

JOHN CHAPTER 8

CONTRASTS AND CONFLICTS¹

I. Grace and Law (8:1–20) *¹ But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them. ³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, ⁴ they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. ⁵ Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?” ⁶ They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have evidence to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. ⁷ But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up and said to them, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. ¹⁰ Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” ¹¹ She said, “No one, Lord. And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go, and from now on sin no more.” ¹² Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will never walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.” ¹³ So the Pharisees said to Him, “You are bearing witness about Yourself; Your witness is not true.” ¹⁴ Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I bear witness about Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵ You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. ¹⁶ But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me. ¹⁷ Even in your law it has been written that the witness of two men is true. ¹⁸ I am He who bears witness about Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness about Me.” ¹⁹ So they were saying to Him, “Where is Your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither Me*

¹ Wiersbe, Warren W. Be Alive (John 1-12): Get to Know the Living Savior (The BE Series Commentary) (p. 123). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.

nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.”²⁰ These words He spoke in the treasury, as He was teaching in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.²

This incident seems suspicious. They would not likely catch a couple in the “very act” of adultery, so we would wonder if the man (who never was indicted!) was part of the scheme. It is strange that the man would go free. The scribes and Pharisees brought this woman to Jesus in the court of the women, in the treasury section of the temple (v. 20).

Their motive was to test Jesus (v. 6) and force Him into a dilemma. The law required that both guilty parties be stoned (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22). If He set the woman free, He violated Moses’ law; if He had her stoned, He could not claim to be One who forgives sins.

There are various suggestions about what Jesus might have written on the ground—the consensus is that it had something to do with reminding the accusers of the Ten commandments—Arthur Pink suggests that Christ wrote on the ground with His finger twice to remind them of the two tablets of the Law, written with the finger of God (cf. Exodus 31:18; 32:15–18; 34:1). The law was given to reveal sin (Romans 3:20), and we must be condemned by the law before we can be cleansed by God’s grace. Law and grace do not compete with each other; they complement each other. Nobody was ever saved by keeping the law, but nobody was ever saved by grace who was not first indicted by the law. There must be conviction before there can be conversion.³

When Moses came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the Law, the Jews were worshipping the golden calf. In his anger, Moses broke the first stone tablets on the ground. However, God did forgive their sin, provide blood sacrifices, and gave another set of tablets. This reminder that all had sinned and that no one was innocent convicted the accusers—they all walked away!

² [*Legacy Standard Bible*](#) (John 8) (2022). Three Sixteen Publishing.

³ Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Alive* (John 1-12): Get to Know the Living Savior (The BE Series Commentary) (p. 124). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.

As we read this account, we, too, are reminded that not only have we sinned, but that Jesus died for the sins of the world, including this woman and each of us. We must not misinterpret this event to mean that Jesus is “*easy on sin*” or that He contradicted the law. For Jesus to forgive this woman meant that one day He had to die for her sins. Forgiveness is free, but it is not cheap.

The great I AM statement in verse 12 follows this incident. As the Light of the world, Christ claimed to be God, for God is light (1 John 1:5). Darkness speaks of death, ignorance, and sin; light speaks of life, knowledge, and holiness. The light reproves sin (John 3:20). The unforgiven sinner lives in darkness (Ephesians 2:1–3; 4:17–19; 5:8) and will spend eternity in darkness (Matthew 25:30) if he never confesses Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9-10). The Jews, instead of submitting to Christ, argued with Him in the temple!

II. Life and Death (8:21–30) ²¹ *Then He said again to them, “I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.”* ²² *So the Jews were saying, “Surely, He will not kill Himself, since He says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come?’”* ²³ *And He was saying to them, “You are from below, I am from above. You are of this world, I am not of this world.”* ²⁴ *Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins. For unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”* ²⁵ *So they were saying to Him, “Who are You?” Jesus said to them, “What have I been saying to you from the beginning?”* ²⁶ *I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I am saying to the world.”* ²⁷ *They did not know that He had been speaking to them about the Father.* ²⁸ *So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing from Myself, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.”* ²⁹ *And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”* ³⁰ *As He was speaking these things, many believed in Him.”*

There are two births: one into this world—*born of the flesh*, AND one from above into heaven—*born again by God’s Spirit*. There are also two ways to die: the sinner dies in his sins, but the believer dies *in the Lord* (Revelation 14:13). Saving faith in Jesus Christ makes the difference.

Jesus told the Jews that He came from heaven; the Father sent Him (v. 26), taught Him (v. 28), and remained with Him (v. 29). The Father forsook His Son only when Christ was made sin for us on the cross. In verse 28, Christ spoke of being “*lifted up*,” which means, of course, His crucifixion. He mentioned this to Nicodemus back in chapter 3:14–16, and He would mention it again in chapter 12:32–34.

III. Freedom and Slavery (8:31–40) ³¹ *So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you abide in My word, then you are truly My disciples; ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” ³³ They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s seed and have never yet been enslaved to anyone. How is it that You say, ‘You will become free’?” ³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. ³⁵ And the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. ³⁶ So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷ I know that you are Abraham’s seed; yet you are seeking to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. ³⁸ I speak the things which I have seen with My Father; therefore, you also do the things which you heard from your father.” ³⁹ They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you are Abraham’s children, you would do the deeds of Abraham. ⁴⁰ But now you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God. This Abraham did not do.”*

The Jews who believed (v. 30) were admonished to *prove* their faith by their faithfulness. The new birth through faith in Christ makes one a child of God. However, abiding in the Word, knowing the truth, and living accordingly is what makes the believer a true disciple of the Jesus. In this passage, Jesus is speaking about spiritual, not physical, or political, bondage and liberty. Lost sinners are in bondage to their lusts and sins (Titus 3:3), to Satan, and to this world (Ephesians 2:1–3). Only by trusting Jesus and abiding in the truth in Christ are slaves set free!

