

Bear Witness John 8:1-11 FBC Canton Sunday am May 24, 2026

Introduction: People need to hear how God has solved a problem in your life=Bear witness! Acts 1:8



If you say...I never really had any big problems, I never was a problem

You are unfortunate

For your sin cost God his life.

You did not do God a favor by getting saved...he did you one...GRACE

You are deluded and you are self-righteous.

People will not be impressed with your self-righteousness.

I have always been a believer in God.

I have always been a good person.

I have always been a part of a church.

That means you will have to tell your story, all of it=bear witness.

Many will never do so, so they will never be much of witness.

Instead of bearing witness, which is very vulnerable, and focuses on Jesus greatness, not our greatness.

We become lawyers...no wonder many never see anyone get saved as a result of their gospel presentation.

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

ACTS 1:8

PONDER THIS When God says, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Exodus 20:16), by implication God is saying you shall bear faithful witness. Jesus Christ is called "the faithful witness," (See Revelation 1:5.) and we're to be witnesses to Him. My home and your home ought to be witnesses to the saving power of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

When the Bible says the Early Church took the Gospel from house to house (Acts 5:42), that does not mean someone went door to door. It means the Gospel goes from the Jones' house to the Smith's house, and from the Smith's house to the Brown's house, and so forth. In other words, one family becomes a witness to another family. Our families are to bear witness of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Has Jesus Christ saved you? Has He changed your home? Is He real to you? A witness tells what he or she has seen and heard. Jesus did not call you to be His lawyer. A lawyer argues a case. A witness simply shares what he's seen and heard. Just tell people what Jesus Christ has done for you and how you know He has done it. Don't give witness about things you don't know; witness about things you do know. If you fail, that's even a part of your witness. Tell how you failed and how God forgave you and gave you another chance. Your neighbor is waiting to hear the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- Who has been a faithful witness of Christ to you?
- How do you interact with your neighbors? Does your life give evidence that you are a witness for Christ? Explain.

PRACTICE THIS Serve a neighbor today by witnessing about what Christ has done in your life.

We are going to read all of the story of one woman today...all of it.

And we are going to ask what would she share if she were here today
How would she bear witness about who Jesus was to her? II John?

I want to call you today to be obedient and bear witness to what Jesus did in your life!

I. There are 3 groups of people involved with the story. V. 1-11 Which one are you?

a. Jesus and those who wanted to be taught.

i. Jesus is the only one who has the right to condemn, and he doesn't!

ii. Learn from what Jesus has written=the Bible.

If you are in this group you were not there by accident and you should have learned much about Jesus. You must tell what you learned.

b. The scribes and pharisees who set the trap.

i. When you try to trap Jesus, he always traps you instead.

ii. What convicted them?

1. Ignored the man.

a. He is not there.

i. Therefore they were selectively using the law to their own benefit.

2. Lusted after the woman.

3. Hated Jesus.

4. Hated the woman and therefore used her.

5. Skeptical reasoning.

a. Find fault and stone her=illegal.

b. Not stone her=unlawful.

6. Maturity convicted them.

“They knew the thrill of exercising power to condemn; Jesus knew the thrill of exercising the power to forgive.” (Barclay)

If you are in this group you are full of self-righteousness and are about to be humiliated, and be convicted...some of that group might be converted and saved...some not.

c. The woman who was caught in adultery, and was freed from her sin.

She is Jewish woman or she would never have been allowed to go into the temple.

i. Her shame must have been immense.

- ii. She didn't defend herself.
- iii. There is no condemnation, just recommendation. Romans 8:1
 - 1. Go and sin no more; no more stronghold. II Corinthians 10
 - a. There is sin.
 - i. Nature always leads to practice.
 - b. Jesus is the only remedy

**IF YOU EVER FEEL LIKE
YOU'VE BLOWN GOD'S PLAN
FOR YOUR LIFE, REST IN
THIS....**

**YOU, MY BEAUTIFUL FRIEND,
ARE NOT THAT POWERFUL**

- c.
 - iv. The issue at hand is not what she was, nor what she did...but what Jesus did in spite of who she was and what she did.
 - v. You may not have been caught in the same act, but you have been caught.
 - 1. In other acts, or in the same thoughts. Matthew 5
 - vi. You can never bear witness to what Jesus means to you without telling them what Jesus caught you doing.

If you are in this group you have a story to tell...to bear witness to the God who saved you.

Conclusion: Which group are you? Pick one the one who bears witness.
and by the way there are no other groups, and you could be in more than one group.

David Guzik

Study Guide for John 8

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

A. A woman caught in adultery is brought to Jesus for judgment.

1. ([John 7:53-8:2](#)) Jesus teaches at the temple.

And everyone went to his own house. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.

a. **Everyone went to his own house:** The sense in the text as we have it is that Jesus confounded His opponents as He preached at the temple and then they went their own ways. Jesus went **to the Mount of Olives** to sleep.

i. As a matter of the original text, this is a section ([John 7:53-8:11](#)) of some debate and controversy. From manuscript current evidence, it seems unlikely that this portion was part of the original text of John's gospel, or at least in this place.

