Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus Confronts Hypocrisy
Scripture: John 7:53-8:11
Code: 1519

Turn in your Bible to the seventh chapter of John's gospel. Our Scripture reading for the morning is John chapter 7 verse 53 through chapter 8 verse 11...John 7:53 through 8:11, as I read you follow closely in your Bible. Beginning in verse 53, John writes:

And every man went unto his own house, Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. 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. 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 and the law commanded us that such should be stoned. But what sayest Thou? This they said testing Him that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. So when they continued asking Him, He lifted Himself up and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast the stone at her. And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. And they who 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 Himself up 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.

May God bless this portion of Scripture to our hearts. You may be seated.

Now I want to begin with a very very important introduction and I want you to listen carefully as I do because this is important for us to understand. Now these verses that we will study this morning, that is verse 53 of chapter 7 through verse 11 of chapter 8, these verses have been a critical battleground. They have been debated and argued about. And the reason is this, our Bible as we know it, as we have it, is really the result of many many ancient manuscripts. In the early days of Scripture, the original autographs which God dictated to His writers were copied and recopied and recopied and recopied through the centuries. When translators go to put it together a Bible, such as perhaps King James in his time commissioned back in 1600, they would gather the evidence of all the ancient manuscripts to find the right text to translate into English. And so our Bible comes from many ancient manuscripts. Now, some of the ancient manuscripts include this portion of Scripture. Some of them do not. Some of the ancient manuscripts omit verse 53 through verse 11. In fact, some of them just start right off with verse 12. Others of them take this section and put it at the end of John's gospel and make it like a footnote. Others put it at the bottom of the page like a footnote. Some manuscripts

leave it out but they leave a big blank space there as if something belongs there. And so there has been a running debate as to whether or not this passage is in or out, whether the Holy Spirit really inspired it, whether John actually wrote it, whether it is intended to be in our Bible or to be omitted. And I want you to understand this, and there is no conclusive evidence either way since some manuscripts have it and some don't, but in order for us to justify presenting it, I want to ask a few rhetorical questions. You don't have to answer those kind.

Question number one, do these verses teach truth that violates other Scripture? The answer is no, they do not. Question two, do they in fact corroborate other Scripture and substantiate it? The answer is yes they do. Third question, is there definite and conclusive evidence that they should be left out? The answer is no.

Now on the positive side these, do they fit the person of Jesus Christ? Yes they do. Do they fit the context? In other words, do they belong in the flow of verses before and after? Yes, it fits beautifully. Then lastly, does this record, or these verses, fit John, the author's, pattern in writing this gospel? The answer is yes.

So it does not violate any other Scriptures. It does not contradict any other Scriptures. It in fact substantiates and corroborates other Scriptures. There is no positive evidence that it should be left out. It is like Jesus Christ, perfectly like Him. It does fit John's context and it does fit John's pattern. For example, in chapter 5 there was an incident and then a sermon. In chapter 6 there was an incident and then a sermon. In chapter 7 there was an incident and a sermon. Here in chapter 8, an incident and a sermon. If you remove the incident, that more easily breaks John's pattern. And so the incident in verses 1 to 11 and the sermon in verse 12 fits John's pattern.

And I think too that the beauty and the obvious Christ- likeness of this record leads me personally to believe that it is genuine. It is a magnificent and an important account of forgiveness and condemnation graphically illustrated in this story. You say, "Well why were some of the manuscripts leaving it out?" Well there's no real obvious answer to that. We don't know. It may just be that some of the manuscripts left it out because at first glance they thought that it appeared to sanction adultery, or sexually immorality. And so they would rather leave it out than confuse the issue, that may be some of the reason. Legalistic copyists wanting to leave it out, we don't know. But the fact that it does not violate Scripture and it does fit the context and it does portray a very beautiful and accurate picture of Christ and beyond all question reveals divine insight and divine wisdom, leads me personally to believe that it is genuine. And so I feel that we ought to study it. We certainly will learn and profit by it.

Now may I quickly add that though this story is a story of a woman taken in adultery who is forgiven by Jesus, it is no way meant to minimize sin. It is in no way to teach that adultery doesn't matter to God. We know different because the Bible clearly tells us that all through Scripture, that God

despises sexual immorality. So that's not the issue. And so we believe there is great justification for dealing with this text.

