

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

I DON'T CONDEMN YOU | RED LETTER TALKS PART 2

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Alright. So good to be with everyone today across all of our locations. I want to welcome those of you spring breakers. We are trying not to resent you for being somewhere warmer.

Glad to be with you today. If you have a Bible, I hope you brought one, find John, chapter 8. John, chapter 8 is our passage today. If you're not in the habit of bringing a Bible, I want to encourage you to make note of that. Bring one with you every week, maybe something to write with.

We've been in a series of messages where we are looking at the words of Jesus in the gospel of John leading up to Easter weekend, which is just a few short weeks away. So, I just want to remind all of you, encourage all of you, be praying for your one. For your one more—that person you can invite.

Typically, we will see attendance double on Easter. So, we could potentially have 22 to 23,000 people here on Easter. We want to be ready for them.

And we're going to be doing baptisms that weekend. God has been doing something in our church over the last few weeks. Just a few weeks ago on a Sunday morning we opened up for baptisms and I think we had maybe 25 planned, but we had over 150.

And then this last week for our Rooted celebration, on Tuesday night when we celebrated Rooted grads, we had about 60 some baptisms planned. By the time we got out of here that night we had 102. So, God has just been doing some amazing things. We're going to be offering baptism on Easter weekend so invite your one more.

And if you have a battleship mentality, then I want to encourage you to get rid of your seat that you usually sit in a prime hour and go to one of our off-hour services so we can give our guests as good of an experience as possible.

Well, we're in John, chapter 8 today. And honestly this is one of my favorite passages in the Bible. But I know that may not mean a whole lot to you because I say that a lot. Even though it's one of my favorites, it doesn't mean that it is easy. In fact, this is a really challenging passage, but I think there is a ton of opportunity for God to speak through it into our lives today in ways that are deep and profound.

So, let me start this way. When I was in high school... I went to a small, private Christian school where it was so small everybody kind of knew each other's business. Maybe you



know the type. And there was a girl in my class, my high school graduating class, I'd known her since 8th grade. She was a Christian. She was a believer.

She was dating a non-believer at the time. And toward the end of her senior year she slipped up, messed up, she got pregnant. Now, everybody was, of course, talking about it. She sort of disappeared for a little bit.

And I remember the Sunday she came back to church. At that point she was beginning to show, and the reception was mixed. It was mostly people being kind and gracious to her. But not everyone, as you might imagine.

And there were a couple of ladies who were within earshot of her who were saying something loud enough where she could hear it. It was along these lines, "Well, if she's going to have one foot in the world and one foot in the church, might as well have both feet in the world."

Now, when I tell you that story, I can even hear it across the room. I've heard it in every service; you likely have an emotional reaction to that story, for a couple of different reasons.

Some of us just have empathy for her. We just know none of us are perfect and we've all made mistakes and we're sinners. Others of us maybe you were that girl. You know exactly what that feels like. Maybe that was a daughter of yours, or a neighbor, or a friend, so your heart goes out to her.

And there is tension in this story as well. I knew her. She would have even said, "I messed up. I went outside of God's best for me." Straight up, she had sinned. In saying that that doesn't mean we hate her. That means that she's not beyond redemption or hope. She can't be. If she's beyond redemption and hope then all of us are beyond redemption and hope. But there is still tension there. Isn't there?

And here's the tension. When it comes to stories like that we could take that as maybe an example, but there are lots of examples we could all give because none of us are without guilt. Do we pounce and condemn or do we kind of look the other way and say, "It's okay because Jesus just came to give love and acceptance." So, there is a tension there.

And what I love about our passage today is that Jesus is going to thread the needle of that tension to avoid both errors that we oftentimes fall into. What Jesus does in this passage is three things. If you're jotting down some notes, I'd encourage you to jot these three things down. They may not make sense now, but they will make sense by the time we get to the end of the passage.

Jesus encourages us to: drop the rocks of condemnation, pick up the grace that only He offers, and let go of our sin. Drop the rocks. Pick up grace. Let go of sin.



The challenge for so many of us in this cultural moment in which we live, especially as believers, is that we pick one of those at the expense of the others. We can't. We have to do all three.

So, we've got these two big threats to the power and the effectiveness of the gospels. One is that those who refuse—like those two ladies in the story I just told you about, like the religious leaders in our text today, like the legalists among us—to extend the grace that has been freely given to us. This is Acts 15, "Let's not make it any more difficult for the Gentile believers who are coming to God."

But then the other side is those of us who maybe take advantage of the grace that has been offered and we keep on sinning. That's Romans, chapter 6 where Paul says, "Shall we go on sinning so grace may increase? By no means."

