground. And these fellows all standing around her; she’d been, they said, *“Caught in the very act.”*

But you listen to me, every one of us without exception; I don’t care who you are, every one of us without exception ought to be able to identify with this woman. We ought to be able to

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identify with her and be cast down ourselves in the circle of accusers. Satan is the accuser of the brethren.

The law is the accuser of all sinners. The justice and righteousness and wrath of God is the accuser of all sinners for if we have not been caught in the act, at least every one of us have been caught in the thought of sin; that's right, in the thought of sin.

Our Lord teaches this and you need to hear this and you need to learn this. If you've ever learned anything you need to learn this because you'll never be saved until you're lost. You'll never find mercy until you have the misery of sin revealed to you. You'll never be found till you are in the wilderness of sin having no way out but His mercy.

One day the Lord gave food to His disciples and they began to eat it and the Pharisee's were offended because they had this ritual that was part of their ceremonial law of always washing their hands carefully before they ate.

And they were offended because the disciples didn't wash their hands before they ate. And the Lord Jesus said this; *"It's not that which goeth into the mouth that defiles a man; it's that which comes out of the heart."*

And the disciples came to Him later and they said, *"What did you mean by that?"* And this is what He said in **Matthew 15:17**: *"It's not that which goeth into the mouth that defileth a man, (that corrupteth a man) it's that which comes from his heart, for out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts."*

Oh, that's where they come from: *"Out of the heart proceeds murders."* You don't have to kill a person to be a murderer. All you've got to do is hate him. The thought is always born in the heart before the deed is committed by the hand.

"And God does not look on the outward countenance; He looks on the heart." There may be a man in prison today who killed a person. You say, "He's a guilty murderer." Well, you're a guilty murderer too in the eyes of God.

You thought it, you planned it, you desired it, you wanted it; you just didn't carry it out. Man looks on the outward countenance and he punishes for outward sins. *"God looks on the heart."*

And our Lord said: *"Out of the heart proceeds adultery, fornication, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies, and lies. These are the things that defile a man."* That's the reason He called the Pharisees, *"Whited sepulchers."*

Do you know what a sepulcher is? It's a grave. And He said, *"On the outside you appear beautiful to men, (the veneer of religion, of piety, of righteousness, of good works, of so-called outward beauty)."*

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“But on the inside you are full of dead men’s bones. You are full of all manner of uncleanness and corruption. Cleanse first that which is within that the outside might be clean.”

That’s where sin is; it’s in the heart. We don’t have hand trouble; we have heart trouble. That’s our problem. And you’re guilty. God’s caught you in the thought, in the imagination, and that to God is the act.

Listen to me; now here’s what He is teaching; it’s not just actions that are wrong; it’s attitude. It’s not just manners, its motive. It’s not just outward deeds that God condemns; its inward thought.

And then **Matthew 5:21**; our Lord said: *“You have heard it said by them of old time thou shalt not kill. But I say unto you: Whosoever is angry, (whosoever is filled with hatred) is in danger, not only the judgment but of hell fire.”*

You don’t have to murder to be a murderer. You don’t have to kill to be a criminal in God’s sight. All you’ve got to do is love someone less than in a perfect manner. All it has to be in your heart is a presence of hatred, malice, envy, jealousy, or any of these things, and God says, “You’re guilty.”

“To offend in one point of the law is to be guilty of the whole law. The thought of foolishness is sin.” This woman was caught in the act of sin and God’s caught you in the act of sin too, many, many times.

And then our Lord said in **Matthew 5:27**: *“You have heard it said by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, to lust in your heart is to be guilty already of adultery.”*

This world is filled with sinners; *“All men are liars,”* the Scripture says. All men and women are blasphemers. All men and women are thieves and murderers and adulterers and fornicators, the whole world.

We ought to identify with this dear soul who was caught in the act, even though you have not been exposed; God has seen your heart and He sees in your heart everything that these witnesses saw here and more.

And then in **Matthew 5:43** He said; *“You have heard it said by them of old time, thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you; Love your enemy. Bless them that curse you. Pray for them which despitefully use you and do good to them.”*

Oh my friend; this is God’s commandment. These are God’s laws. And what we have done is we have taken the holy, matchless, law of God, like the Pharisees of old, and we’ve whittled it down and brought it down and stripped it of its power and stripped it of its edge and made it refer only to these outward acts that men and women see.

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And we think because they can't see our hearts and cannot see our imagination and cannot see our dreams, and cannot see our thoughts, that we're not defiled. We are defiled; we're defiled in our hearts and in our souls and in our consciences.