Now, I want you to remember the key to John's gospel. I was asking somebody about this two weeks and they didn't know and I had a traumatic seizure right on the spot because I have said this 500 times. Now file this in your frontal lobe and let it remain there. The key to John's gospel is presenting Jesus as God in a body, see, that's it. Like the man said, you get that in your head and you've got it in a nutshell. John's gospel...some of you are coming a little slow this morning...John's gospel has one reigning continuous never-ending relentless theme, it's on every page, in every paragraph, it is John presenting Jesus the man as God incarnate in human flesh. That's the key to everything in this gospel. Now I say that because I want you to realize something. This is not the story of the scribes and the Pharisees. It is the story of Jesus Christ. It is not the story of a woman taken in adultery. It is the story of Jesus Christ that is on every page of John's gospel. And you see, they are incidental. What John is revealing here is Christ in all His glory. The story of Nicodemus is not the story of Nicodemus, it's the story of Jesus Christ, the giver of the new birth. The story of the woman at the well is not the story of the woman at the well, it's the story of Jesus the living water and the Messiah. And the noble man's son and the impotent man 38 years sick and the people in Galilee and all the rest of it all is not anything but the story of Jesus Christ and all those characters are blurred incidentals. Whatever is the case, whatever the reason, whatever the purpose, in John's gospel in every confrontation Jesus Christ is the issue. It's like a camera, you know, you focus the camera on one object and everything else is blurred. And John's pen is like a camera and he focuses on the person of Jesus Christ who becomes crystal clear in focus dominant and everybody else sort of fades into a blurred background. My friend, we are not studying the woman and we are not studying the scribes and the Pharisees, we are studying Jesus, God in a human body. And He is ever and always on every page the one in focus in John's literary camera.

But just to be fair, let's look at the blur for a minute. And I want you to take your eyes off Jesus, very difficult to take your eyes off what's in focus and put it on the blur, but let's do it. Take your eyes off Jesus for a minute and let's look at the blur a little bit, let's look at these characters surrounding Him for a moment.

The scribes and the Pharisees we meet first of all. Now they were after Jesus. And they were after Him for bad reasons. They had violently rejected His claims. They had reacted to what He said about being from God and all of these other claims and we've been through them many times. They were really upset at Jesus. He had stepped on their ecclesiastical toes, He had embarrassed them publicly, He had destroyed them in front of the people several times. They were shamed of themselves and they were after Jesus because of what He was doing and they wanted to kill Him. And already by the time we get to chapter 8, a murder plot is brewing. In fact, back in chapter 7 they had become so incensed at Jesus Christ's claims and so incensed at what He was teaching that they sent the temple police to get Him. Remember they commissioned the officers of the temple police to

go arrest Jesus. And the temple police came back and He wasn't there. They didn't have Jesus and all they said was, "Nobody ever spoke like that man." The only excuse they had, "Wow, He's something else." And they came back empty handed. And so they found they couldn't arrest Him and they were panicky. And to add to their panic, some of the people were believing in Him. And the city was getting divided because some said He is the prophet, He is the Christ. And they were losing their grip on the population and that was a threatening thing because they held those people in subjection and ignorance under them. And so they were panicked. The people were divided. Some of them were believing. They couldn't get their hands on Him to arrest Him. He had threatened their control over the people. He had publicly shamed them and embarrassed them and showed their ignorance. And they knew they had to act fast, and they were in a big mad hurry to get at Him.

And they thought...If we can't capture Him and we can't arrest Him, maybe...and here comes their plot...maybe we can get Him to publicly condemn Himself by His own words, if we can trap Him in His words. They thought they could impale him on the horns of a dilemma, ask Him a question that didn't have a safe answer and then watch Him try to get out of it and destroy Himself by His inability to give the right answer. They were going to try to trap Him in His words. And in order to do this, they bring a woman. And we look at her for a minute. She was a woman who was caught in the very act of adultery, that is immoral sex act between people who are married, or involving married people, she was right in the act itself when they caught her. And so they bring her to use her as the tool to get their plot rolling.

Now let's take our eyes off the blur and let's focus on Jesus. Jesus is in Jerusalem now. He's finished His Galilean ministry. He's come back to Jerusalem, six months...less than six months from the time of this incident He'll be dead, nailed to a cross. But He came back to Jerusalem because once again He wanted to present His claims to the people of Judea that they who might believe would have the opportunity. And so He's there. And He's in the temple and He's been in the temple and He's been teaching. There He is. Tragically He is the object of hate. He is the object of scorn. He's the object of ridicule by the leadership. And that's tragic because at the same time that He was the object of scorn, He was indeed the Savior of the world and they didn't know it. So there's the picture. Blurred is the woman taken in adultery, blurred are the scribes and Pharisees trying to trap Jesus. Focus on Jesus. And I want you to see in this confrontation four aspects of Jesus Christ. Now you have a little outline in your bulletin, maybe you can take it and follow along.