And these tensions can be described in a number of ways. Maybe you've heard these terms: license verses legalism; grace verses truth. We kind of pit them against each other. Evangelism—hey, come as you are, it's okay. You come in here. You're accepted as you are. But then discipleship—hey, don't stay as you are. You've got to take the next step of obedience as the Spirit of God lives in you.

And we typically read John 8, and we fall into one of two camps. For those of you who know the story well, then you know that we're getting ready to read about some religious leaders who had picked up their rocks and they want to throw them at a lady.

What we have a tendency to do as self-righteous believers is we want to throw the rocks at the religious leaders. That's what we do. We read this text and we're like, "How dare they?" We pick up our own rocks. Or, maybe this, we use the story to go easy on sin—ours and others.

There is a verse in the passage that we are going to read today that I think is one of the most memorized passages of Scripture next to John 3:16, "Let he who has no sin be the first to throw the stone." And we use that to sort of justify sin. But that's not what that means. We'll get to that in a minute.

The woman in this passage today is going to get set free from a couple of things. She's going to get set free from the despair of condemnation and she's going to get set free from the despair of her personal sin. Jesus is going to say to one group, "Drop the rocks and pick up grace." And He's going to say to the woman, "Receive My grace and drop your sin."

Now, we've got to back up and actually start in verse 53 of chapter 7 before we get into the narrative in chapter 8. The reason why I wanted to do this is because oftentimes we skip over it, and I don't want to skip over it. Likely, if you're reading your Bible you read what I'm getting ready to read and you scratch your head and are going, "What do we do with this?" So, I'd rather just go ahead and address it. Alright?

Before we even get into the text there are these little brackets in your Bible that say this: [The most ancient Greek manuscripts do not include John 7:53 through 8:11], which is convenient for me because that's our passage today.

Now, some of you, you might read that and especially if you are new to Bible study, that doesn't exactly stir up a whole lot of confidence for you in the Bible, does it? You are like, "Man, what am I supposed to do with that?"

Actually, what I want to show you is that you may not expect this, but because those brackets are there, that should actually bolster your confidence in the Bible, not take away from it.

Here's what I mean. First of all, let me just say I don't have time to unpack all of this, but we could point you to a number of great resources, scholarly work, to show the authority and how the Scriptures have held up over time. The Bible has experienced some of the most intense scrutiny over the last couple of thousand years and it holds up. Lots of resources we could point you toward.

One that I might point you to is a guy named Wes Huff. He's got a YouTube channel. You can get on there and just fall into the rabbit hole. Wes has some great teaching around the authority and reliability of the Scriptures.

More importantly than that, 2 Timothy, chapter 3, verse 16, what the Bible even says of itself is that all Scripture is inspired by God. So, I just want you to know, you are a part of a church that believes that the Bible is the trustworthy, authoritative, inerrant word of God. God spoke by His Spirit through human authors to give us our Bible. And it's held up over time.

So, what are these brackets about? Well, the brackets are saying this, "Our text today was in the earliest Latin manuscripts, but that it wasn't in the original Greek manuscripts."

Now, there are a couple of schools of thought on this. Two early church fathers, one by the name of Augustine, or maybe you pronounce it St. Augustine, believed that the story was in the original Greek manuscripts but that a little bit later some early church folk pulled it out precisely because of the tension we're talking about today. They didn't want you and me reading this thinking, "Oh sweet. We can commit adultery, and Jesus will let us off." So, they took it out. And then later they put it back in.

There is another early church father by the name of Jerome and he believed that it actually wasn't in the earliest Greek manuscripts but that John was actually very well aware of it and so were his disciples and the disciples put it in because they were like, "Man, this is too good to leave out."

Now, what I want you to know today is that those little brackets should bolster confidence in your mind. And here's why. This is how committed the Bible translators

were to preserving the truth and integrity of the Scriptures. They didn't have to tell us. But they did.

Wouldn't it be nice if you did that on news media and social media? Where we just re-tweeted something, "I don't know if it's true or not. The original sources are a little shaky." No, we just throw it out there because it agrees with our perspective.

I'd say this. There is nothing in this story that adds to or takes away from key doctrine. And it is consistent with what we see and hear Jesus teach all throughout the gospels. It just reinforces that.

So, let's start in verse 53 of chapter 7. John writes:

"Then the meeting broke up, and everybody went home." (NLT)

So, we've got to ask: What meeting are we talking about? Well in chapter 7 Jesus stands up in front of crowds of people and He offers them the exact same thing that He offered a woman at a well a couple of weeks ago. You remember? Jesus said, "If you are thirsty, I will give you living water. Come and drink and rivers of living water will flow from your heart."

Now, I've got a question for you. Does that sound offensive to anybody? It shouldn't. That's actually sounds like a really great offer. But the people then were kind of like us today, offense is our national pass time, and some were offended by that. I don't know why, but they were. Now some received it. Some wanted to take Him up on it. Some had questions about it. But there were others who were really hacked off, including the Pharisees.

