

Reconciliation Engages Sinners

John 8:1-11
February 15, 2026
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If you were to know my worst sin, would you still love me? Be careful how you answer that question. You may not know my worst sin. You may not like what you hear. You may judge me, condemn me, and sentence me to hell.

In God's eyes every sin is our worst sin. God put misusing His name in the same category as adultery and murder. So, when I say my worst sin I might be thinking of my most embarrassing sin. Or it might be the sin that would do the most damage to my reputation.

Do you want that sin in your life revealed for the world to hear and see? I think the answer is no. But in our conversations with sinners we either excuse their sin or condemn them for their sin. We fail to help them see God's grace for their lives and their need to reject their sin.

Last week we saw how Jesus provided a second chance to the woman at the well. The week before we saw how God has given us a new life in Jesus so we can be reconciling sinners to God. Each of those lessons provided us with the practical application of inviting people to come back to God and revealing to sinners that Jesus is their Savior. So, today instead of condemnation we want to see how to share God's grace.

Every sinner needs to know that God is not accusing them. The Jewish religious teachers who were corrupted by their own teachings were accusing her. The passage explains that there was an ulterior motive in this scene. These two groups of men wanted to trap Jesus.

The Jewish religious teachers were in the most theoretical sense the men who study the Law given to Moses. They interpreted the Law in how it was to be carried out. Over the generations they wrote hundreds of other rules for how to interpret the Law. In this case the law said the man and woman were to be put to death. But in the days of Jesus the Romans alone could put someone to death. They had changed the Law about adultery. They only brought the woman. This means they were breaking the Law given to Moses.

This was not any issue for a rabbi like Jesus but for the moral courts. This matter was to include the husband of the woman. He had a decision to make about their relationship. The Pharisees, the leaders who feared losing political power, were accusing her. Jesus was becoming more and more popular. His ideas about the coming of God's Kingdom along with forgiveness were drawing people to Him. Then there were all the miracles Jesus had performed, the people were flocking to Him. He must be proved a fraud, discredited in anyway possible. Time and time again they asked Him questions to trap Him. This time they felt they had the perfect plan.

So, we have seen two of the three accusers. Throughout history there is always someone ready to make an accusation about sin. That's mostly because we are guilty of sin. But it's also the result of every person being ready to blame someone else.

The devil accuses, but the Holy Spirit convicts and calls sinners out of their sin. The third accuser in this scene is the devil. He accuses us of every sin we've ever made. He brings death penalty charges against every person. He's guilty of sin, he brought sin into the world. He tempts everyone. With the devil's temptations is the belief that we can't be forgiven. He waves our sins in front of us telling us we deserve to be punished in the harshest possible ways. Since he's telling us we can't be forgiven, we might as well just keep on sinning. He wants every person to believe that God doesn't love us, God wants to condemn us, God will send us to hell.

Since the devil is going to spend eternity in hell, he's trying to get as many people as possible to join him. The devil would love nothing more than to have everyone crushed with the stones of guilt. The devil wants us to believe there is no redemption, no deliverance, no salvation.

The Holy Spirit of God shows us our sin, makes it clear to us that we have sinned, and that we need to be redeemed from its power, delivered from its condemnation, and saved from its punishment. Through the Holy Spirit we are convinced that we are Sinners and that there is a Savior.

There are plenty of accusers, but there only needs to be one Savior. This Savior puts all the accusers in their place. This Savior takes away all of our sins. This Savior asks us to turn away from our sins. His name is Jesus.

John 8:3-4 (NLT) As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. "Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery.

Too often condemnation is proclaimed when repentance and reconciliation is needed. The motive here was to trap Jesus by publicly embarrassing the woman. The teachers and the Pharisees have no compassion for this woman, or the man who was also caught in adultery. They only want to punish Jesus by trapping Him in a way they are willing to ruin this woman's life.

Had Jesus not been a thorn in their flesh the religious people would have ignored this woman. They would have only made this public had the woman's husband been upset. Who knows how they discovered her adultery, but she became a pawn in their plans to attack Jesus. Although, the Law required her to be put to death, the man was also guilty of the same offense. Both of them according to the Law given to Moses should be present for a trial before the appropriate religious leaders.

But, because only the Romans were allowed to execute people, the Law was changed. This pattern of punishment was not effective in turning the hearts of adulterers from their sin. Others may have lived in fear of being caught, so they only became more cautious about their intimate affairs. The religious leaders only cemented their position as cruel and fanatical.

The sin of adultery is just as damning as misusing the Lord's name, worshiping idols, stealing, or murder. The Law given to Moses by God intended to keep the people of God aware of their sin and to call out to God. But, the Law failed to save because no one can keep it. For no person can keep the Law without faith in God. Even though the religious leaders were seeking to punish this woman, it wasn't to keep the Law, but to turn the people against Jesus. This was not an attempt to have the woman repent and be reconciled to God. She was merely being used as a tool to strike at Jesus.

Some folks are very good at condemning others, but we may have learned to excuse sin. This isn't a lecture on the religious leaders of Jesus' day. It is an opportunity to look seriously at how Jesus once again handled a person who was guilty of sin.

As I see our culture today, there are people who attack others and there are people who make excuses for sin. We, redeemed sinners need to see who we are in comparison to who Jesus is. Jesus is offering a different way, the way that is led by the Spirit of God.