"God looked down from heaven and saw that every imagination of man's heart was evil continually." That's where it all starts.

I'll tell you what holds most sinners back; it's reputation, it's like an old lion that's in a zoo. He's got the bars around him you know. You've got bars around you. You've got the bars of reputation, the bars of community approval, the bars of marriage, the bars of religion, the bars of fear, and the bars of all these other things.

If all those were removed and you were turned loose and not restrained by all these things that restrain you; you'd be right down there in the dust where she is. That's so! And if you deny it you're in worse shape than that person there that's caught in the act.

Secondly: In **verse 5**; now the Pharisees, they're standing around there with the rocks in their hands and here she lays on the ground. And Christ our Lord was stooping down and these Pharisees said, *"Moses and the law, commanded that she be stoned."*

That's what the law says and my friend, that's true. There's no way around that. And there's nothing the law can do but condemn. That's the reason Paul wrote in **Galatians 3:10**: *"You, you that would be under the law; don't you hear the law?"* Don't you hear what the law says?

You talk about salvation by law and by works; don't you hear what it requires? *"Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things that are written in the law to do them."*

No sir; the law can do nothing but condemn. The law can do nothing but pronounce guilt. The law can do nothing but punish the guilty. That's what the law was given for, to reveal sin. *"What the law saith it saith to them that are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all the world become guilty before God."*

And my friend; whether we are caught in the act or caught in the thought or caught in the imagination; we're guilty. And the Scripture says, *"God will in no wise clear the guilty."* The Scripture says, *"The soul that sinneth; it shall surely, (surely, surely) die."*

That's so! There's no use to plead for mercy. The law offers no mercy. There's no use to plead for grace; the law has no grace to give. There's no use to promise to do better; there's no grace in the law. There's no use to offer excuses and blame everybody else. The law has no leniency.

That's what these men are saying to me, they brought me to Christ and they threw me on the ground. And they stood around with the rocks in their hands and they said, "The law says he's guilty and the law says stone him." Now what do you say, what do you say?

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Oh listen; it says, in **verse 6**; *“Our Lord stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground.”*

I see a beautiful picture here. The Pharisees all standing around there you know in their piety and in their holier-than-thou attitude, and in their offended righteousness, with the stones in their hands getting ready to shed the blood of this dear woman.

They were getting ready to drive the life out of her body with the rocks of their indignation. And our Lord acted like He didn't even hear them. And He stooped down, knelt down, right beside that woman.

Our Lord didn't step around here with that crowd and pick up a rock with them and take His place with them and be identified with them. I see people doing that all the time. *“If a brother be over taken in a fault; you which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness considering thyself less thyself also be tempted.”*

But do we see that? No sir! You let a person be overtaken in a fault and everybody, practically everybody, takes their place in the circle of condemnation, in the circle of indignation, in the circle of self-righteousness.

And they begin to stone him with their words, stone him with their criticism, stone him with their gossip, and stone him with their slander. Not our Lord; He stooped down beside her, right down beside her.

What does that say to you preacher? It says this; it shows me His love for sinners. It shows me where the love of God is. It's not in that circle of self-righteous religious leaders. His love is upon that sinner.

That's what it says in **Romans 5:8**, *“God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”* That's what it tells me in **Ephesians 2:4 and 5**: *“But God who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us; Christ died for us.”*

The ungodly; Christ died for us. Sinners; Christ died for us, enemies. That's right! When our Lord stooped down beside this dear woman caught in the act of sin, it tells me He loves sinners. If He loved her why wouldn't He love me and you, double-dyed sinners?

The Lord says, *“Come let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, red like crimson; I'll make them white as snow.”*

It tells me this too; it shows His identification with sinners. He identified Himself with her. He stooped down there where she was. He came down where she was. He condescended.

That's like an angel becoming a maggot. That's like a glorious cherubim becoming a worm. The Lord of glory, the spotless, sinless, Son of God, took on Himself human flesh. He was identified with me. *“He took on himself the likeness of sinful flesh.”*

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He who was rich became poor. *“He emptied himself. He who knew no sin was made sin.”* He who wrote the law was condemned by the law that He had written. He identified Himself with the transgressors. *“He was numbered with the transgressors.”*

And then in **verse 7**: These people wouldn't stop. He was writing something on the ground. I don't know what He wrote. Do you know what I think He wrote? This is just what I think; I think He was writing some names and some dates and things that would remind these men around there of their own sins.