And then there was a guy named Nicodemus; I want to point this out because we talked about him a couple of weeks ago. He shows back up here, and he actually defends Jesus. The crowds all break up. Everybody goes home.

Now we're ready for chapter 8, verse 1:

"Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives,"

Now the Mount of Olives was where Jesus went to pray. It was kind of like where He did His quiet time.

" but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them." (NLT)

So, understand that the Temple was like our auditorium. This is sort of like their Temple of the day. It's where crowds of people could come together, and they came around Jesus because He was such a great teacher, and they were so hungry for the truth.

In the first century, the only difference between what they did in the Temple courts and what we do in the auditorium is in the first century the Rabbi would sit, and the crowds

would stand. I think we should bring that back. No? I get really tired standing up here three hours in a row; you all only have to sit for one. Alright? I don't think it's going to happen. We love our comfy seats too much. It goes on in verse 3:

"As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been," here it is, "caught in the act of adultery." (NLT)

Now, if you are thinking, "Does that mean what I think it means?" Yes. That means what you think it means. This wasn't like they stumbled across some text messages. This wasn't a rumor. They walked in on them. But then they pulled her out (we'll get to the guy here in a second) and they put her in front of the crowd.

Now, I don't know, if they just caught her in adultery chances are pretty high that she was either completely undressed or mostly undressed. This would have been embarrassing and shameful. And there she stands in front of all of these religious leaders, in front of crowds. And in verse 4:

"'Teacher,' they said to Jesus, 'this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?'" (NLT)

Now, you may not pick this up automatically in the passage here. I think this is a jab at Jesus because oftentimes when He would begin His teaching—we see Him do this in The Sermon on the Mount and all throughout the gospels—Jesus would often begin His teaching this way, "You have heard it said in the law, but I say to you." And now here they are going, "Hey, Jesus. The law of Moses says we should stone her. So, Mr. Rabbi, what do you say?"

And then in verse 6 John offers a little bit of commentary as to what was going on in their minds, meaning their motivation and intent. Don't you wish you had that superpower? It says in verse 6:

"They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him," (NLT)

In other words, this was a set up. They could care less about the holiness and righteousness of God. They could care less about the purity or the dignity or the self-esteem of this woman. They could care less about upholding the law of Moses. Their motivation was that they hated Jesus so much, they wanted Him out of the picture so badly, that they were using this woman as a pawn in their chess game with Jesus. How sick and twisted is that?

It's a theological trap

It's a theological trap, first of all. Maybe this is out of response to what Jesus had just taught in chapter 7 where He said, "Hey, man. I'll give you living water." This invitation was very similar to the woman at the well. And this woman who had been caught was thirsty and was drinking from empty wells. So, now they catch her, they bring her to

Jesus, "Alright Jesus. What's it going to be? It is going to be the law or is it going to be grace?"

And no matter what He says, there is a significant percentage chance that He loses.

It's a political trap

Part of the reason why is because it was also a political trap. See, by the time we get to the first century the Roman Empire occupied Jerusalem, and they passed a law that said that the lowly Hebrews were not allowed to exact capital punishment without Roman permission.

This is why when you get to the end of the gospel of John, if you've ever noticed this, when Jesus gets arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane; they keep passing Him around to these different boards. And you are like, "Why did they do that?" Well, because they didn't have the authority to put Him to death. They eventually had to get Him in front of a Roman authority by the name of Pilate to get permission.

So, understand what's going on here. They've just trapped Jesus in this political and theological corner. What's it going to be? Here's what I mean. If Jesus responds with, "No, no, no. Don't stone her. Give her grace," they can say, "You've just broken the law of Moses, Rabbi."

And if He says, "Well, go ahead and stone her," then they can run to the Roman authorities and say, "He just broke your laws." Do you see the predicament that He is in? They've got Him backed into a corner.

Now, we also know this is a set up because according to the law there had to be multiple eyewitnesses to the offense. So, in case you need reminding, swimming is a solo sport. Bike riding—solo sport. Lust—solo sport. Adultery—team sport. In order to pull this off, you had to have two to tango. There had to have been somebody else in on it. There had to be some sort of insider information tipping them off as to where they would be. They were looking for them.

Now, here's the deal. Technically speaking, they are right, and they are dead wrong. What I mean by that is in Exodus, chapter 20, verse 14 is the seventh commandment of the Ten Commandments. It says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

Now we could go on. The law also said in Deuteronomy 22:22, "If a man is discovered committing adultery," what's the word there? Both. "Both he and the woman must die." Leviticus, 20, verse 10, "If a man commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, what's the word? Both. "Both the man and the woman who have committed adultery must be put to death."

