

JESUS AND THE ADULTEROUS WOMAN

BIBLE TEXT : John 8:1-11
LESSON 129 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

John 8:1-11

¹ Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.
² And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.
³ And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst,
⁴ They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.
⁵ Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?
⁶ 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*.
⁷ 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.
⁸ And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.
⁹ 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.
¹⁰ 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?
¹¹ She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I A Pharisaical Accusation

- 1 The scribes and Pharisees bring to Jesus an adulterous woman whom they state should be stoned according to the Law of Moses, John 8:1-5;

Leviticus 20:10

¹⁰ And the man that committeth adultery with *another* man's wife, *even he* that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

Deuteronomy 22:22

²² If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, *both* the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.

- 2 The scribes and Pharisees were desirous of obtaining grounds of accusation against Christ that He did not obey the Law of Moses, John 8:6;

John 7:19-23

¹⁹ Did not Moses give you the law, and *yet* none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?

²⁰ The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?

²¹ Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.

²² Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.

²³ If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

Mark 3:1-4

¹ And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.

² And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him.

³ And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth.

⁴ And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.

John 10:31-33

³¹ Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.

³² Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

³³ The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

- 3 The Pharisees asserted they obeyed the Law of Moses, and said that Christ did not, John 8:5-7;

John 7:19-26

¹⁹ Did not Moses give you the law, and *yet* none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?

²⁰ The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?

²¹ Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.

²² Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not

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because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.

²³ If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?

²⁴ Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

²⁵ Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?

²⁶ But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?

John 7:47-52

⁴⁷ Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?

⁴⁸ Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?

⁴⁹ But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

⁵⁰ Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)

⁵¹ Doth our law judge *any* man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

⁵² They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

II The Accusers Accused

- 1 Jesus did not answer their question in the affirmative or in the negative; He directed the one who was without sin to throw the first stone, John 8:6-8;

Deuteronomy 17:4-7

⁴ And it be told thee, and thou hast heard *of it*, and enquired diligently, and, behold, *it be true, and* the thing certain, *that* such abomination is wrought in Israel:

⁵ Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, *even* that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die.

⁶ At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; *but* at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.

⁷ The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.

2 Corinthians 10:6

⁶ And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

2 Corinthians 3:6

⁶ Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

- 2 The Pharisees, condemned by their own sins, left the accused woman unharmed with Jesus, John 8:9

III The Condemned Acquitted

- 1 Christ as the giver of redemption to sinful man did not condemn the adulterous woman, but forgave her sins and saved her soul, John 8:10, 11;

John 3:17

¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

John 12:47

⁴⁷ And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

Luke 9:56

⁵⁶ For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*. And they went to another village.

Matthew 9:10-13

¹⁰ And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

¹² But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

¹³ But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

2 The Law of Moses was given by God to condemn sin, that man might see his need of a Savior, John 8:10, 11;**John 1:17**

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

Romans 7:5-14

⁵ For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.

⁶ But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

⁷ What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

⁸ But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin *was* dead.

⁹ For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

¹⁰ And the commandment, which *was ordained* to life, I found *to be* unto death.

¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew *me*.

¹² Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

¹³ Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Galatians 2:21

²¹ I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Galatians 3:19-24

¹⁹ Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

²⁰ Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one, but God is one.

²¹ *Is* the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

²² But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

²³ But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

²⁴ Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

NOTES:

The Accusing Pharisees

The story of Christ, as recorded in the four Gospels, reveals to us the determined attempts of the Pharisees and scribes to destroy the works of Christ; and, in the end, their attempt to destroy Christ Himself. The scribes and Pharisees were the religious rulers of their day. They were the expounders of the Law, and interpreters of righteousness; they were the so-called messengers of God to man, to teach him how he should live and walk before God. They were in positions of great authority both in civil and religious government.

The Pharisees and scribes have since the time of Christ become synonymous with religious bigotry and hypocrisy. Christ, in contrast, was the express image of God and His righteousness.

"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." True religion is of the heart and not merely a mental concept. Jesus said they that worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Of the Pharisees Christ said: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:7-9).

The twenty-third chapter of Matthew's Gospel is a scathing indictment against false professors of religion. Jesus severely rebuked them for their hypocrisy and ungodly living. Of such he said "All their works they do for to be seen of men." (See Matthew 23:1-39.)

It was these men who came to accuse Him of disobedience to the Law, and to seek something that they might misconstrue as unrighteousness.

The Accusation

The Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus who had been caught in the act of adultery. They did not bring her to Jesus with any thought of helping her to escape from such a life of sin. They saw a chance of tempting Christ and entrapping Him in a clever plot, so that they might slander Him, and have material to speak against Him to the people.

The Pharisees reminded Jesus that the Law said that all adulterers were to be stoned to death; "But what sayest thou?" There had been ample evidence of the kindness and mercy of Christ to the common man, so the Pharisees perhaps believed that Jesus would not accede to any demand that a woman be stoned to death, regardless of her sins. What they did not realize *was* that God is not unrighteous in His judgments. While God does not condone sin, and will not at all acquit the wicked, yet Christ in His office as Mediator between God and man for sin, will see that mercy is shown and justice is done to all (**Nahum 1:3** ³ The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked*: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. **1 John 2:1-2** 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: ² And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*.)