But, He was writing on the ground. And they continued; they continued this harassment. *“What are you going to do about it?”* And then He stood up. He looked them in the eye and He delivered a message to every man, woman, boy and girl, in this world; *“He that is without sin among you; let him first cast a stone at her.”*

Now there you have it my friend, set forth. Be your own judge. The Scripture says, *“To judge yourself you wouldn't be judged.”*

You have the Saviour's permission. If you are without sin step over there and start stoning the guilty. If you're without sin; the law still says, *“Obey and live.”* If you've obeyed you'll live. That's right; Christ gives you permission. But I'm telling you this, if you'll judge yourself right here, you won't be brought to the Judgment and judged.

Now these men turned and walked off one at a time from the eldest to the younger. When He got through charging them, *“You who are without sin; throw the first stone”* and He stooped down again and started writing and they began to disappear.

The first one walked off and then another one and then another one. They began to walk off, each one of them until finally; it says in **verse 10**; *“the Lord lifted himself and saw none but the woman.”*

I love that. This to me is a beautiful Gospel message. Here's a sinner in the dust guilty, caught in the act. Thank God they brought her to the right person; they brought her to the Lord. They didn't take her to the baptismal pool; they brought her to the Lord.

They didn't take her in front of the church or to the mourner's bench; they brought her to the Lord. They didn't know what they were doing but they brought her to the Saviour. And our Lord stooped right down there with her.

And then our Lord lifted himself. That's right; He first stooped in identification, identified with the guilty. He stooped in temptation; *“He was tried in all points as we are.”* That's right! *“He's able to succor them that are tempted because He was tempted in all points, yet without sin.”*

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He stooped in substitution. He had our sins laid on Him and He like the scapegoat of old was led out into the wilderness to disappear and to take our sins with Him. But He arose; that's right, He arose from the grave.

And when He arose from the grave He looked at us and He says the same thing He said to that woman. When He stood up and looked around. There was no one there but Christ and the woman and He said to her; "*Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?*"

Where is Satan sinner? Christ has broken his power and crushed his head and defeated the prince of this world and has judged him once and for all and he can lay no charge to God's elect.

Where are your accusers? The law, certainly the law can condemn me. No it can't because Christ has kept the law. He has satisfied the law. He has in every jot and tittle obeyed and honored God's law and the law has slipped away into darkness and I'm no longer under the law but under my Lord's grace and mercy.

Where are thine accusers? Where's the wrath of God? It's been satisfied. Where's the justice of God? It's been satisfied. Where's the penalty for sin? Paul said, "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ.*" There's no judgment. "*Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemneth?*"

And He said, "*Woman; where are your accusers? Doth no man condemn thee?*"

She said, "*No man Lord.*" He said and here's the assurance, the voice of Christ; "*Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more.*" Lay aside this way of life; put it aside. Walk in newness of life. "*Go and sin no more.*"

There was an old man that lived in the mountains. He lived alone and all he had to spend away his lonely hours was an old violin, an old second-rate violin. And at night after he had finished his supper he would sit in front of the fire and he'd play that old violin.

He'd play a Home Sweet Home and America and songs like that you know. One night it was raining hard and the wind was blowing and it was storming and he heard a knock at the door and he went to the door.

There stood a stranger. His collar was turned up and water was streaming from his face. And the stranger said; "Friend, I've got no place to go and I'm lost. Could I stay the night with you?"

The old man, glad to have company invited him in and fed him something. Then they sat in front of the fire and the old man looked at the stranger and he said "would you like to hear me play my violin?" And the man said, "I surely would."

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So, he got that old second-rate violin out and he started playing, squeaking and squawking, Home Sweet Home and America, whatever he knew, you know. And the stranger sat there a while and the stranger said, "Could I try it?"

The old man took that old violin and handed it to the stranger and the stranger tightened the strings and tightened the bow and then he began to play. And you could hear the angels sing. You could hear the rippling water going over the rocks.

You could hear the humming bird. You could hear the laughter of a child. You could hear the sigh of a broken heart. And that old man sat there dumbfounded with his mouth open. The man who was playing that violin was the number one violinist in the entire state who was visiting in that home.

It wasn't the violin that made that music; it was the hand of the master. And I'll tell you this; when the Master meets a sinner, the grace, love, joy, peace, patience, and the longsuffering that comes out of that sinner; it's not coming from the sinner, it's coming from the hand of the Master.

Has He touched your life? He's good to sinners. Look to Him and trust in Him!