So, can anybody see what is missing from this scenario? The dude. Where is the guy? They are using her as a pawn for their own means. And that is tragic because she is an image bearer of God. That is spiritual abuse.

Now, I also need to acknowledge this because I know you are already thinking this. So, let me just go ahead and acknowledge it. I just read from these laws and these Old Testament laws sound really crazy and extreme to our modern ears. Don't they?

You're like, "Yeah, yeah. Sure. I knew adultery is a sin, but do they really both need to be put to death? Why does the law sound so extreme?" Or, as one person put it, "Why is God so grumpy in the Old Testament?"

There is a reason. Understand.

I don't know how many of you have ever built a house. The least sexy part of building a house and the part that seems like it takes the longest is setting the footers and the foundation. It goes by so slowly. There is not much to look at. Not much to take pictures of. But, arguably, it's the most important part. You've got to get that right.

And it's very, very rigid. You don't just pour a bunch of cement and say, "Well, I hope it all flows together in a form of a foundation." No, you've got two-by-fours in a frame that is very, very rigid and fixed. It's because the foundation is important—same thing with Old Testament law. God is laying His foundation for His people, the Israelites, and those of us who would be grafted into the family tree.

So, why punishable by death? Well, understand what God is doing. The Israelites had just been freed from Egyptian slavery, so they have gone from a slave nation to a free nation. Now, they are learning to live for God, and they are learning how to live in such a way that they treat one another with honor, dignity, and respect. So, the law, starting in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy...

By the way, those of you who are doing our chronological Bible reading plan, you just now finished the book of Deuteronomy, can I just say, "Way to go man." Because those books are where, as Terra Lee Cobble says, "Most Bible reading plans go to die." Man, you made it through some of the most difficult books of the Bible. And the reason why we sloth through that stuff and not skip over it is because it's foundational and God is teaching, "This is how we are going to live."

So, go back to the question, "Why is the punishment for adultery so severe?" And many of you already know this. It's because adultery kills either way: marriages, families, children, hopes and dreams.

But it also doesn't mean that we are beyond redemption and hope. You've got to understand in accordance with these laws that are so extreme that there is also Leviticus 16, which is known as the Day of Atonement. It would come once a year. What would happen is, the nation of Israel would all gather together, and they would confess

their sins. What's that? They would confess all of the ways that they had broken the law. None of us can fulfill the law.

And the High Priest would then receive their confessions, and he would transfer the guilt of the sins of the people to a goat, which became known as the scapegoat, which is where we get the term, by the way. They would take the scapegoat to the edge of town, release it off into the desert where the scapegoat would wander out into the desert to die and their sins with it. So, it was a tangible and visible expression of the people watching their sins being removed from them.

But we're not done. Then the High Priest would take the shed blood of an animal, he would go into the Holy of Holies, which is where the Spirit of God resided in the Old Testament, he would pour that shed blood over the Mercy Seat of God, which was the covering of the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the Ten Commandments.

So, to understand all of this, follow me, track with me, God would look down to see not His broken law, but the shed blood of an animal covering over it and their sins were paid for and atoned for. That was all a foreshadowing of Jesus. And this is something they did every year.

All of this is laid out in Leviticus 16, before all of the consequences of the broken law. In other words, the verdict of God comes before the performance. The verdict of God, you are not guilty because the price has been paid, has come before you could ever live up to the law.

So, listen. We go back to John 8. Without that background, she's busted. She's guilty. She's embarrassed. And she is ashamed. And honestly, she knows what is coming. I would imagine that she's standing there—will you just go with me there in your mind? She's standing there and her eyes are closed, her head is down, maybe her fists are closed. She's got hot tears streaming down her cheeks. She knows that at any moment, she's anticipating it, her muscles are tense, she knows she's going to be pelted by rocks at any moment. She doesn't know when they are coming.

And these religious leaders have Bible verses on their side. Legalists usually do. And they are like, "How about it Jesus?" Man, it is a gotcha moment if there ever was one. So, we've just got to ask ourselves, what in the world is Jesus going to do? How is He going to respond to this?

I love what happens next:

"but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger." (NLT)

I love how the King James version puts it. It says, "As if he wasn't listening to them." Any of you have kids like that? Do you understand how frustrating that would have been to these religious leaders?

Have you ever been in an argument with someone or a debate where maybe you are going back and forth, via text or the comment section on social media or whatever? And you think, “There is no way that they are getting out of the point I just made.” And then they do.

That’s what is happening here. They think they’ve got Jesus because 99.9 percent chance, whatever He says next they’ve got Him in some way. But Jesus bends down and starts coloring.

There is a lot of speculation as to what He was writing in the dirt. I don’t really know. We’ve got guesses. I don’t know if it’s really all that important. I think what is more important is His posture. Instead of standing over her in judgment—she had a lot of people doing that—He gets low. And then I think He starts drawing in the dirt quite possibly because there is a naked woman standing in front of Him. Get your eyes off of her and put them down here.