The Pharisees were willing to see a woman stoned to death

that they might obtain evidence to enable them to retain their position of righteousness in the eyes of the people. How incongruous was their position!

They were in actuality stooping to murder to be able to say that they were true worshipers of God, that they were teachers of righteousness, leaders of those who were in spiritual darkness. (The Spanish Inquisition was a mass repetition of this same idea.)

There was no righteousness in the Pharisees in bringing a woman guilty of adultery to Jesus. A true Christian does not condemn anyone to death, regardless of how guilty he might be of sentence. That is God's part. He is the Judge of all the earth, and He is the One who will set the judgment of man in His own good time, and He is the One who will carry it out. Paul tells us: "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:33, 34).

Christ made it plain that the requirement of God was more than the Law said, "Thou shalt not kill." (**Matthew 5:21** ²¹ Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: **Matthew 5:22** ²² But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire) "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (I John 3:15).

Therefore the Pharisees who brought the woman to Jesus were guilty themselves of a far worse transgression. They had hate and murder in their heart. They were willing to see the woman stoned to death, and were stooping to such a means to get rid of Christ. They proved to what extent they were willing to go when they later were instrumental in helping to crucify the Savior.

Condemnation

The Pharisees arrogantly asked Christ several times what should **be** done with the adulterous woman, "What sayest thou?" His answer was far different from their expectations. "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." How that must have stung them! There **is the** command of God to all men. They were teachers of the Law, but they were face to face with the divine Son of God, who was the embodiment of all righteousness and truth. James tells us: "If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James 2:8-13).

In the words of Jesus — "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone" — is a view of the differences between Law and Grace. The Law was the thunder of God's righteous demands of man to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this

present world. It is the revelation of sin, and the revelation to man of his inability to keep the whole Law. To fail to keep it is death! In Romans 7:7 we read: "Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. . . . For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." (Read all of Romans 7.)

In short, the Pharisees suddenly awoke to the fact that the Law which they had been so confident would be the instrument to silence Christ had now arisen like some dread specter in front of them 43 condemn them for the sin in their hearts. They had received permission to carry out the Law of Moses and to stone the adulterous woman for her sins. There was only one stipulation: Let the one who threw the first stone be without sin. There were none without sin. They slunk out of sight, defeated, humiliated, and condemned for their actions.

Pardoning Grace

"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). Jesus, speaking to the woman, said: "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? . . . Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." Here is the pardoning grace of God. The Law is a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. By the Law is sin, and the knowledge of sin. By that knowledge is revealed the need to be delivered from sin. That was the purpose of Christ, that men might be forgiven for their sin. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). Christ was the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, that sinful man, when he repents of his wickedness, will have the Bleeding Lamb as his Atonement for those sins.

Doubtless the adulterous woman realized her need of some ground of conciliation that she might plead before God for mercy.

While the Pharisees were guilty of many grievous sins in their bringing to Jesus this sinful and fallen woman that they might tempt Him and find a reason to accuse Him, that did not acquit her of her sinfulness. Regardless of how much one may be sinned against, he must still answer for his own sins.

Anyone guilty of adultery is a sinner. The Law stated, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). And under Grace, Jesus looked right into the heart of man and said: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). Divorce and remarriage are condoned by modern society, but Jesus said: "Whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matthew 19:9). And in Romans 7:2, 3, we read: "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth.... So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man."

We can see that this woman deserved death under the Law. She had nothing to say to Jesus; she was a guilty sinner, standing at the bar of justice. But Jesus saw a repentant heart,

and with Him there was mercy.

How wonderful must have been the words of Jesus to the woman as He told **her**, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more"! How different from the hateful scribes who were interested in her only as a means for carrying out their murderous intent!

With what wonder every repentant sinner realizes the pardoning grace of Christ through the atoning Blood of Calvary! He stands before God helpless, guilty of sin, condemned by the Law of God to eternal damnation and separation from the Lord; and then he receives pardon, his sins are taken away, and he is told to go and sin no more!

The Psalmist well said: "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psalm 130:3; 103:10). If God were to deal with a sinner according to his sins, who then would ever be justified before God? Who would ever be able to stand in the congregation of the righteous and testify of the goodness and grace of God toward him?

QUESTIONS

- 1 What was the purpose of the Pharisees' bringing an adulterous woman to Christ?
- 2 *Were* the Pharisees motivated by godly love when they came to Christ to discuss Moses and the Law?
- 3 Do you think the Law of Moses was unrighteous in demanding adulterers to be stoned to death? Give your reasons.
- 4 Was God unrighteous (as the author of the Law) in demanding death to adulterers?
- 5 Why did the Pharisees think that Christ would not permit the woman to be stoned?
- 6 What was the purpose of the Law of Moses?
- 7 Were the Pharisees living up to what the Law required?
- 8 Of what sins were the Pharisees guilty?
- 9 How did Christ save the adulterous woman from being stoned?
- 10 Why did Jesus have authority to tell her to "go, and sin no more"?