- Most of the earliest ancient Greek manuscripts omit this section.
- Many later manuscripts mark this section with asterisks.
- One group of manuscripts inserts this section after [Luke 21:38](#).
- A few manuscripts have this section after [John 21:24](#), and one has it after [John 7:36](#).
- "All this evidence suggests that scribes were often ignorant of its exact position, though anxious to retain it as part of the four Gospels." (Tasker) They knew it belonged, but they didn't exactly know where.

ii. Some ancient Christians (such as Augustine and Ambrose) omitted this story, not so much because of the textual evidence but because they thought it made Jesus appear to approve of sexual immorality, or at least not regard it as serious.

iii. At the same time, the character of the story makes it seem obvious that it is genuine, and many scholars note that it is historical and factual. Early Christian writers mention this account as soon as the early second century (A.D. 100). We have good reason to believe that this actually happened, and that John really wrote this. There is some debate as to where it belongs in the Gospel accounts, but there is good reason to believe it belongs.

iv. "If not John's it was a very early interpolation: it may possibly have had the sanction of Simeon or Jude (early 2nd century), the second and third bishops of Jerusalem, 'brethren' of

our Lord, the last survivors of the Apostolic age. These two seem to have been connected with the editing of this gospel, for they are probably the 'we' of [John 21:24](#) and the two unnamed disciples of [John 21:2](#)." (Trench)

v. "If we cannot feel that this is part of John's Gospel we can feel that the story is true to the character of Jesus." (Morris)

b. **He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them**: If we take the chronology of the Gospel of John in its current composition, Jesus remained in Jerusalem for a few days after the Feast of Tabernacles ([John 7:37](#)). Though the religious authorities wanted to silence and arrest Him, He still boldly taught large crowds in the most public place in Jerusalem — **the temple**.

2. ([John 8:3-5](#)) The woman is brought to Jesus, caught in the act of adultery.

Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"

a. **Brought to Him a woman caught in adultery**: They did this as Jesus publically taught in the temple courts. They wanted to make this as public as possible, to embarrass both the woman and Jesus.

i. "All the indications are that her accusers had some special vindictiveness against her. This is shown also in the fact that they brought the woman along publicly... There was no need for this. She might have been kept in custody while the case was referred to Jesus." (Morris)

ii. The verb **caught** is in the perfect tense. "The perfect indicates a meaning like 'taken with her shame upon her'. It points to her continuing character as an adulteress." (Morris)

b. **This woman was caught in adultery, in the very act**: The religious leaders brought this woman to Jesus in shame-filled, humiliating circumstances. She was held against her will, a prisoner under the custody of the religious police who caught her involved with a man not her husband, **in the very act** of adultery.

i. To mention the obvious, there was also a man involved in this **very act** of **adultery** — yet the guilty man was **not** brought before Jesus for judgment. It also meant that there were pre-arranged spies sent to witness this affair, and they carefully noted the sordid details.

ii. Morris points out that legally speaking, the standard of evidence was very high for this crime. There had to be two witnesses and they had to agree perfectly. They had to see the sexual act take place; it wasn't enough to see the pair leaving the same room together or even lying on the same bed together. "The actual physical movements of the couple must

have been capable of no other explanation.... conditions were so stringent that they could have been met only on rare occasions.” (Morris)

iii. “Under these conditions the obtaining of evidence in adultery would be almost impossible were the situation not a setup.” (Boice)

c. **Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned**: It is true that adultery was a capital offense under Jewish law, but the rules for evidence in capital cases were extremely strict. The actual act had to be observed by multiple witnesses who agreed exactly in their testimony. As a practical matter, virtually no one was executed for adultery, since this was a relatively private sin.

i. “It appears that by the first century AD the full rigour of the law was no longer applied as a general rule, in urban communities at any rate.” (Bruce)

ii. “From the reference to the law in [verse 5](#) it might seem that she was liable to this particular punishment because she had sinned during the period of betrothal, fornication during that time being regarded as adultery.” (Tasker)

d. **But what do You say?** They set a trap for Jesus. If Jesus said, “Let her go,” then He would seem to break the Law of Moses. If He said, “Execute her for the crime of adultery,” then Jesus would seem harsh and perhaps cruel. Also, He would break Roman law, because the Romans had taken the right of official execution for religious offenses away from the Jews.

i. This was a similar dilemma as posed by the question to Jesus about paying taxes to Caesar ([Matthew 22:15-22](#)).

3. ([John 8:6](#)) **Jesus ignores the accusers, as if He never heard them.**

This they said, testing Him, that they might have [something](#) of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with [His](#) finger, as though He did not hear.

a. **This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him**: The religious leaders — wretched men as they were — used this woman as a weapon against Jesus. They presented her as a sinner before Jesus, but ignored their own sin in the matter.

i. They cared nothing for true righteousness, for it was evident that they carefully arranged both the adulterous act and her arrest. They claimed that **this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act** — yet they did not bring the guilty [man](#) before Jesus. It’s possible that the man was one of them, and they simply used the woman as a weapon or pawn in their conflict against Jesus.

ii. “Adultery is not the kind of offence that can be committed by one person in solitude; if she was caught red-handed, how was her guilty partner allowed to escape?” (Bruce)

iii. "They were not looking on this woman as a person at all; they were looking on her only as a thing, an instrument whereby they could formulate a charge against Jesus." (Barclay)

b. **Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger**: This was a careful and deliberate response from Jesus. Instead of making an immediate verbal response He **stooped down**. Then He **wrote on the ground with His finger**, presumably in the dirt on the ground.

i. **Stooped down** indicates humility. Jesus didn't react with anger or immediate outrage. He didn't scream at the woman or those who brought the woman. Jesus paused and **stooped down**.

ii. **Stooped down** is a low posture, identifying with the humiliation of the woman. Jesus did what He could to identify with, care for, and ease the embarrassment of this woman. One may say this story illustrates the great problem: how can God show love and grace to the sinner without being unjust, without breaking His own law? He does it by first identifying with the sinner in their low condition.

iii. **Wrote on the ground** means that Jesus could write, and that He wrote in the presence of the woman and these men. *What Jesus wrote* has been an endless source of speculation for teachers, preachers, and commentators.