Four aspects of Jesus Christ...four aspects, His humility, His wisdom, His conviction, His forgiveness. Now mark what I said. This is not the story of a woman, this is Christ and He is being presented in His humility, in His wisdom, in His conviction and in His forgiveness and they are only incidental to His presentation. It's all in the context and it's going to be exciting, you're going to love it, every minute of it.

First of all, look at His humility...this is just beautiful. You say, "What do you mean by His humility?" Well, you know, when Jesus Christ came to this world He humbled Himself. There is no humility like that humility. We can't even imagine humiliation like being equal with God and face to face with God, pros ton theon, John 1:1, "In the beginning was God and was the Word and the Word was...what?...with God." There is no humiliation like being with God and stripping yourself and coming down here to be born and to be spit on and to be crucified. That is absolute ultimate humiliation. And Jesus did it. And we see perhaps in three verses here by implication as clearly a revelation of His voluntary humiliation as there is any where in Scripture and you most of the time would miss it and go right by it, but it's there...it's there deep and powerful.

Verse 52, "And every man went unto his own house." You see, Jesus had been teaching in the temple but evening fell...time to go home. The Pharisees and the scribes had found themselves unable to capture Jesus Christ, unable to arrest Him. Christ had devastated the multitude with His answers, some were beginning to believe. But night came, and it was time to leave. The leaders who were left in a confused state went home. The multitude mulling over the words of Jesus Christ, no doubt their minds were captivated by Him, left for their places of rest, their own homes and the places where they would be staying if they were pilgrims in for the feast. They all went home.

You say, "What's so significant about that?" Nothing until you read verse 1 of chapter 8, "Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives." Evening shadows were falling. The people went home. But Jesus, the creator of all things, had no home to go to. He was a stranger in His own world. Where did He go? The Bible says He went to Olive. His hearers had their comfortable beds. They had their families. They had their warm fires, for it was October. But Jesus, a stranger in the world He had fashioned with His own hands, had nowhere to go, no place. And so He sought His sleep on the slopes of Olive. And truering(?) the words in my mind in Matthew 8:20 when Jesus said, "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." The world didn't want Him. Everybody went home but Jesus went to Olive...alone, He crossed the little brook Hidron, ascended the slopes of Olive, passed through the tangled olive trees into a garden that would become a great familiar place to Him, the garden of Gethsemane, likely...alone. But you know something? I personally believe that that garden and that bough of olive was the closest place to home that Jesus ever knew. You know why? Because there He could be alone in sweet quiet uninterrupted communion with His Father. Everybody else had their family, I think Olive was close to home for Jesus. All the noise of the city would be abated. Jesus in quiet communion could spend the night with His Father. And you know something? In those last six months in Jerusalem, that's where Jesus spent the vast majority of His nights. He had nowhere else to go...at Olive with His Father.

But tragic it is that He was a stranger in His own world, a lonely man with a cosmic kind of loneliness. Exiled by voluntary humiliation. Oh Paul hits that thing right on the head when he says in Philippians 2:6, "Christ Jesus who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God," in other

words, didn't want to hang on to His equality, "but made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." That is voluntary humiliation...to leave the glories that He had with the Father to become a babe in a manger, a man spit on and crucified is humiliation. And here He ascended the slopes of Olive all alone and sought His repose there in the presence of His Father where He was in a world that did not want Him...unrecognized, unwanted and unloved. I'm telling you, a dignitary of any sort would have had a better reception than Jesus had. The people would have done anything for any kind of dignitary, but here was the God of the universe, He had nowhere to go...nowhere to go.

Then I think verse 2 just shatters my mind in the concept of His humiliation. Verse 2 says this, "And early in the morning," isn't it interesting that Jesus actually went to sleep? I used to think, you know, there was so much to do for the Lord, you just could hardly even bother to go to sleep, and then I realized that Jesus got up every morning. "Early in the morning He came again into the temple and all the people came unto Him." You don't think they had been up half the night thinking about Jesus? They were there at the crack of dawn. "And all the people came in and He sat down and taught them." Oh, there He was, no change in the daily routine, this is God, the God of the universe, and He actually got up in the morning and went down to the temple, sat down and taught. No shattering miracles, no celestial press agents running around to the Jerusalem News and standing on corners..."Jesus arriving at the temple in 20 minutes." No place for that. He took His place among men. His humiliation...He was as men are.