Jesus is not indifferent in this situation. His kneeling down and writing in the dust doesn't mean that He isn't concerned about people breaking the Law. There has been lots of speculation about what Jesus was doing. For me it seems obvious. He is setting the stage to do two things. One expose hypocrisy and two to offer God's grace.

I would like offering God's grace to be the big take away from this passage. We can seek to make disciples by publicly embarrassing people with their sin. That would be the way of the religious leaders. We can seek to make disciples by helping people experience God's grace once they see their sin. That would be the way of Jesus. He knew she was an adulteress, she knew it was a sin. She had sinned against God, the man, the man's wife, and her husband, but also against herself.

All of our sin is against God and against us. Our sin damages us, is unhealthy for us, and is destructive to us. Jesus offered grace. Her salvation was dependent upon whether she accepted His grace or not.

John 8:7 (NLT) They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!"

We don't need our sins revealed publicly we need help coming to Jesus. Your sin is between you and Jesus, but someone helped you see it and showed Jesus to you. Through brute force this woman's sin was revealed for all to know. Knowing our God, this is the only way for her to see her sin. Most people don't like the brute force way to see their sin. I need to put this another way, most people don't need their sin revealed in such public ways.

The vast majority of Christians that I know were not publicly humiliated and then they came to Jesus. What most of us needed was someone to show us our sin. Often times it has been through less public ways. People come to Jesus in conversations that come in the midst of a crisis. The crisis doesn't have to be public. The crisis can come in the form of bad financial, medical, or relationship news. People come to Jesus in conversations about their life. They see the problem which feels like a crisis to them. The sin isn't public even though the Holy Spirit has opened their eyes to see it.

People come to Jesus as they become aware of their sin. They may see the kindness and faithfulness of believers. They may hear the story of how a believer was changed and they want that for their lives. Ultimately the sin and the confession are between the sinner and Jesus.

No matter what people see, Jesus sees into our very souls. He knows what is in our spirit, what is in our heart. Even if what we confess is public, Jesus is aware of the condition of our soul. He knows the truth of our spirit. He can see our heart. Therefore we talk about our own sins and the grace of Jesus.

In this scene Jesus is the only one who can throw the first stone. He is the only one who is without sin. Every person in that crowd from the woman, the bystanders and the religious people was a sinner. Not every one was an adulteress. Some of them were thieves. Others were liars. Some pretended to worship God, but worshiped idols. Then there were the ones who hated their parents.

Somewhere in that group of people was a person who thought only of themselves. All were sinners. All were condemned by their own sin. They all were worthy of God's wrath, death, and eternity in hell.

We who have been delivered to eternity in heaven, who have been redeemed from the power of sin, who have been forgiven of our sins have a story to tell. Every sin that Jesus has forgiven is your opportunity to talk about God's grace. Each time you have seen a sinful part of your nature, surrendered it to Jesus, then you can talk about God's grace. Any one of your sins is just like someone else's sin. My sin is my sin and your sin is your sin, but it's all sin. We all have sin in common. Jesus looks at me and every sinner asking if we want be forgiven.

John 8:10-11 (NLT) Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" "No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."

When sin is revealed always talk about the grace of Jesus. Grace is greater than sin. When will we get that through our thick hearts, spirits, and souls? When will we as people of every color, nation, language, and culture acknowledge that being forgiven is greater than being guilty? Regardless of the sin, God's grace is greater. God's mercy is more powerful. God's love is more satisfying.

We deserve God's wrath: we have committed sin from jealousy and envy, to stealing and selfishness, to murder and adultery. We are all guilty. God doesn't give us what we deserve: He gives us His mercy. He chooses not to condemn us for our sins. God gives us what we don't deserve: His grace. He forgives those who put their faith and trust in Him.

God loves us even though we are unlovable. God entered this world, lived every day facing every temptation without sinning, became our sin, died and defeated the punishment for our sin by coming back to life. This is Jesus. God in person, walking this earth, suffering, being rejected, taking on all of it, entering the grave without life, but walking out again as the giver of life. Jesus did this to set us free from sin. He did this to set me free from sin. He did this to set you free from sin.

We can talk with sinners about our bondage to sin, it's power over us and how Jesus is transforming our lives. We don't brag about, we rejoice in it. We don't lift up ourselves, but we lift up what Jesus did to us and for us. Confession and repentance open the floodgates of grace to enter your life.

Jesus said to the woman to leave and stop sinning. We don't know what happened to her. We're not sure what choice she made. Did she let public humiliation drive her to turn away from her sin? Did Jesus' offer of grace call her to a new life? Did she take the second chance given to her?

I do know this, when we see our sin, admitting it, and turning from it, Jesus gives us a new life. Every person who chooses Jesus as their Savior and Lord is made new. The old life is removed and a new life is given. It is like throwing out the rags and putting on the new clothes. In this new life there is not only hope and peace, there is power. It is the power that raised Jesus from the dead. It is the power that transforms sinners into Children of God. It is the power to overcome temptation and sin.

To receive this power is to invite Jesus into your life. To live with hope and peace is to turn your life over to Jesus. To experience mercy, grace, and love everyday for all of eternity is to choose Jesus. He is calling to you to follow Him. He is asking you to trust Him. He is providing you with the opportunity to no longer be condemned for your sins. Do you want this life? Ask Jesus to enter your life, to come into your heart, to live in your spirit, to dwell in your soul.