- Some think that Jesus simply doodled in the dirt. The verb translated **wrote** could also mean, "to draw." (Morris)
- Some think Jesus simply stalled for time.
- Some think that Jesus wrote the passage in the law that condemned the adulterous woman.
- Some think Jesus wrote out a passage like **Exodus 23:1**: *Do not put your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness*.
- Some think that Jesus wrote the names of the accusers.
- Some think that Jesus wrote the sins of the accusers.
- Some think that Jesus followed Roman judicial practice and wrote out His sentence before He said it.

iv. "The normal Greek word for *to write* is *graphein*; but here the word used is *katagraphein*, which can mean *to write down a record against someone*." (Barclay)

c. **As though He did not hear**: As Jesus stooped down and wrote, He acted as if He did not even hear the accusation against the woman. Perhaps Jesus ignored them because He despised their wicked work. Perhaps Jesus ignored them because He was embarrassed for the woman's sake.

i. Paul made reference to *the meekness and gentleness of Christ* ([2 Corinthians 10:1](#)) — this is what we see on display here.

4. ([John 8:7-8](#)) Jesus passes sentence upon the accusers.

So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

- a. **So when they continued asking Him**: Jesus stooped down, wrote on the ground, and acted as if He did not hear the accusers of the woman taken in adultery. The men who brought the woman didn't stop asking Jesus what should be done with her — **they continued asking Him**.
- b. **He raised Himself up and said to them**: Jesus said this directly to the accusers of the woman, standing up to make eye contact with them.
- c. **He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first**: In Jewish law, witnesses to the capital crime began the stoning. Jesus really said, “We may execute her, but we must do it correctly. One of the witnesses must begin her execution. So who among you is the one who witnessed this crime, and only brought to Me the woman, not the man? Who designed the humiliation of this poor woman?”

- i. Instead of passing a sentence upon the woman, Jesus passed a sentence upon His accusers. He didn't say, “Don't execute her.” He simply demanded that justice be fairly and righteously applied.
- ii. **Without sin among you**: It wasn't that these men had sinned once or twice before, and so had no right to be concerned about the woman's sin. It's that they orchestrated and plotted her sin, her shame, using her as a weapon against Jesus. *In this direct incident* they had a greater sin and a greater guilt.
- iii. In this Jesus exposed a common sin: a desire to punish the sins of others, while ignoring our own sin. King David was an example of this when Nathan the Prophet told him the story of a man who stole and killed the pet lamb of another man ([2 Samuel 12:1-10](#)).
- iv. *If we must look at the sins of others, we must be aware that we have also sinned*. There is still a place for exposing and rebuking and directly dealing with the sins of others in God's family, but it must always be done with a heart that recognizes itself as a forgiven sinner. When done right, confronting sin is done more often with tears and a broken heart than with anger and condemnation.

- d. **Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground**: Jesus seemed to do everything He could to calm the excitement and tension at the scene, probably out of concern for the woman's dignity and safety. Again, Jesus **wrote on the ground**.

- i. He didn't stare down the accusing men in an act of intimidation. Jesus did everything in this situation to make things less tense, not more tense. He did not try to change them through intimidation.
- ii. Jesus continued to care about the shame of the woman and did what He could to ease it. Shame may serve a helpful purpose, but God never intended it to be a permanent condition.

5. (John 8:9) The accusers respond by leaving.

Then those who heard *it*, being convicted by *their* conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

a. **Being convicted by their conscience:** They were **convicted** by what they **heard** from Jesus. Seemingly it wasn't what Jesus wrote (though that may have had something to do with it). More so, it was what Jesus **said** that **convicted** their **conscience**.

i. It spoke well of these men that their conscience was not dead or burned over. They still could be **convicted by their conscience**. They were now more aware of their own sin than the sin of the woman.

b. **Went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last:** We understand why they left; they were **convicted by their conscience**. It's not immediately clear why they left in order; **the oldest even to the last**. Perhaps the oldest left first because they most easily understood that Jesus was talking about them.

i. "The continuous tense in this last verb gives the thought of something like a procession. They kept on going out." (Morris)

ii. Some speculate that Jesus wrote on the ground an account of their own sins, beginning from the oldest to the youngest — explaining the order of their departure.

c. **The woman standing in the midst:** This is the only reference in the account to the physical posture of the woman. It is possible that the religious leaders who brought her to Jesus forced her to stand through the ordeal. Yet human nature and the repeated stooping posture of Jesus suggests that the woman, for all or some of this ordeal, was in a low posture on the ground.

i. The ancient Greek word translated **standing** (*hestimi*) often means "to stand," but is sometimes understood in a figurative sense — such as to set or to place, as in **Matthew 4:5** and **18:2**. The phrase **standing in the midst** doesn't demand that the woman was actually standing upon her feet.

ii. Trench says of a later use of *hestimi* in **John 18:18** and **18:25**: "Luke is quite definite that they and Peter were **sitting**; so too Matthew as to Peter. John seems to speak of them and Peter as **standing**; but these words used by John are so frequently idiomatic to mean merely

'to be stationary,' 'to continue,' 'to be there,' 'to be,' exactly like the Italian **stare**, that the **standing** cannot be pressed -- no more here than **e.g.** in the other nineteen places where they occur in John's gospel." (Trench)

6. (**John 8:10-11**) Jesus challenges the woman to sin no more.

When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

a. **When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman**: The accusers left as Jesus was bowed down to the ground, writing in the dirt.

b. **Where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?** With her accusers gone, there was no one left to **condemn** the woman, and Jesus Himself did not **condemn** her.

c. **She said, "No one, Lord"**: The woman — guilty of sin, and a great sin — knew the goodness of having no condemnation. She passed from sin and a death sentence to forgiveness and life.

d. **Neither do I condemn you**: In a sense, *Jesus took her guilt upon Himself*, especially as He so demonstrably stooped down. He alone was *without sin among* them. Knowing all things, He had the right to cast the first stone — but He did not. The woman found refuge in connection to Jesus.

i. "They knew the thrill of exercising power to condemn; Jesus knew the thrill of exercising the power to forgive." (Barclay)

ii. In a sense, Jesus here modeled the great truth of **Romans 8:1**: That there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

e. **Go and sin no more**: Jesus sent her away with a call to stop her sin, and to **continue** stopped in regard to that sin. He sent her away without ever approving of or accepting her sin.

i. "The form of the command implies a ceasing to commit an action already started: 'Stop your sinful habit'. And the 'no more' points to the thought of no return." (Morris)

ii. Jesus did several things with these powerful words.