Have you ever just let your imagination go with thinking of how Christ could have done it? Oh, He could have had celestial press agents, He could have had great billboards, "Jesus at the temple today," see. Do you realize that He could have just flown right over the city of Jerusalem, suspended Himself 150 feet up or so and just preached like this....? Do you know, if He wanted to, He could have taken His finger and written it in the sky like a skywriter? Here's a better one. You know what He could have done? He could have written the whole message on the eyeballs of everybody so they had to see it all the time. But you know what He did? He got up in the morning, He went over to the temple, He sat down and He taught. He didn't go outside and..."Come in, everybody, come on...I'm ready." You know something, with Jesus the Word is never sensationalism...here it is, are you ready for it?, the Word is availability, He's there if you want Him. Jesus never drummed up business. Never sensationalism. He sat and He taught and if any man wanted to come, that man could come. But it was that man's prerogative to come, there weren't any celestial press agents, no angels dragging ropes with bodies attacked to them into the temple...no sensationalism with Jesus. Why? This is His humiliation, folks, this is His humiliation. He did it the way men did it. He did it the way every rabbi before Him had done it, gone in the temple, sat down, cross- legged and taught, that's what Jesus did. He's the God of the universe. Nothing spectacular, nothing flamboyant, no super thrill maker, this Jesus.

And may I add a footnote? There's no place for sensationalism in any presentation of the gospel. The key is availability and teaching. Just give the Word, it's available.

So there He is in His humiliation. It's hard to believe. The ancient of days, the creator of the universe, sitting cross- legged in a temple teaching just those who wanted to hear. And nobody stirring up the crowd and nobody handing out fliers and nobody beating the bushes, and no super miracles to draw the crowd...no. Available, yes. Sensational, no.

But you see, that's His humiliation. The next time He comes He's going to come suspended from the sky and the Bible says every eye shall...what?...see Him. That's His glorification. So we see His humility. Oh, He was humble...He was humble. And that's what Paul says, "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ." What mind? The mind of what? Humility, condescension. Oh His humiliation...

We not only see His humiliation, and I'd like to say more about that, I won't, I want you to see His wisdom...His wisdom is astounding. And now we come to the story itself. And I want you to see what Jesus does. Here comes the scribes and the Pharisees to trap Jesus and Jesus with one blow devastates them...with one word, one sentence destroys them. But when you're talking about Jesus Christ you're talking about some kind of powerful mouth. "He spoke and the worlds were made." Right? He'll speak and they'll be dissolved. What little think to speak a few words to handle a little crew of scribes and Pharisees? He annihilates them with one sentence. They have come to trap Him. Humph...verse 3, look at His wisdom. "And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery and when they had set her in the midst." We'll stop right there.

The scribes were men who copied the law. They were professional secretaries. They just kept copying scrolls and more scrolls. They also interpreted and taught the law. Naturally they would be bosom buddies with the Pharisees who prided themselves on being the legalists. So naturally the scribes and Pharisees went together arm in arm all the time. The ones who taught, interpreted and copied the law going around with the ones who loved and kept the law...at least said they kept the law. And it was custom in those days that whenever there was a difficult question that came up, it was always to be taken to a rabbi. And so following the pattern, the natural routine thing to do, if they had a question was ask the rabbi. So they approached Jesus as a rabbi and they've trumped up a dilemma. They know what they're doing. They've got it all calculated. And they brought a woman who has been taken in the very act itself of sexual sin and they stick her right in front of Jesus Christ. And this idea of sexual sin that appears to be so terrible to them is no...really no big issue at their time because history tells us, Tholax(?) says, that at the time in which this was happening, the Sanhedrin never enforced the laws of God or of the Old Testament against adultery, not only that, Tholax says many of the leaders of Israel were so constantly involved in adultery that they didn't dare bring it out into the light.