Jesus’ opponents made their appeal to their worldly advantages: “*We are Abraham’s children!*” They said the same thing to John the Baptist (Matthew 3:8–9). However, Jesus made a distinction between Abraham’s fleshly seed (v.

37) and Abraham's spiritual children (v. 39). In Romans 2:28–29, 4:9–12, and 9:6, the Apostle Paul makes the same distinction (cf. Galatians 4:22–29).

People tend to reject Jesus when they confuse the physical and the spiritual. When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about a spiritual birth, he asked the Lord about a physical birth (John 3:4). Christ offered the woman at the well eternal life (*living water*), but she asked Him about literal physical water (4:15). Salvation is a supernatural, spiritual experience, and the only thing involving physical birth is that you must have been born and are physically alive to be *born again*!

IV. Children of God and Children of Satan (8:41–47) ⁴¹ *"You are doing the deeds of your father."* They said to Him, *"We were not born of sexual immorality; we have one Father: God."* ⁴² Jesus said to them, *"If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come of Myself, but He sent Me."* ⁴³ *Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word."* ⁴⁴ *You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."* ⁴⁵ *But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me."* ⁴⁶ *"Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?"* ⁴⁷ *He, who is of God, hears the words of God; for this reason, you do not hear them, because you are not of God."*

The Bible speaks of four different kinds of "spiritual children:" We are born by nature *children of wrath* (Ephesians 2:3); As we age physically, we commit sins and become *children of disobedience* (Ephesians 2:2). When we put our faith in Christ and are born again, we become the *children of God* (John 1:12). However, the person who rejects Jesus as Savior and lives accordingly becomes *a child of the devil*.

Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43, describes the "children of the devil" as counterfeit Christians. Satan is a murderer and his children imitate him. Jesus pointed out the characteristics of the children of the devil:

A. *They will not give place to the Word of God (v. 37).*

- B. They trust in the flesh—human birth, works (v. 39).**
- C. They hate Christ and seek to kill Him (vv. 40, 44).**
- D. They do not love Christ or the things of Christ (v. 42).**
- E. They do not understand the Word—blinded by Satan (v. 43).**
- F. They are liars and love lies more than the truth (v. 44).**
- G. They will not hear the Word of God; they hate it (v. 47).**

Remember, these “children of the devil” were not grossly immoral people; they were self-righteous, religious people who rejected Christ. Many people today are deluded by Satan to focus upon religion and present an outward form of godliness that lacks the power of the Gospel. Unfortunately, these people are deluded to think that their religious endeavors are the evidence of salvation—they think that they are actually saved and going to heaven.

V. Honor and Dishonor (8:48–59) ⁴⁸ *The Jews answered and said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?”* ⁴⁹ *Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.* ⁵⁰ *But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.* ⁵¹ *Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word, he will never see death—ever.”* ⁵² *The Jews said to Him, “Now we know that You have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, ‘If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death—ever.’* ⁵³ *Surely You are not greater than our father Abraham who died? The prophets died too; whom do You make Yourself out to be?”* ⁵⁴ *Jesus answered, “If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God’; ⁵⁵ and you have not known Him, but I know Him; and if I say that I do not know Him, I will be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word.* ⁵⁶ *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”* ⁵⁷ *So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”* ⁵⁸ *Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”* ⁵⁹ *Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.*

God honors His Son, but these self-righteous Jews dishonor Him. They dishonored Him verbally by calling Him a *Samaritan* and by accusing Him of having a *devil*. (*Samaritans were the scum of the earth to the Jews.*)

In response, Jesus told them that Abraham saw His day and rejoiced. How did Abraham see Christ's day? By faith (Hebrews 11:8–16). Abraham glimpsed the redemptive work of Jesus when he offered Isaac on the altar (Genesis 22). God shared many secrets with His *friend* Abraham because of his faith and obedience (Genesis 18:16–22). Likewise, when we walk in faith and obedience to Christ, our understanding of God becomes clearer!

When we are confronted with God's Word, we must either accept it, and be saved or reject it, and be lost. In our text, we see how these religious Jews hated Christ and sought to kill Him! This was certainly proof that they were *children of Satan*, the *murderer*. Jesus claimed to be Yahweh, the God of Abraham, when He said, "*Before Abraham was, I AM*" (see v. 58; also, Exodus 3:14). In verse 24, He also said, "*For if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.*" In verse 28, He said, "*When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am.*" Satan's lie then and now is that Jesus Christ is not the Son of God (see 1 John 2:22; 4:1–3). It is impossible to honor God and at the same time dishonor His Son (5:23).⁴

*Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion*⁵

1. What are some common objections to Christianity?
2. What attitudes toward sin—your own sin and others' sin—does this story encourage you to learn from Jesus?
3. What was Jesus' main point in this argument with the Pharisees?

⁴ Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). [*Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament*](#) (pp. 232–234). Victor Books.

⁵ Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Alive (John 1-12): Get to Know the Living Savior (The BE Series Commentary)* (pp. 136-138). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.