- He recognized that what the woman had done was **sin**, because He told her to **stop** sinning.
- He told her to repent, and to not continue her sin.
- He gave her hope that her life could go on in freedom from sexual sin.

- He gave her a word of hope to speak against the shame that would later likely threaten to overwhelm her life.

iii. The woman needed hope because the consequences of her sin would be severe enough. After this she would likely be shunned by her community, and rejected by her husband, perhaps even divorced (assuming she was married or betrothed).

Chapter 8

Now Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again to the temple ([Jhn 8:1-2](#)),

Now the feast is over, but Jesus is returning to the temple on the next day.

and all of the people came on to him; and he sat down, and taught them ([Jhn 8:2](#)).

I told you this morning that the rabbi always sat when he talked.

And the scribes and the Pharisees brought unto him a women taken in adultery; and when they sat her in the midst, they said unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act ([Jhn 8:3-4](#)).

We caught her in the very act.

Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what do you say? And this they said, tempting him, that they might have an occasion to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he did not even hear them. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and he said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they were surded, 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 women standing there in the midst ([Jhn 8:5-9](#)).

Now, I have a couple of...well, I have one problem with this, and then a comment. The problem: where was the man? Because they caught them in the very act. And according to the law of Moses they were both to be stoned. Why did they only bring the woman if they were caught in the act? So there was an injustice at the very onset, in their own judgments. They should have brought the man too. The question: what was Jesus writing there in the sand? Now, of course, the scripture doesn't tell us, so we can guess. My guess is that starting with the oldest of those Pharisees in the crowd, who were really pushing Him and challenging, "Our law says stone her, what do you say?" you know. And here was ole Levi, the old man, pressing the point, and so Jesus probably wrote in the sand the name Levi. And then, "Last Tuesday at two in the afternoon, why were you," and started writing out what Levi was doing the other day at two in the afternoon. And Levi said, "Hmm, I think my wife wanted me

to pick up a loaf a bread. I better get home, you know." And he split. It says they were one by one convicted. So Levi's gone, so he writes "Simon". And He begins to write one of Simon's sins of the previous day or so. Simon gets all embarrassed and flustered and he takes off.

And so down the line from the oldest to the youngest, Jesus begins to write their names and write the things they have been doing. Because they were, all of them, convicted one by one in their own conscious. And they went out one by one, beginning from the eldest even to the youngest, until there was no one left but the woman. And when Jesus had stood up again, He just put His head down and just started writing. Finally,

When he stood up again, he saw no one but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, what happen to your accusers? hasn't any man condemned you? And she said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn you: go, and sin no more ([Jhn 8:10-11](#)).

That's an important thing. "Go," but don't forget the last, "and sin no more." It's not just a license. Jesus said, "God did not send Me into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through me might be saved. And he that believeth is not condemned" ([John 3:17-18](#)). So here's a woman caught in the act of a capital sin according to the Mosaic Law, but Jesus is saying to her, "I don't condemn you." Because He didn't come to condemn, He came to save. And there He demonstrated His glorious ministry: seeking and saving that which was lost. She didn't need to be condemned, she needed to be saved. We don't need to be condemned, we need to be saved.

Now as we move on in [Romans 8](#) on Thursday nights, we're soon gonna be getting to that interesting rhetorical question, "Who is he that condemmeth?" It is true that Christians live under much condemnation. But who is he that condemns? If you as a child of God are living under condemnation, is it because Jesus is condemning you? God help us to be freed from this stereotype picture of God that we have of just waiting for us to do something wrong so He can rub us out. We so often sort of transpose the image of Santa Claus over to God, as though God is a Santa Claus and, you know, all of our prayers are just to get the good gifts from Him. Tell me what you want today. What do you want for Christmas little boy? And so prayers just to get all the things from God that we want. But in carrying that image over, we also see Him making out a list and checking it twice, gonna find out who's naughty and nice. And because we know that we've been naughty and we feel guilty over our sins, we feel that God is condemning. Who is he that condemns? Paul does not declare who condemns. He only declares negatively who isn't condemning. He said, "It is Christ who has died, yea rather is risen again, and is even at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for us" ([Romans 8:34](#)). He's not condemning us. He's interceding for us. And Jesus did not condemn the sinner. To this woman He said, "Neither do I condemn you. Just go and sin no more." Chuck smith

Matthew Henry Commentary on John 8

Chapter 8

In this chapter we have,

- I. Christ's evading the snare which the Jews laid for him, in bringing to him a woman taken in adultery ([v. 1-11](#)).
- II. Divers discourses or conferences of his with the Jews that cavilled at him, and sought occasion against him, and made every thing he said a matter of controversy.
 - 1. Concerning his being the light of the world ([v. 12-20](#)).
 - 2. Concerning the ruin of the unbelieving Jews ([v. 21-30](#)).
 - 3. Concerning liberty and bondage ([v. 31-37](#)).
 - 4. Concerning his Father and their father ([v. 38-47](#)).
 - 5. Here is his discourse in answer to their blasphemous reproaches ([v. 48-50](#)).
 - 6. Concerning the immortality of believers ([v. 51-59](#)). And in all this he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself.