But now they're going to use it. And legally they have a legitimate point, you see, in the eyes of God and in the Jewish law adultery was a sin and a serious one. The old rabbis, in fact, used to say this, "Every Jew must die before he will commit idolatry, murder or adultery," it was one of the big three sins. In fact, in Leviticus 20:10 the Bible very carefully says, "And the man who commits adultery with another man's wife, even he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall be surely put to death." Serious. God saw that as a serious sin that destroyed the basic unity of society, the family. And in fact the Jews knew it to be serious, the Mishna which is a set of codified laws that the Jews put together said that the penalty, they had somehow changed the penalty around, it used to be the idea of stoning, but the Mishna said it was to be done by strangulation. In fact the Mishna says how you do it, here's the quote: "The man is to be enclosed in dung up to his knees and a soft towel set within a rough towel is to be placed around his neck." The reason the soft towel is on the inside was he didn't want to leave any marks because it was supposed to be a divine punishment and they didn't want any human marks on him. So they wrapped a strong cloth in a soft cloth, put it around his neck. Then it says, "One man pulls in one direction, another in the other direction until he's dead."

Now the Jews had serious thoughts about adultery, and rightly so in God's eyes. And so from a purely legal standpoint they were right, they had a legitimate case and this woman deserved to die. But they don't care about that, they just want to use her. They want to get to Jesus Christ. So they push her out in the middle of the crowd and they make a display of her before Jesus and the people. Now look at verse 4, "They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery in the very act." I can just hear them. "O Master, this woman was taken in adultery in the very act," see. And then they add, verse 5, "Moses and the law commanded us that we should...that she should be stoned." Oh they're so sanctimonious.

Then they ask the question, "But what sayeth Thou?" Humm, there's the real key. What sayest Thou? You say, "Why did they ask Him that?" Verse 6, "This they said testing Him that they might have to accuse Him." Stop there. All right, now here we meet the hypocrisy of the Lord's enemies. I want you to see this. They brought this woman to Jesus not because they were shocked at her conduct. They weren't shocked at all, went on all the time. Not because they were so horrified that God's holy law had been broken. They were phony from the word go. They didn't care one wit about her and they didn't care about the idea of God's law being violated at that point, they had one thing in mind, they wanted to exploit that sin to trap Jesus. And with a cold-blooded kind of indelicacy they acted, employing the guilt of their captive to accomplish the evil purpose in their soul. They were publicly malicious and they wanted to get at Jesus.

Now let me show you what the dilemma is when they ask Jesus, "What do You say?" Here's the key, watch this. They said in verse 5, they lined up with Moses. Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned. Now somehow they had gotten back to the stoning where they had been

mixed up in the strangulation somewhere in the middle. Now they're back to stoning. They said Moses said she should be stoned.

Now this is a very important thing. They ally themselves with Moses. I think they had stones in their hand because of what verse 7 says, and we'll see it in a minute. I think they were loaded with stones. And in fact I think they were racehorsing the deal. Here's this woman taken in adultery, Lord, what are we going to do with her...what are we going to do with her? They're ready to fire. They're pushing the issue. And they tried to get Christ to make a hasty decision. And this is really exciting. The people revered Moses. There's a crowd all around, see, and here's Jesus in the middle with the woman and the scribes and the Pharisees. The crowd revered moses...Moses, honored among the most of all the Jews. Now if Jesus says, "Well I don't want to go along with Moses' law," that disqualifies Him immediately because Jesus has been saying "I came from God, the same God that gave you the law. I am come not to destroy the law but to...what?...fulfill it." If Christ set Himself right at odds against Moses they'd say, "Wow, You didn't come from the same God Moses did because God gave Moses that law. And God's not going to send You to shatter that law." And the people would just write Him off just that fast. So, if Jesus said, "No, don't stone her," He would prove that He was not from God by contradicting God's law given to Moses, see. And the people would write Him off.

On the other hand, if He said, "Yes, stone her," two things would happen. Number one, Jesus had been going around saying He was the friend of sinners, right? Jesus said, in fact, "The Son of Man is not come to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be...what?...saved." I didn't come to condemn. Not only that, He said, "I am come to bring mercy," and so forth and so on. Now if He says, "Yes, stone her," wow, the people would say...."Hold it, You're a liar." Plus here's really the key to the whole thing. The Roman law had disallowed the Jews to take the life of anybody. They could not execute. And if Jesus had said yes, stone her, they would have fired those stones so fast she wouldn't have known what happened. And the Romans would have come and said, "What..." "The rabbi told us to do it...the rabbit told us to do it," and that would have been it for Jesus. You see, that's why I believe they were in such a mad dash to get Him to act. They had those stones ready. "What do You say? What do You say?" And as soon as He would have said stone her...voom, that would have been it. And then the Romans would have come and said, "What...you can't..." "Heat the rabbi...the rabbi...he told us." What the rabbi says, you've got to do it. That's what was going on. There's the dilemma. Either go contrary to God's laws, or go contrary to your professed love and Roman law. And I can just see them. What's He going to say? And they're anxious to fire those stones. They were hoping that He would probably go along with Moses' law and they could fire those stones and the Romans would capture Him.