It kind of reminds me of Philippians 2 where Jesus made Himself low for you and me. Somebody needs to hear this today. No matter what you’ve done, no matter who you’ve done it with, God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us.

Man, they saw her as a pawn. He sees her as a person, even though she is guilty. Look at verse 7:

“They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, ‘All right,’” the most quoted verse in the Bible next to John 3:16, “but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.” (NLT)

Now, oftentimes we use that verse to try to say, “Well, we should just go easy on sin.” But that’s not what Jesus meant by it. Here’s what Jesus meant by it. God had given Him authority to judge, “If there is anybody who could judge here in this circle, it’s Me. So, you want to do this boys? Let’s go.”

There is a lot of speculation as to what He was writing in the dirt. Some think He was writing out the rest of the law. That’s possible. Some think, I like this one, some think He was writing out the names of the religious leaders, He knew them as well as their sins, both known and unknown. It was a visual.

You’ve got to understand He’s like, “Hey, man. By the same measure...” Here’s what He means by that. Not that we go easy on sin. He goes, “By the same measure you judge, that’s how I’ll judge you too.”

Listen. We are all this woman. Every single one of us. Because sexual brokenness and sin has touched every single one of us. All of our stories are different, but they are there.

Some of us might go, “Now, wait a second, Pastor Aaron. I’m not saying I’m perfect, but I’ve never done that. Never committed adultery. I would never.” You sure about that?

In Matthew, chapter 5, Jesus says this, "You've heard the commandment that says you must not commit adultery." That's Exodus 20:14, the second commandment. "But I say..."

Can I say I often hear this a pastor? People will say, "Hey, the God of the Old Testament is sort of rigid, but Jesus is all about love and acceptance." And I just want to go, "I don't think you've read this."

Do you understand what Jesus is saying here? He's saying, "You've heard the law in the Old Testament say... But I say," now buckle up because He's actually going to raise the standard not lower it. He says, "Anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

And I believe the appropriate response to that is, "Oh, dang." Because that's all of us. And if you say, "Not me," then you've just broken the ninth commandment which is lying.

He's not talking about noticing somebody who is pretty or noticing somebody who is handsome. That's not what He's talking about. He's talking about looking at someone as a commodity to devour for your own ends.

The word for adultery also falls into the same category in the Bible as this term: sexual promiscuity, which is connected to another Greek term porneia, which is where we get our word for pornography. It's just a junk drawer term to include it all.

So, anything outside of one man, one woman, for life in a covenant relationship—everything else outside of that is sexual promiscuity and what Jesus is talking about.

Now we may have a number of questions on that. Maybe some of you would say, "Wait a second. What if we're both say that we are Christians but we're living together? We plan on getting married one day, but we're living together now because of financial reasons. That's just good financial stewardship." No, that's sexual promiscuity.

Or, "Well, she's my work wife. We like to flirt but it never gets physical." Sexual promiscuity.

"Well, he's my best friend outside of my marriage who I confide in about my problems in marriage because it's helpful to get a male perspective." No, sexual promiscuity.

This means no same sex sex. No friends with benefits. No Pornhub, OnlyFans, or AI sexting. It means, guys, by the way, that pressuring the woman who you are dating to be intimate with you because you have needs...

Listen. Taking something that is not yours is not manhood. Boys take. Men serve. You want intimacy, you can have it. Do it the right way. Give your life to Jesus. Get a job. Move out of your parents' house in that order. Court a woman the right way, respect her enough to be intimate after you've made a covenant with her for life.

By the way, if you are here and you're being predatory toward women in our church, either online or in person and we find out about it, we'll ask you to leave because church should not be a place where women need to be fearful of predatory men.

Now, fellas I say that out of love. And look right at me. May the 2nd is Men's Night. I want you to put that on your calendar. Don't miss it. We've got some incredible things planned.

If you think I'm being hard on you now, just wait 'til you hear what I have to say when women aren't in the room. Alright? It's going to be great. Lives are going to get changed. We're going to get things right. And I'm telling you, when men take the lead in this, then women thrive, families thrive, churches thrive.

Now, inevitably there will be somebody on a podcast or on TikTok somewhere who will talk about John, chapter 8 and this woman and they will say, "It wasn't her fault. This was a power differential thing. She was being taken advantage of."

And while I would concede that does happen, the problem with explaining that away in this passage is at the end. Because Jesus is going to look at her and He's going to tell her, lovingly but directly, that she is sinning.

Now, if you are being abused, that is not sin. But if you are actively participating and especially if you are a believer, then you are.