[Jhn 8:1-11](#)

Though Christ was basely abused in the foregoing chapter, both by the rulers and by the people, yet here we have him still at Jerusalem, still in the temple. *How often would he have gathered them!* Observe,

- I. His retirement in the evening out of the town ([v. 1](#)): *He went unto the mount of olives;* whether to some friend's house, or to some booth pitched there, now at the feast of tabernacles, is not certain; whether he rested there, or, as some think, continued all night in prayer to God, we are not told. But he went out of Jerusalem, perhaps because he had no friend there that had either kindness or courage enough to give him a night's lodging; while his persecutors had *houses* of their own to go to ([ch. 7:53](#)), he could not so much as borrow a place to lay his head on, but what he must go a mile or two out of town for. He retired (as some think) because he would not expose himself to the peril of a popular tumult in the night. It is prudent to go out of the way of danger whenever we can do it without going out of the way of duty. In the day-time, when he had work to do in the temple, he willingly exposed himself, and was under special protection, [Isa. 49:2](#). But in the night, when he had not work to do, he withdrew into the country, and sheltered himself there.
- II. His return in the morning to the temple, and to his work there, [v. 2](#). Observe,
 - 1. What a diligent preacher Christ was: *Early in the morning he came again, and taught.* Though he had been teaching the day before, he taught again to-day. Christ was a constant preacher, in season and out of season. Three things were taken notice of here concerning Christ's preaching.

- (1.) The time: Early in the morning. Though he lodged out of town, and perhaps had spent much of the night in secret prayer, yet he came early. When a day's work is to be done for God and souls it is good to begin betimes, and take the day before us.
- (2.) The place: In the temple; not so much because it was a consecrated place (for then he would have chosen it at other times) as because it was now a place of concourse; and he would hereby countenance solemn assemblies for religious worship, and encourage people to come up to the temple, for he had not yet left it desolate.
- (3.) His posture: He sat down, and taught, as one having authority, and as one that intended to abide by it for some time.
- 2. How diligently his preaching was attended upon: All the people came unto him; and perhaps many of them were the country-people, who were this day to return home from the feast, and were desirous to hear one sermon more from the mouth of Christ before they returned. They came to him, though he came early. They that seek him early shall find him. Though the rulers were displeased at those that came to hear him, yet they would come; and he taught them, though they were angry at him too. Though there were few or none among them that were persons of any figure, yet Christ bade them welcome, and taught them.
- III. His dealing with those that brought to him the woman taken in adultery, tempting him. The scribes and Pharisees would not only not hear Christ patiently themselves, but they disturbed him when the people were attending on him. Observe here,
 - 1. The case proposed to him by the scribes and Pharisees, who herein contrived to pick a quarrel with him, and bring him into a snare, v. 3-6.
 - (1.) They set the prisoner to the bar (v. 3): they brought him a woman taken in adultery, perhaps now lately taken, during the time of the feast of tabernacles, when, it may be, their dwelling in booths, and their feasting and joy, might, by wicked minds, which corrupt the best things, be made occasions of sin. Those that were taken in adultery were by the Jewish law to be put to death, which the Roman powers allowed them the execution of, and therefore she was brought before the ecclesiastical court. Observe, She was taken in her adultery. Though adultery is a work of darkness, which the criminals commonly take all the care they can to conceal, yet sometimes it is strangely brought to light. Those that promise themselves secrecy in sin deceive themselves. The scribes and Pharisees bring her to Christ, and set her in the midst of the assembly, as if they would leave her wholly to the judgment of Christ, he having sat down, as a judge upon the bench.
 - (2.) They prefer an indictment against her: Master, this woman was taken in adultery, v. 4. Here they call him Master whom but the day before they had called a deceiver, in hopes with their flatteries to have ensnared him, as those, Lu. 20:20. But, though men may be imposed upon with compliments, he that searches the heart cannot.
 - [1.] The crime for which the prisoner stands indicted is no less than adultery, which even in the patriarchal age, before the law of Moses, was looked upon as an iniquity to be punished by the

judges, Job 31:9-11; Gen. 38:24. The Pharisees, by their vigorous prosecution of this offender, seemed to have a great zeal against the sin, when it appeared afterwards that they themselves were not free from it; nay, they were within full of all uncleanness, Mt. 23:27, 28. Note, It is common for those that are indulgent to their own sin to be severe against the sins of others.

- [2.] The proof of the crime was from the notorious evidence of the fact, an incontestable proof; she was taken in the act, so that there was no room left to plead not guilty. Had she not been taken in this act, she might have gone on to another, till her heart had been perfectly hardened; but sometimes it proves a mercy to sinners to have their sin brought to light, that they may do no more presumptuously. Better our sin should shame us than damn us, and be set in order before us for our conviction than for our condemnation.
- (3.) They produce the statute in this case made and provided, and upon which she was indicted, v. 5. Moses in the law commanded that such should be stoned. Moses commanded that they should be put to death (Lev. 20:10; Deu. 22:22), but not that they should be stoned, unless the adulteress was espoused, not married, or was a priest's daughter, Deu. 22:21. Note, Adultery is an exceedingly sinful sin, for it is the rebellion of a vile lust, not only against the command, but against the covenant, of our God. It is the violation of a divine institution in innocency, by the indulgence of one of the basest lusts of man in his degeneracy.
- (4.) They pray his judgment in the case: "But what sayest thou, who pretendest to be a teacher come from God to repeal old laws and enact new ones? What hast thou to say in this case?" If they had asked this question in sincerity, with a humble desire to know his mind, it had been very commendable. Those that are entrusted with the administration of justice should look up to Christ for direction; but this they said tempting him, that they might have to accuse him, v. 6.
- [1.] If he should confirm the sentence of the law, and let it take its course, they would censure him as inconsistent with himself (he having received publicans and harlots) and with the character of the Messiah, who should be meek, and have salvation, and proclaim a year of release; and perhaps they would accuse him to the Roman governor, for countenancing the Jews in the exercise of a judicial power. But,
- [2.] If he should acquit her, and give his opinion that the sentence should not be executed (as they expected he would), they would represent him,
 - First, As an enemy to the law of Moses, and as one that usurped an authority to correct and control it, and would confirm that prejudice against him which his enemies were so industrious to propagate, that he came to destroy the law and the prophets.
 - Secondly, As a friend to sinners, and, consequently, a favourer of sin; if he should seem to connive at such wickedness, and let it go unpunished, they would represent him as countenancing it, and being a patron of offences, if he was a protector of offenders, than which no reflection could be more invidious upon one that professed the strictness, purity, and business of a prophet.