Now let me add something here that I want you to get. Footnote and very important, please get this. The problem here confronting Christ, watch it now, by His enemies is no small local issue. Catch it. The problem confronting Christ is the most profound moral problem in the entire universe. You say,

"What do you mean?" Just that. The real problem here is not to do with this woman. You know what the real moral problem is here? This, how do justice and mercy harmonize. Do you see it? Profound. That, my friend, is the question of the universe. How do justice and mercy harmonize? The law of righteousness demands punishment, right? God is a holy God and holiness burns against evil and holiness cannot allow that which is defiled to enter its presence. God says you sin, you die, that's justice, that's holiness, that's righteousness.

Now what happens to the poor sinner? I mean, if God says I also have grace and mercy, how do mercy and justice harmonize? How can you...how can you give mercy when the sword of justice is swinging in the way? How can there be grace without destroying justice? How can God look at somebody and say...Okay, you're forgiven. Wow, He just eliminated His justice, it's inconsistent with His nature. You see, you have those two things, don't you? How...this is the greatest question of the universe...how do justice and mercy harmonize?

Now human wisdom has no answer. No answer. But it just so happens that Jesus Christ was the answer. See, the only answer came in the cross of Jesus Christ. You know, that's where justice and mercy harmonized. God said you've sinned, punishment must come. Jesus died on the cross and what was He bearing there? Punishment. Whose? Ours. And substitution, He took our place and God gave Him all His judgment and then was free to give us His...what?...His mercy. You see, in Jesus Christ justice and mercy harmonize. God says I'll let Christ take My judgment and give Him justice and I'll give you mercy. You see, they asked the wrong question to Him. They were questioning the one in whom justice and mercy had kissed each other. Little did they know. Jesus took our punishment, and even though He hadn't died yet, listen if the cross is good for us who lived two thousand years after, I think it's good for those who live six months before it. The coming sacrificial shed blood of Christ gathered up the sins of all men and bore it and Jesus was the only one in whom justice and mercy could kiss and they did. He bore our sin and God said your sin is taken care of, here's mercy, I'll forgive on the basis of the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Do you see how profound that question was that they had picked out THE question? That's it. Oh little did they know that they were about to get devastated. Was grace helpless before law? Oh, not in Jesus Christ. Oh, watch this, the second part of verse 6, oh I love this. You say, "What's Jesus going to do? Here they are with their stones? What do You say? What do You say? We're ready to stone her, what do You say?" Look at this, it says in verse 6, middle, "That Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground." What is this? You say, "What's He doing?" Scribbling in the dirt. You say, "Jesus had better things to do than scribble in the dirt?" Sometimes. The best thing to do right now is scribble in the dirt. You say, "Why would He do that?" Well I've heard sermons...Well, He wrote the name of the cities and He wrote the sins of the men and He wrote this and that, and somebody copied it..." It doesn't say that. All it says, "He stooped down and wrote on the ground." And the italics, it says, "as though He heard them" isn't in the original either. He just scribbled in the dirt. You say, "What's He doing sitting there scribbling in the dirt?" Just waiting until He can capture

the moment for Himself.

Do you get the picture? What are we going to do? What do You say? What do You say? They're ready to go with the rocks. Fire away. And He's just going.... He's just cool, calm, collected, waiting for the moment to become His own moment. Jesus gets pushed in to no corners, my friend, none. He takes His time. He calmly runs His finger through the dirt until the focus has left them and moved to Him. He's acted very indifferent. They're passionate. They're anxious. They'd like nothing better than for Him to support the law of Moses so they could stone her. And then He would be the blame and the Romans would execute Him. And so He calmly makes them wait. It's going to be His moment and when the time is right He'll grab that moment.

And the time came, verse 7, they continued to ask Him, "So when they continued asking Him," they're just keeping...what do You say? What do You say? What do we do with her? You can imagine the tenseness of the moment. The woman would have been in a horrifying situation having been just torn out of an adulterous situation. And they're crying to Christ...what do You say? What do You say? And He's calmly waiting. And then, oh I love this, the Bible says in verse 7, "He lifted Himself up...just calmly stood to His feet" By this time, no doubt, He had captured the moment. Not only that, by the protracted pleas of these scribes and Pharisees, He had allowed them to reveal their own hatred and their own animosity to that crowd all by themselves. Do you see? Their continued pleading had already revealed the true character of their hearts. And Jesus calmly stood to His feet.

