

Let Jesus Change Your Life

The story of the woman caught in adultery, found in **John 8:1-11**, is a tough nut to crack in my opinion. I have really struggled with what is happening here. The fact is the Pharisees were right. Moses commanded that this woman was to be stoned for her sin (cf. **Leviticus 20:10**). Of course, I recognize the duplicity of the Pharisees. If she was caught in the very act, then where is the man? He is also to be stoned. The Pharisees were clearly not really all that concerned with the judgment of Moses' Law and Jesus deftly exposed that. Further, I am also in awe of the way Jesus turns the whole situation back on the Pharisees by asking the one without sin to throw the first stone. That is just phenomenal.

My problem is that there actually was someone in that crowd who was without sin. There was one who based on that standard had the right to throw the first stone. Yet, in **John 8:11**, that person said, "Neither do I condemn you." I am amazed. Did the Pharisees' sins absolve hers? Surely not. Or did Jesus not condemn because the Pharisees lied? Had she not really committed adultery? Was she actually innocent? If so, why the admonition to "sin no more"? Why didn't Jesus cast the stone?

This causes me all kinds of problems in this specific case. But then I wonder why I don't ever ask the question why Jesus didn't just go about stoning people since He already knew the sinfulness of every person He met. Why didn't God just destroy all the world and everyone in it because everyone had sinned and fallen short of His glory (**Romans 3:23**)?

Romans 3:24-26 says God passed over former sins in His forbearance in order to show His righteousness by not only being just, but being a justifier of those who had faith in Jesus. It seems this woman is a specific example of that. Jesus had not come to judge the world but to save it (**John 12:47**). If Jesus were to take up the stone against this woman, He would need to take up the stone against all of mankind. That was not why He was here. He was here to save us. So, He told this woman, "Neither do I condemn you."

And yet, then I struggle even further. Is this permission to commit adultery? Didn't Jesus just gloss over her sins and enable her to keep on committing adultery? If He, the only sinless one in the crowd, wasn't going to condemn her for her sins, couldn't she just keep on sinning?

Who knows how the woman responded to Jesus' mercy. All we know is how Jesus wanted her to respond. Jesus did not say, "Neither do I condemn you; your sins don't matter." Rather, He said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more" (**John 8:11**). Jesus fully expected that the grace He had just extended to this woman would change her life. She had been an adulteress. She had come face to face with the death her sin should cause and she was granted grace by the only one who had a true right to cast the stones. She was not to see that as permission to fornicate, but as freedom to quit fornicating.

That is exactly where each of us stands. We are continually in the presence of the One who has the right to stone us and destroy us for our sins. And yet, He has continued to mercifully let us live. He even sent His Son to die so that we might be forgiven of and set free from our sins. And, according to **Romans 8:1**, there is no condemnation in Jesus. How should we respond to that grace? Some may respond by sinning even more, hoping to receive more forgiveness. But that is not the response Jesus asks of us. Jesus removes condemnation and provides justification in order to help us overcome sin, not in order to let us languish in it. He loves us so that we will be prompted to love Him, not so we will ignore Him (**I John 4:19**). Jesus forgives us so that our lives might be changed.

Are you letting Jesus change your life? Or are you hoping you can receive the forgiveness without pursuing the change? What would have happened to this woman had she continued in adultery? Eventually she would have been judged. Eventually, she would have stood face-to-face with God and would stand there dead in her sins (**Romans 6:23**). The forgiveness of Jesus gave her the opportunity for life. She was not doomed to adultery and death. She could have freedom, if she would let Jesus' forgiveness change her life. The same is true for us. The forgiveness of Jesus is our opportunity for life apart from sin. We are not doomed to a life of sin and death. We can be set free if we let Jesus change our lives.

This week, Brian Anderson is leading us in a series of studies. Each of these studies asks us to look at what Jesus has done for us and let it change us in some way. Please, make the most of this opportunity. Let Jesus change your life.

--Edwin L. Crozier