- Secondly, In the net which they spread is their own foot taken. They came with design to accuse him, but they were forced to accuse themselves. Christ owns it was fit the prisoner should be prosecuted, but appeals to their consciences whether they were fit to be the prosecutors.
- a. He here refers to that rule which the law of Moses prescribed in the execution of criminals, that the hand of the witnesses must be first upon them (Deu. 17:7), as in the stoning of Stephen, Acts 7:58. The scribes and Pharisees were the witnesses against this woman. Now Christ puts it to them whether, according to their own law, they would dare to be the executioners. Durst they take away that life with their hands which they were now taking away with their tongues? would not their own consciences fly in their faces if they did?
- b. He builds upon an uncontested maxim in morality, that it is very absurd for men to be zealous in punishing the offences of others, while they are every whit as guilty themselves, and they are not better than self-condemned who judge others, and yet themselves do the same thing: "If there be any of you who is without sin, without sin of this nature, that has not some time or other been guilty of fornication or adultery, let him cast the first stone at her." Not that magistrates, who are conscious of guilt themselves, should therefore connive at others' guilt. But therefore,
 - (a.) Whenever we find fault with others, we ought to reflect upon ourselves, and to be more severe against sin in ourselves than in others.
 - (b.) We ought to be favourable, though not to the sins, yet to the persons, of those that offend, and to restore them with a spirit of meekness, considering ourselves and our own corrupt nature. Aut sumus, aut fuimus, vel possumus esse quod hic est-We either are, or have been, or may be, what he is. Let this restrain us from throwing stones at our brethren, and proclaiming their faults. Let him that is without sin begin such discourse as this, and then those that are truly humbled for their own sins will blush at it, and be glad to let it drop.
 - (c.) Those that are any way obliged to animadvert upon the faults of others are concerned to look well to themselves, and keep themselves pure (Mt. 7:5), Qui alterum incusat probri, ipsum se intueri oportet. The snuffers of the tabernacle were of pure gold.
- c. Perhaps he refers to the trial of the suspected wife by the jealous husband with the waters of jealousy. The man was to bring her to the priest (Num. 5:15), as the scribes and Pharisees brought this woman to Christ. Now it was a received opinion among the Jews, and confirmed by experience, that if the husband who brought his wife to that trial had himself been at any time guilty of adultery, Aquae non explorant ejus uxorem-The bitter water had no effect upon the wife. "Come then," saith Christ, "according to your own tradition will I judge you; if you are without sin, stand to the charge, and let the adulteress be executed; but if not, though she be guilty, while you that present her are equally so, according to your own rule she shall be free."
- d. In this he attended to the great work which he came into the world about, and that was to bring sinners to repentance; not to destroy, but to save. He aimed to bring, not only the prisoner to repentance, by showing her his mercy, but the prosecutors too, by showing them their sins. They

sought to ensnare him; he sought to convince and convert them. Thus *the blood-thirsty hate the upright, but the just seek his soul.*

- [3.] Having given them this startling word, he left them to consider of it, *and again stooped down, and wrote on the ground,* [v. 8](#). As when they made their address he seemed to slight their question, so now that he had given them an answer he slighted their resentment of it, not caring what they said to it; nay, they needed not to make any reply; the matter was lodged in their own breasts, let them make the best of it there. Or, he would not seem to wait for an answer, lest they should on a sudden justify themselves, and then think themselves bound in honour to persist in it; but gives them time to pause, and to commune with their own hearts. God saith, *I hearkened and heard,* [Jer. 8:6](#). Some Greek copies here read, He *wrote on the ground,* *enos hekastou autoun tas hamartias* *the sins of every one of them;* this he could do, for he *sets our iniquities before him;* and this he will do, for he will *set them in order* before us too; he *seals up our transgressions,* [Job 14:17](#). But he does not write men's sins *in the sand;* no, they are written as with a *pen of iron* and the *point of a diamond* ([Jer. 17:1](#)), never to be forgotten till they are forgiven.
- [4.] The scribes and Pharisees were so strangely thunderstruck with the words of Christ that they let fall their persecution of Christ, whom they durst no further tempt, and their prosecution of the woman, whom they durst no longer accuse ([v. 9](#)): *They went out one by one.*
- *First,* Perhaps his writing on the ground frightened them, as the hand-writing on the wall frightened Belshazzar. They concluded he was writing bitter things against them, writing their doom. Happy they who have no reason to be afraid of Christ's writing!
- *Secondly,* What he said frightened them by sending them to their own consciences; he had *shown them to themselves,* and they were afraid if they should stay till he lifted up himself again his next word would show them to the world, and shame them before men, and therefore they thought it best to withdraw. They went out *one by one,* that they might go out *softly,* and not by a noisy flight disturb Christ; they went away by *stealth,* as *people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle,* [2 Sa. 19:3](#). The order of their departure is taken notice of, *beginning at the eldest,* either because they were most guilty, or first aware of the danger they were in of being put to the blush; and if the eldest quit the field, and retreat ingloriously, no marvel if the younger follow them. Now see here,
- 1. The *force* of the word of Christ for the conviction of sinners: *They who heard it were convicted by their own consciences.* Conscience is God's deputy in the soul, and one word from him will set it on work, [Heb. 4:12](#). Those that had been old in adulteries, and long fixed in a proud opinion of themselves, were here, even the oldest of them, startled by the word of Christ; even scribes and Pharisees, who were most conceited of themselves, are by the power of Christ's word made to retire with shame.
- 2. The *folly* of sinners under these convictions, which appears in these scribes and Pharisees.
- (1.) It is folly for those that are under convictions to make it their principal care to *avoid shame,* as Judah ([Gen. 38:23](#)), *lest we be shamed.* Our care should be more to save our souls than to save our

credit. Saul evidenced his hypocrisy when he said, *I have sinned, yet now honour me, I pray thee*. There is no way to get the honour and comfort of penitents, but by taking the shame of penitents.