Oh the master of every moment. Stood to His feet. "Lifted Himself up and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Oh, what a devastating answer. What a fantastic answer. He didn't minimize her sin, did He? He didn't get into a debate about Mosaic law, He didn't get into a hassle with the seventh commandment. He didn't set aside the Roman law. He didn't do any of those things, He just stared at them and said, "If you think you have the right to be her judge, you've got something else coming." He devastatingly showed them that they were unfit to be her judges and executioners. He says, "There is a qualification for judging, it is to be without sin," anamartetos, you know what it means? To be without the desire to sin. Wow. If you are without the desire to sin, go ahead, throw the stone. Conviction, power, devastation and they were hypocrites. And there they were, He says, "If you are without the desire to sin..." they were the same people that He had earlier said to, "You've heard that you shall not commit adultery, but I say unto you, if a man looks at a woman to lust after her he's committed adultery in his heart." They must have been thinking about that one.

Not only that, here they were so indignant, so indignant righteously...Oh, this woman's committed adultery. In their mind...Murder Jesus, murder Jesus. Hypocrites. So He says the question is not whether Moses' law shall stand, the question is whether you're foul hearts puts you in a position to be anybody's judge. So you know what happens? They came...they brought the woman condemned...you know what happened? They got condemned. Oh great defenders of the law, the

question is not should she die but whether you think you have the right to be a judge or not. In Romans 2:1 Paul says, listen to this, great commentary on this passage, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest for where in thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself for thou that judgest doest the same thing." She's committed adultery? Huh, you have done it in your mind and probably literally a hundred times. But we are sure, says Paul, that the judgment of God is according to truth against them who commit such things and thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them who do such things and doest the same that thou shall escape the judgment of God? Who are you sinners to be condemning this one? There's no place for that. There's no place for hypocritical judgment of others, he said to them.

You know, what Jesus said in Matthew 7 comes to my mind. Listen to this, this is really devastating...7:1, Matthew, listen, "Judge not that ye be not judged, for with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged." Now watch this. "And why beholdest thou the moat, that means speck, or splinter, that is thy brother's eye but considerest not the telephone pole that's in your own eye?" Or, "How wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull the moat out of your eye and behold a telephone pole's in your own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast the beam out of thine own eye...that's translation of the telephone pole...and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the moat out of thy brother's eye."

In other words, He says, you hypocrites, you go around and find a fault over here with this one and you're so full of sin you have no right to be this woman's judge or executioner. You see what Jesus has done? Whose moment is this? Doesn't belong to the Pharisees. And then I love what Jesus did again, just does something to me. Verse 8, "He just went back and doodled some more on the ground, He stooped down and wrote on the ground." He was done. He just calmly waited for the reaction. Oh the humanity of Jesus, the master of capturing the moment. And He left that silent gap when He just did nothing in order that the crowd might muse over what had happened.

And it really hit. Oh did it hit. Oh such wisdom...such wisdom. They come to condemn a woman and they are condemned. Look at the third thing, His conviction, quickly. Verse 9, "And they who heard it being convicted of by their own conscience," that's not embarrassment, folks, that's pure conviction, "went out one by one, beginning at the old ones," they had the most to remember, "even unto the last and Jesus was left alone and the woman standing in the midst."

You see, they made a mistake. They tried to stand in confrontation with the eternal God of the ages and they got smashed. And rather than that woman being condemned, they were condemned and the whole crowd stood in stunned silence. One sentence from the lips of holiness incarnate had silenced them. And Jesus said sinlessness is the only qualification for judgment. I don't know about you, but that puts me out of the stone throwing business for good. They were convicted...they were convicted. Their conviction was good, it's good thing to get convicted, but what they did was very bad...very bad. They were convicted by their own conscience and they...what?...they went out. Wasn't that too bad? What should they have done? They should have fallen at the feet of Jesus

Christ in conviction and said, "Christ, forgive me, cleanse me." They walked away from the only source that could heal their broken souls. They walked right back into their sin. You know, conviction does two things, it drives a man to Jesus Christ or it drives them away. People come to church sometimes and they'll just squirm and itch...I've got to get out of this place...and once they get out they don't want to come back again. Conviction either drives a man to Jesus Christ or it drives a man out.