Paul addresses this to Christians in the church in 1 Corinthians. I oftentimes find it funny when people are like, "Man, I just wish that we could get back to being like the church in the New Testament." Well, the church in the New Testament was really, really jacked up. And Paul writes this in 1 Corinthians. He's writing this to believers, he's not writing this to unbelievers. Check out what he says:

"Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God?"

Some of us who are ready to pick up our rocks would go, "Yeah!" And then he would go:

"Don't fool yourselves. Those who,"

And then he's going to list all of the sins that are easy to throw rocks at:

"Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality"

You are like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah. We've got our rocks, man. Give it to them Paul." And then he goes:

"or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people,"

Like, "Wait a second, you put greed in the same category as sexual sin? Yeah. Well, define greed Paul." He's writing to believers, those of you who don't trust God with your

finances. Greed. And he just put them in the same category as those with sexual sin. And he says:

You “will inherit the Kingdom of God.” 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NLT)

It’s pretty clear. But, verse 11, he goes:

“Some of you were,” notice all of the past tense verbiage, “Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed;”

He doesn’t say are being cleansed, he says you were cleansed, because it’s a work that is finished through the sacrifice of Jesus on a cross.

You were cleansed, “you were made holy; you were made right with God,”

How? By being a really good Christian. No.

“by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:11 (NLT)

Listen to me. Your old name is that thing you did. But no longer—you have a new name in Christ Jesus. Can I just say this? Some of you have given your heart to Jesus, you’ve given your belief to God, but you continue to give your eyes to a computer screen, you continue to give your body to your boyfriend, you continue to be lorded over by your desires. And it’s not just a physical act, it is a spiritual union.

A couple of years ago I was doing a series on sexuality and afterward I got DM from a very upset young man. He was very mad at me. And he said, “Hey, me and my girlfriend left very, very upset. She left in tears feeling condemned over what you said.” And he said, “I don’t see why you seem to be suggesting that just because we’re living together and sleeping together that you’re suggesting that we are bad Christians.”

So, I said, “Hey, I’ve got a couple of follow-up questions for you.” So, I just began to ask some clarifying questions. Anybody can call themselves a Christian or say that they believe in God.

So, it’s just like, “Hey, what do you mean by Christian? Would you say that you’ve surrendered your life to Jesus as not only Savior but also Lord? Are you committed to being a disciple? What’s your next step of obedience? Does the Holy Spirit reside within you? Have you been baptized?”

I just asked all of these clarifying questions to really pin him down. He said, “Yes to all of them.” So, then I said this, “Hey, man. I’m not suggesting that you are a bad Christian. I’m telling you you’re a bad Christian.”

Now, some of you, you don’t know what to do with that, “That seems a little harsh.” No, it’s kind because clarity is kindness. I would not have said that to him right out of the gate. I said it after I asked all of the clarifying questions, and what he was claiming. And

the reason why I would say that so directly to him is because he was claiming the name of Jesus, but he was robbing that young woman of her identity in Jesus as well as his own.

With that said, let me say this. Every single sin can be paid under the cross of Jesus. No doubt. You've just got to lay it down. But when you willingly keep picking it back up and when you willingly indulge and make excuses for it, it is an offense to the glory of God. And, quite honestly, you've just forgotten how valuable you are and what Jesus did to pay for you.

Look at what it says in verse 9. It says:

"When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman." (NLT)

I love this so much. It says the oldest left first. Why do you think that is? They've got more sin. They know. They've got more gray hair. Life can kind of humble you that way.

Listen, man. When I first came to Traders Point I had no gray hair in this beard. They are taking over, man. It's all your fault. Stressful.

They knew, man. They were like, "Oh, dude. He's got us. We're out."

And I wonder even for her when she's like standing there and He says this, "Hey, any of you who don't have sin, throw the first stone," that she's like taking a deep breath, "There is going to be somebody who is going to throw one." And every time a stone dropped I wonder if she just winced. Until finally she hears no more thuds on the ground. And she's standing there and her whole life flashed before her eyes.

After a few seconds of silence turn into a minute or two she finally had the courage to open one of her eyes and that's when she sees the face of her Creator. And I think that He is smiling at her with tears in His eyes because He gives her her dignity back. And in verse 10:

"Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" (NLT)

Why do you think Jesus said that? Because there is always one, there is always one who is contrary. There is always one grumpy person. There is always one person who is going to be defiant. But not this time.

And in a millisecond she's gone from an inch of losing her life and not expecting to ever see her loved ones again to instead... Listen. She'd been run over by the grace train of Jesus Christ. He says, "I don't condemn you."

You see, the Bible says it is not the judgment or the embarrassment of God that leads you to repentance. It is the what? It's the kindness of God that leads you to repentance. And Jesus is so kind to her.

Some of us might be like, "Well, wait a second, Jesus. Before you let her off the hook, how do you know she's really sorry? She might take this as a license to keep on sleeping around." Any of you ever think that? Have you ever been in small group with somebody like that? Is this what we think?