- (2.) It is folly for those that are under convictions to contrive how to *shift off* their convictions, and to get rid of them. The scribes and Pharisees had the wound *opened*, and now they should have been desirous to have it *searched*, and then it might have been *healed*, but this was the thing they *dreaded* and *declined*.
- (3.) It is folly for those that are under convictions to *get away from Jesus Christ*, as these here did, for he is the only one that can heal the wounds of conscience, and speak peace to us. Those that are convicted by their consciences will be condemned by their Judge, if they be not justified by their Redeemer; and will they then go from him? To whom will they go?
- [5.] When the *self-conceited* prosecutors quitted the field, and *fled for the same*, the *self-condemned* prisoner stood her ground, with a resolution to abide by the judgment of our Lord Jesus: *Jesus was left alone* from the company of the scribes and Pharisees, free from their molestations, *and the woman standing in the midst* of the assembly that were attending on Christ's preaching, where they set her, [v. 3](#). She did not seek to make her escape, though she had opportunity for it; but her prosecutors had appealed unto Jesus, and to him she would go, on him she would wait for her doom. Note, Those whose cause is brought before our Lord Jesus will never have occasion to remove it into any other court, for he is the refuge of penitents. The law which accuses us, and calls for judgment against us, is by the gospel of Christ made to withdraw; its demands are answered, and its clamours silenced, by the blood of Jesus. Our cause is lodged in the gospel court; we are *left with Jesus alone*, it is with him only that we have now to deal, for to him all judgment is committed; let us therefore secure our interest in him, and we are made for ever. Let his gospel *rule us*, and it will infallibly *save us*.
- [6.] Here is the conclusion of the trial, and the issue it was brought to: *Jesus lifted up himself, and he saw none but the woman*, [v. 10, 11](#). Though Christ may seem to take no notice of what is said and done, but leave it to the *contending* sons of men to *deal it out among themselves*, yet, when the hour of his judgment is come, he will no longer keep silence. When David had appealed to God, he prayed, *Lift up thyself*, [Ps. 7:6](#), and [94:2](#). The woman, it is likely, stood trembling at the bar, as one doubtful of the issue. Christ was *without sin*, and might cast the first stone; but though none more severe than he against sin, for he is infinitely just and holy, none more compassionate than he to sinners, for he is infinitely gracious and merciful, and this poor malefactor finds him so, now that she *stands upon her deliverance*. Here is the method of courts of judicature observed.
- *First*, The prosecutors are called: *Where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?* Not but that Christ knew where they were; but he asked, that he might shame them, who declined his judgment, and encourage her who resolved to abide by it. St. Paul's challenge is like

this, Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Where are those their accusers?

The accuser of the brethren shall be fairly cast out, and all indictments legally and regularly quashed.

- Secondly, They do not appear when the question is asked: Hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. She speaks respectfully to Christ, calls him Lord, but is silent concerning her prosecutors, says nothing in answer to that question which concerned them, Where are those thine accusers? She does not triumph in their retreat nor insult over them as witnesses against themselves, not against her. If we hope to be forgiven by our Judge, we must forgive our accusers; and if their accusations, how invidious soever, were the happy occasion of awakening our consciences, we may easily forgive them this wrong. But she answered the question which concerned herself, Has no man condemned thee? True penitents find it enough to give an account of themselves to God, and will not undertake to give an account of other people.
- Thirdly, The prisoner is therefore discharged: Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more. Consider this,
- a. As her discharge from the temporal punishment: "If they do not condemn thee to be stoned to death, neither do I." Not that Christ came to disarm the magistrate of his sword of justice, nor that it is his will that capital punishments should not be inflicted on malefactors; so far from this, the administration of public justice is established by the gospel, and made subservient to Christ's kingdom: By me kings reign. But Christ would not condemn this woman,
- (a.) Because it was none of his business; he was no judge nor divider, and therefore would not intermeddle in secular affairs. His kingdom was not of this world. Tractent fabrilla fabri-Let every one act in his own province.
- (b.) Because she was prosecuted by those that were more guilty than she and could not for shame insist upon their demand of justice against her. The law appointed the hands of the witnesses to be first upon the criminal, and afterwards the hands of all the people, so that if they fly off, and do not condemn her, the prosecution drops. The justice of God, in inflicting temporal judgments, sometimes takes notice of a comparative righteousness, and spares those who are otherwise obnoxious when the punishing of them would gratify those that are worse than they, Deu. 32:26, 27. But, when Christ dismissed her, it was with this caution, Go, and sin no more. Impunity emboldens malefactors, and therefore those who are guilty, and yet have found means to escape the edge of the law, need to double their watch, lest Satan get advantage; for the fairer the escape was, the fairer the warning was to go and sin no more. Those who help to save the life of a criminal should, as Christ here, help to save the soul with this caution.
- b. As her discharge from the eternal punishment. For Christ to say, I do not condemn thee is, in effect, to say, I do forgive thee; and the Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins, and could upon good grounds give this absolution; for as he knew the hardness and impenitent hearts of the prosecutors, and therefore said that which would confound them, so he knew the tenderness and sincere repentance of the prisoner, and therefore said that which would comfort her, as he did to that

woman who was a sinner, such a sinner as this, who was likewise looked upon with disdain by a Pharisee ([Lu. 7:48, 50](#)): *Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace.* So here, *Neither do I condemn thee.* Note,

- (a.) Those are truly happy whom Christ *doth not condemn*, for his discharge is a sufficient answer to all other challenges; they are all *coram non iudice--before an unauthorized judge.*
- (b.) Christ will not condemn those who, though they have sinned, will *go and sin no more*, [Ps. 85:8](#); [Isa. 55:7](#). he will not take the advantage he has against us for our former rebellions, if we will but lay down our arms and return to our allegiance.
- (c.) Christ's favour to us in the remission of the sins that are past should be a prevailing argument with us to *go and sin no more*, [Rom. 6:1, 2](#). Will not Christ condemn thee? Go then and sin no more.