So they were gone. Oh conviction. Listen, when Christ talks...they could have argued. They could have said, "Hey now wait a minute, we have a right to...oh yeah, we can fire these stones, we are the righteous ones," but you know something? They didn't argue with Jesus. You know why? When Jesus spoke...whew He had absolute control and they were cut to the heart. If some normal man had stood up and said, "Well let him that is without the first sin cast a stone," they would have said, "Oh phooey on you, that's no excuse, what does the law say? Come on, don't give us any of that stuff." No, no, when Jesus spoke He absolutely dominated and they were cut to the heart and they just kind of slid away one by one, the old ones first.

And that left just Jesus and the woman. "He said unto her, Woman..." that's good. He gave her back a little dignity didn't she?(meant to say He) He could have called her harlot, many things, "Woman," the same thing He called He called His mother twice. Once at Cana, once on the cross, "Woman, where are your accusers?" Kind of ironic, isn't it? A little irony in it. "Has no man condemned you?" Where did they go? "She looked at Him and said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." You know what that is, my friend? That is divine forgiveness. Jesus gave her something the law couldn't give her. You know, the law can show you sin, can the law forgive it? No. Jesus said you're forgiven. Listen, that's something only God can do, you know that? The law can't forgive you. No man could forgive you. You can't come to me and say, "Would you forgive me my sins?" I can't do that. You could talk to a little man in a box and he can't forgive your sins. Nobody can forgive your sins but God. He's the only one with prerogative for forgiveness. And how can He forgive? Because His justice is taken care of...where? On the cross and He can forgive and give mercy. So He says your sins are forgiven.

You say, "Well it doesn't say she believed. It doesn't say anything about her faith." You're right, it doesn't say anything about her faith. You know why? That, my friend, is sovereign forgiveness. You say, "Well did she believe?" Sure she believed. But this isn't the story of a woman's faith, this is a story of who? Jesus Christ in sovereign forgiveness. There are other stories in the Bible that talk about people's faith, this is Christ...sovereign forgiveness. Her faith is implied, obviously, but the focus is on Christ, He says you're forgiven.

You say, "Boy, I like this chapter. Wow we, you mean you could just go do whatever you want and you're forgiven? Terrific stuff." No, Jesus said, this is important He said this, if He had said, "Neither do I condemn thee, go," oh, oh, oh, but He said, "Go and...what?...sin no more." Romans 6, "Shall

we sin that grace may abound? God...what?...forbid." No, no, you don't trade on God's grace. Don't trade on God's grace. A true believer never takes advantage. You see, there you have a positional statement...I don't condemn you. Then you have a practical statement...go and...what?...sin no more. You see, there are both sides of your Christian experience. You're forgiven but that's no excuse to trade on God's grace by going out and sinning. No, no, love doesn't act like that, does it? Love does not abuse the object of its love. So the true believer doesn't take advantage.

So He forgives her by divine sovereign grace. Oh what a story of Christ it is. Do you see His humility there? Humiliation, His humanity. Do you see His wisdom? Devastating. Do you see His conviction? One by one they just kind of drifted away. Do you see His forgiveness? That's the same forgiveness that I've experienced. You know, I'm no better than that woman, neither are you. For one day I came to Jesus Christ and you know what He said to me? He said neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more on the basis of the shed blood of Christ, your sins have been taken care of. And by your faith you are forgiven. Now go and live like a forgiven man, don't sin.

You say, "But I might sin." That's right, God knows that. That's why 1 John 2:2 says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father...who?...Jesus Christ the righteous." He just keeps on cleansing us.

There He is, Jesus Christ. Do you know Him and have you experienced that forgiveness?

Father, we thank You this morning for teaching us again Your truths. Lord, just an exciting portion of Scripture and thank You, Father, that we have understood perhaps a little more about Jesus Christ because of it. Oh we see His humility, His humiliation, His wisdom profound and divine, His convicting power as men just disintegrate in front of Him, convicted by their conscience. And oh the beauty of sovereign forgiveness that can look at us vile and wretched in sin and just wash it away by the death of Christ taking our place. O God, such a glorious truth. Thank You for forgiveness.

Lord, we pray this morning that if there are some here who have never experienced the forgiveness that comes from receiving Christ that they might experience it today. We pray it in Christ's name. Amen.

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