We're either too harsh or we go too easy on sin. We pick up the rocks or the grace. We don't know which one to leave. Jesus encourages us to drop the rocks, pick up grace, and let go of sin. That last part is so key.

Here's the deal. She likely knew what the law said about adultery. I don't think this was any new information to her. I think that she would have known. But it wasn't enough to keep her or change her from doing it.

And the same is true for you and me. Most of us, especially believers, we know... Just think about this besetting sin in your life. It's not a surprise to you, "I know it's a sin." The wages of sin is death. We know. We do it anyway.

That's Romans 7. The things I want to do I don't do. The things I hate I keep on doing. So, why do we do it? Very honestly and practically, it's because it feels good. It regulates us. We enjoy it. We're thirsty. We're looking for something to satisfy. We don't trust that God will satisfy.

So, why do we have these laws that are so extreme that none of us can ever live up to? Here's why:

The Law reveals your sin; it never saves you from it

The only thing that can change you and me is grace. Grace ushers you out of living in the flesh to living in the Spirit, which is why the Scriptures urge us to walk or to keep in step with the Spirit.

So, Jesus says to this woman, "Does anyone condemn you?"

"No, Lord," she said.

"And Jesus said, 'Neither do I.'"

Condemnation is not of God. It's the native language of our enemy. And he brings it up, likely in a sermon like this. It's not only hard to listen to; it's hard to preach. And a sermon like this, likely the enemy in the last 35 minutes has been condemning you by bringing up your past, especially in this area. It's a reverse highlight reel.

Here's what it sounds like, "Who do you think you are? Just a moment ago you had both hands raised in the air being all happy and clappy. If they only knew your sexual brokenness."

See, condemnation is a building term. It's more than a feeling. Here's what condemnation means: unfit to be occupied; unfit for use. This is why buildings that are unsafe get condemned. They put the tape around them and say, "This is unfit for occupancy."

Did you know that 1 Corinthians calls your body the building of God? Actually, he doesn't use the word building he uses the word temple. When you give your life to Jesus the Holy Spirit moves in.

What the enemy wants to do is he wants to keep reminding you of all of that old furniture, all of that old baggage that's there. Then he condemns you and he wraps this yellow tape around you and says, "You are unfit for use."

Here's the deal. When you give your life to Jesus, Jesus tears down that yellow tape and He moves in and then He fills you with His righteousness and His holiness and His Spirit. Your body is a temple.

So, understand that's what that means. The next time a body builder walks up to you and says, "This is a temple," wrong usage of the passage. That's not what that means. By all means, take care of your body. But that's not what that means.

It means that God lives in you. I'm not talking to unbelievers here. If you are a non-believer you need to audit all of this. If you are a believer you should take it to heart. Your body is the permanent address of God on this side of eternity, which is why God takes sexual sin so seriously. The Spirit of God resides in that body that you are using to color outside of the lines of what He calls good, rightful, holy, and true.

In other words, you're taking God along with you on that booty call—really embarrassing. He's with you. And if you feel shame and condemnation, then the only thing that will set you free is not more law, not more legalism, not more shame. It's the grace of Jesus Christ.

See:

We don't just receive the gospel; we wage war with it!

What that means is that when the enemy reminds you of your sexual scars, you say, "No, no, no. I'm defined by the scars of Jesus Christ on a cross. It is finished, "I did do those things, but I am not those things. The old me is dead and I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me."



Listen. Only Jesus gets to tell you who you are. And we will go back and forth with this whole condemnation thing. Some of you right now, some of you would say, "I love Jesus, and I believe that He has forgiven me," anybody like this, "I just can't forgive myself."

And I would say, "Who do you think you are?" Do you think your standards are superior to the righteousness and holiness of God? That's a misguided view of God and how much He loves you and how sufficient His grace is for you.

The answer is Romans, chapter 8. I want to read it. I want to let these words wash over you as we bring our time together to an end today. Romans 8, starting in verse 1. It says:

"So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus."

It says nothing of performance. It says nothing about being a super Christian. It says nothing of being super religious. It says for those who belong. It's ownership language.

"And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death."

In other words, those things that just have your number all of the time. He's freed you from all of that.

"The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

"Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace." Romans 8:1-6 (NLT)

You are, today... You and I today according to that passage are one of two things. We are either dominated or we are controlled. Which one do you want to be? You are either dominated by the desires of the flesh, the world, our enemy, or you are controlled by the Spirit of God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Now the passage isn't finished. Quite possibly the most powerful little sentence is found at the very end. You cannot miss it. Jesus looks at this woman after giving her all of this and He says:

"Go and sin no more." (NLT)

By grace you have been saved. Now, go and sin no more. Step into that new identity. Jesus came full of grace and full of truth. It is not 50/50. It's not like He has scales so when the truth goes up the grace goes down and when the grace goes up and the truth goes down. That's how we operate. Not God.

