

Subject: *Grace Greater than Our Sin*

Scripture: *John 8:1-11*

It is true saying that every saint has a past and in Christ every sinner has a future. This story in John 8 is an illustration of that profound truth. In this story three groups of people are represented:

1. The unrighteous – represented by the woman caught in adultery

Romans 3:10 *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.*

Romans 3:23 *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*

2. The self-righteous – represented by the scribes and Pharisees

John 7:24 *Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*

Romans 2:1 *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.*

3. The righteous – represented by Jesus, the only righteous One

1 John 2:1 *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. John may have had the story of this adulterous woman in mind when he wrote those words.*

The central figure in this story is Jesus, and He is the main focus of the entire Gospel of John. This story highlights His amazing grace and compassion toward sinners. It is a powerful illustration of **John 3:17** *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*

As John 8 begins we should notice the contrast between John 7:53 and 8:1. Jesus had no home of His own. He left His home in heaven and during His earthly ministry had no home. **2 Corinthians 8:9** *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*

THE CHARGE (vs. 3-6a)

While Jesus was teaching early in the morning in the temple the scribes and Pharisees interrupted the lesson by bringing a woman caught in the act of adultery. This interruption became an illustration of God's grace and an introduction to Christ's teaching that He is the light of the world and when a person follows Him he will not walk in spiritual darkness any longer. The scribes (sometimes called lawyers) were experts in interpreting the law and the Pharisees were experts in enforcing it. The rabbis said: "Every Jew must die before he will commit idolatry, murder, or adultery." Adultery was considered to be one of the worst sins and it was punishable by death. **Leviticus 20:10** *And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.* In verse 5 they stated what the law required and then asked Jesus what He thought. They brought the guilty woman but where was the man? They accused the woman, but they really wanted to trap Jesus and accuse Him. This was a set-up. If Jesus was lenient and disregarded the law He would lose credibility. If He held to the law and called for her execution He would lack compassion.

THE CHALLENGE (vs. 6b-8)

At first Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground as if He didn't hear them. This is the only time in the Bible where it is recorded that Jesus wrote something. What did He write? We don't know for sure, but there have been several suggestions:

- He wrote on the ground as a delay tactic, making these men think about what they said to Him and what He said to them.
- He wrote the Ten Commandments or the sins of these men on the ground. The word "write" can mean to write down a charge against someone.
- He wrote the names of these men on the ground in connection with ***Jeremiah 17:13*** *O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.* The names of unbelievers are written in the earth, but the names of believers are written in heaven (Lk. 10:20).

In verse 9 Jesus turns the situation back on the scribes and Pharisees. According to the law the witnesses of a crime were to start the execution process, but in order to do so they could not be guilty of the same crime. Jesus said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Literally, He said "He that is without a sinful desire among you, let him first cast a stone." Jesus said in effect, "You may stone her, but only if you have not done the same thing yourselves, even in your heart."

THE CONVICTION (vs. 9)

When the scribes and Pharisees heard what Jesus said and thought about it, they were convicted and went out one by one with the older men leading the way. Their conscience testified against them. Every person has a conscience. The word "conscience" means to know with. The conscience gives us the self-awareness of right and wrong. Conscience approves us when we do right and it condemns us when we do wrong. These accusers felt the sting of their own conscience and knew they were guilty of lust and had committed adultery in their heart, as Jesus taught in ***Matthew 5:27-28*** ²⁷ *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:* ²⁸ *But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

THE COMPASSION (vs. 10-11)

When all her accusers left, Jesus wanted her to know they were gone. And this is the amazing thing...Jesus did not condemn her either, and yet He was righteous. When there is a righteous law and a righteous judge and yet that judge acquits a guilty person, it has to be for one reason only...grace. ***John 3:17*** *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.* ***Romans 8:1*** *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

In just reading this story we might get the impression that she got away with sin and that Jesus was willing to overlook it or be lenient in her case, but that is to miss the point. First of all, Jesus knew her heart and He knew she was truly sorry for her sin. **John 2:25** *And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.* Second, Jesus didn't condemn her and He forgave her sin because He had the authority to do so and He would offer Himself as a sacrifice to make atonement for her sin. Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin. Jesus knew that better than anyone. The penalty for her sin must be paid and He would pay that penalty. **Romans 6:23** *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Colossians 2:13-14 ¹³ *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; ¹⁴ Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;*

THE COMMAND (vs. 11b)

When Jesus said "Go and sin no more," it was a call to repent and change her way of life. He told her, "Leave your life of sin." This is His command to every Christian: **1 John 2:1** *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*

APPLYING THIS MESSAGE TO YOUR LIFE

1. Salvation is not a reward for the righteous, but a gift for the guilty.

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

2. Conviction alone falls short of true conversion.

The scribes and Pharisees felt bad about their sin, but they didn't feel bad enough to ask Jesus to forgive them. They lived with guilt when they could have lived under grace. Some many people feel conviction and settle for religion when conviction should lead to real salvation.

3. Our sin and guilt should bring us to Jesus for His grace.

John 1:17 *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*

4. Grace is not a license to keep on sinning, but a reason to stop.

Romans 6:1-2 ¹ *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ² God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*