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary on John 8

The Gospel According to John
Commentary by DAVID BROWN
CHAPTER 8

[Jhn 8:1-11](#). THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY.

1, 2. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives--This should have formed the last verse of the foregoing chapter. "The return of the people to the inert quiet and security of their *dwellings* ([Jhn 7:53](#)), at the close of the feast, is designedly contrasted with our Lord's *homeless* way, so to speak, of spending the short night, who is early in the morning on the scene again. One cannot well see why what is recorded in [Luk 21:37, 38](#) may not even thus early have taken place; it might have been the Lord's ordinary custom from the beginning to leave the brilliant misery of the city every night, that so He might compose His sorrowful and interceding heart, and collect His energies for new labors of love; preferring for His resting-place Bethany, and the *Mount of Olives*, the scene thus consecrated by many preparatory prayers for His final humiliation and exaltation" [STIER].

3-6. scribes and Pharisees--foiled in their yesterday's attempt, and hoping to succeed better in this.

4, 5. woman. . . in adultery. . . Moses. . . commanded. . . should be stoned--simply put to death ([Deu 22:22](#)), but in aggravated cases, at least in later times, this was probably by stoning ([Eze 16:40](#)).

but what sayest thou--hoping, whatever He might answer, to put Him in the wrong:--if He said, Stone her, that would seem a stepping out of His province; if He forbade it, that would hold Him up as a relaxer of the public morals. But these cunning hypocrites were overmatched.

6. stooped down--It will be observed He was sitting when they came to Him.

with his finger wrote on the ground--The words of our translators in italics ("as though He heard them not") have hardly improved the sense, for it is scarcely probable He could wish that to be thought. Rather He wished to show them His aversion to enter on the subject. But as this did not suit them, they "continue asking Him," pressing for an answer. At last, raising Himself He said.

7. He that is without sin--not meaning sinless altogether; nor yet, guiltless of a literal breach of the Seventh Commandment; but probably, he whose conscience acquits him of any such sin.

cast a stone--"the stone," meaning the first one (Deu 17:7).

8. again he stooped down and wrote--The design of this second stooping and writing on the ground was evidently to give her accusers an opportunity to slink away unobserved by Him, and so avoid an exposure to His eye which they could ill have stood. Accordingly it is added.

9. they. . . convicted. . . went out one by one. . . Jesus was left alone--that is, without one of her accusers remaining; for it is added.

the woman in the midst--that is, of the remaining audience. While the trap failed to catch Him for whom it was laid, it caught those who laid it. Stunned by the unexpected home thrust, they immediately made off--which makes the impudence of those impure hypocrites in dragging such a case before the public eye the more disgusting.

10. Woman, &c.--What inimitable tenderness and grace! Conscious of her own guilt, and till now in the hands of men who had talked of stoning her, wondering at the skill with which her accusers had been dispersed, and the grace of the few words addressed to herself, she would be disposed to listen, with a reverence and teachableness before unknown, to our Lord's admonition. "And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." He pronounces no pardon upon the woman (such as, "Thy sins are forgiven thee" [compare Luk 5:28 7:48] --"Go in peace" [compare Mar 5:34 Luk 7:50 8:48]), much less does He say that she had done nothing condemnable; He simply leaves the matter where it was. He meddles not with the magistrate's office, nor acts the Judge in any sense (Jhn 12:47). But in saying, "Go and sin no more," which had been before said to one who undoubtedly believed (Jhn 5:14), more is probably implied than expressed. If brought suddenly to conviction of sin, admiration of her Deliverer, and a willingness to be admonished and guided by Him, this call to begin a new life may have carried with it what would ensure and naturally bring about a permanent change. (This whole narrative is wanting in some of the earliest and most valuable manuscripts, and those which have it vary to some extent. The internal evidence in its favor is almost overpowering. It is easy to account for its omission, though genuine; but if not so, it is next to impossible to account for its insertion).

Get Back Up

*Though the righteous fall seven
times, they rise again.*

PROVERBS 24:16 NIV

Abraham lied about his wife's identity to save himself. Moses murdered a man. David was an adulterer and killer. The disciples fled after Christ's crucifixion. The failures of humanity mark the pages of Scripture, yet they aren't the story-enders that we might imagine they would be. God specializes in picking us up after we fall and restoring our confidence and dignity.

Of course, when you fail, you may feel worthless and like God will never accept you again. But remember that no matter what you've done, the Father freely offers you forgiveness (1 John 1:9). You don't have to remain trapped in self-condemnation—that doesn't help anyone. Instead, accept that Christ determines your self-worth and identity. And because of His infinite wisdom and kindness, the events in your life that you would consider disappointing, even crushing, can be redeemed. Through the Lord's rich and plentiful grace, they can even work together for good.

Failure is never final with God, because with Him all things are possible. When you fall, He will pick you up. If you falter, He will come to your rescue. So don't let your failures keep you down. Turn to the Lord and allow Him to show you the path forward.

*Jesus, thank You that my failures don't define me and that
You help me up when I fall. Amen.*