God is full on grace and full-on truth. And here's the grace train, "I don't condemn you. That's all been paid." Payment that satisfies has been given through Jesus on a cross. Now, here's the truth. Sin no more because you have a new identity in Christ.

"Well, I'm going to keep on sinning." Yeah, keep on repenting. Keep on confessing. Keep on turning it back over to Him. Stop justifying it, normalizing it, rationalizing it saying, "God made me this way."

Romans 1: everything in this world is broken and in need of His redemption and restoration. And He doesn't lower the bar for the woman, He still called it sin. Why? Not because He hates her, but because He loves her too much not to tell her the truth and call her to more.

Here's how the world talks about it: God is love so we should just let people do whatever they want. But have you ever met parents who let their kids do whatever they want? Do you want to be around that kid? Does that look like love?

No, Jesus is saying to this woman... Here's what He is saying when He says go and sin no more, "Listen. You've gotten yourself into a real pickle today. If you continue down that lifestyle it's going to catch up to you. It's going to burn everything to the ground and it's going to destroy you, your family, your relationships, the other guy's family. Everything you care about."

And a pursuit of no more sinning only works when you have an encounter with Jesus, not will power but His power where you experience His grace. Without it you end up either walking in a spirit of shame or a spirit of condemnation toward others, we end up with rocks in our hands.

The reason why she's going to have victory over her sin is because Jesus saved her life. And instead of experiencing the penalty of her sin, she received the reality that Jesus would be the propitiation for her sin. That's a good Bible word that means payment that's satisfies.

Now, this woman got caught and drug to Jesus. Today you get a chance to confess and walk to Jesus. Her life was changed even though she was caught and drug. Your life can change all the more if you confess and walk. So, we just want to offer an opportunity for you to do that.

This isn't really an altar down here, but we can talk about it like it is. Over the last few weeks, we've been inviting you to come, to walk down here. You can use this as an altar



to come before God, drop to your knees, drop to your face, come down to just confess, to pray, to ask for healing and to be set free.

Maybe for some of you, right now, married couples may want to come down together because, listen. If the enemy wants to take our church down, he's not going to do it from the outside. He'll do it from the inside by attacking and destroying marriages.

So, maybe instead of giving your husband or your wife that weird look like, "Why are you getting ready to walk down there? What did you do?" Maybe you might just grab a hand and say, "Let's go together because we've got an enemy who is coming after us in this area."

Maybe you're a single and you're going, "I am not married yet. I'm kind of off of the hook here." No, actually your actions now are setting up the behaviors and the patterns for your marriage one day. And maybe you might grab your friend group and say, "You know what guys? Let's commit ourselves to purity. We need to wage war with the gospel."

Maybe some of you need to come down who are raising teenagers right now in this sex crazed world and you just need a covering over them and a prayer over them, "We just need to consecrate ourselves before the Lord."

There will be prayer counselors. You don't have to talk to them if you don't want to. They are here if you want to. Maybe you just come, even if it's just symbolic saying, "I'm going to have the courage to get up out of my seat and walk down the aisle and give God my sexual brokenness and sin.

So, I'm going to ask for everybody across all of our locations to stand to your feet. I'm going to pray. And as I pray, you come. As I pray, you walk. As I pray, you confess. As I pray, you step into the light and let this be a time and an opportunity for the Spirit of God to be pleased, like the incense of worship coming up to Him.

The confessions of His people, we shed them. We recognize that we have a new identity that we are operating out of. And we ask for the grace of God to change us forever.

So, as I pray would you just come? Nobody is judging. Nobody is condemning. You just come and you drop to your knees, you come, and you pray, you grab the hands of those around you and say, "Man, we need to wage war together against this.

Father, we come to You right now. It is such a tension for us to know how to bridge the gap between grace and truth.

I'm so thankful for the people who are having the courage right now to walk down these aisles. It's not an easy thing to do wondering what people are going to think.

God, truth be known, every single one of us should come. Every single one of us has brokenness. Every single one of us is condemned. So, Father, would You see this, and would You be pleased with this, that this is our true act of worship where we come, and



we lay this down before You and we confess our sins, and we repent of them. We ask for Your strength and Your power to help us face the battle, not by ourselves, but by the power of Your Spirit.

Father, I pray that dramatic transformation and change would take place in the lives of individuals and the lives of couples and marriages, single adults and teenagers, that they would recognize the radical power that can save and deliver from sin.

We thank You for Your grace, because without it we don't stand a chance. And we thank You for Your truth because without it we cannot step into a new identity. So, God, please be honored as we come. We ask this in Jesus' name. And everybody says: Amen. Amen.

