



## John 8:1-11

# Neither Do I Condemn You

"Pastor is it OK to sell a Bible to a prostitute?"

Laura is a member of a small church in a small town in central Brazil. She has sold Avon products for years in the town to supplement the family income. One of her weekly routes takes her through the red light district, and with those business contacts she often shares her faith in Jesus Christ.

One day after asking her pastor if it is OK to sell Bibles to prostitutes she took a few Bibles with her on her Avon trips to the red light district.

God opened a door to present Bibles and Christian books in a house of prostitutes. Oddly enough, the house was located directly across the road from a large evangelical church. Ten of these women gathered around a table one afternoon as Laura shared with them the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. A few Bibles and some books containing testimonies of transformed lives were sold that afternoon.

Several months later there were terrible rains and floods in that part of Brazil, causing several deaths. With the floods came mudslides in communities that had been inundated by the rising rivers. Two prostitutes who had attended the book demonstration earlier that year talked about the danger and decided to read the Bible they had purchased. Perhaps thinking the book to be like an Agatha Christie mystery novel, they started with Revelation in order to find the conclusion of the story. What they read terrified them.

They read with dismay Revelation 21:7, 8: "He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, and the sexually immoral, the idolaters and all liars –their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

The gal who owned the Bible became alarmed and exclaimed, "We're lost! We're lost!" Her housemate replied, "No, *you're* lost. I'm not lost because I do penance every day." Still alarmed and concerned, they continued to read.

A few days later Laura visited her Avon customers. These two women literally pulled her off the street and shoved the Bible into her hands. "Read this part right there! Tell us what it means!" they ordered. Laura read the verses and responded, "It means that when you practice and live in one of these sins, you will not be permitted to enter heaven." Again, the owner of the Bible cried, "We're lost! We're lost! I told you we were lost!" Her friend again assured her, "No, *you're* lost. I'm not lost because I repent every day."

"Repentance," Laura explained, "is when you confess your wrong and completely turn around. You do not repent. Repenting is turning from your sin. You only feel guilty for your sins." Again, the prostitute shouted even louder, "We are lost! We're lost!" After sharing the plan of salvation and trying to pray with them Laura

even louder, "We are lost! We're lost!" After sharing the plan of salvation and trying to pray with them Laura returned home planning to visit again. One week passed by and she made her way down the muddy and rutted dirt streets of that little suburb. On arriving at the home of the two prostitutes, she was handed a note by the one who had been so assured of her false repentance.

*Laura,*

*Enclosed is the money I owe. Thank you so much for help. After your visit last week, I returned to my hometown and am living with my parents. On Sunday I attended an evangelical church and gave my heart to the Lord Jesus. If ever I visit your city again, it will only be to attend your church. Jesus has made me a different person.*

*Maria Isabel*

We can never estimate the power of God's Spirit working through His Word to convict, regenerate and transform lives in Jesus Christ.

This amazing true story of the power of God's Word was adapted from Richard Jacobsen, "A Miracle in Ipatinga," American Bible Society Record, (April 1988, Vol. 134, No. 4.), pp. 12-14.

When Jesus Christ comes into your life, He sets you free! There is no greater freedom in all the earth than having all your sins forgiven and being at peace with God. "If the Son shall make you free, you are free, indeed!"

John chapter eight opens with Jesus teaching a crowd of people who were coming and going in the Temple (8:1-2). It was early in the morning when Jesus began to teach them. Not everyone of course was ready to hear Him teach. A group of Pharisees called for His death, and was ready to trap Jesus. Some were saying, "Never did a man speak the way this man speaks" (7:46). Others were responding, "You have not been led astray, have you?" (v. 47). One of their own, Nicodemus entered into the discussion suggesting that no one should prejudge another without first hearing from him and knowing what he is doing (vv. 50-51). However, the Pharisees as a group was ready to entrap Jesus.

### **JESUS DEALS WITH SINNERS (8:3-6)**

Jesus helps people where ever and in whatever condition He finds them. He was busy teaching when He was interrupted by a group of thugs who crash in on Him. They came dragging into the room a disheveled, hastily clothed, barefooted and humiliated woman.

### ***A woman was taken in adultery (vv. 3-4)***

The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman whom they testified was caught in "the very act" of adultery (v. 4). There is no question about her guilt. John repeats the statement twice in two verses, a woman "caught in adultery." She was "taken with shame upon her." She has lived in continuous adulterous relationships so long that she is now characterized as an adulteress.

Where is the man? If I remember correctly, it takes two! Verse four says she was "caught in adultery, the very act." Should there not have been have been two sinners? Is this a lynching party? Where is the man? Who is trying to get even with the woman? Who set the deliberate trap for her? Her husband, or a former lover? Perhaps the husband set her up to divorce her or have her stoned.

George MacDonald wrote in his poem "Sweet Peril":

Alas, how easily things go wrong!  
A sigh too much, or a kiss too long,  
And there follows a mist and a weeping rain,  
And life is never the same again.

She was guilty. There is no question about that. But it is also a candid reminder that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). No one rises up to meet the divine expectation for mankind. This woman was not the only one who had a problem; we all have a spiritual problem. We have all failed in the sight of God. We all got an "F" on our spiritual report card.

### ***What will you do with this sinner (vv. 5– 6)?***

This is a well-rehearsed plot to "test" Jesus with the idea of proving Him false. They were skillfully laying a trap. It was a setup.

The Pharisees demanded, "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?" (v. 5). I am sure they were ready to misquote Deuteronomy 22:22ff. They stressed stoning the woman in the recorded quotes of their conversation with Jesus, but the Law demanded that both parties be stoned. It was only under the condition of persistence after previous warning and after the actual witness of the act of adultery by two competent witnesses that a couple was to be stoned.

The Pharisees and scribes continued to press their point. They were not after the poor woman as much as they were after Jesus. They were saying this "testing" Jesus (v. 6). They wanted grounds for "accusing" Jesus. He is the one they are really after.

This self-righteous, self-appointed judge and jury were out to hang Jesus. We are determined we are going to get rid of you, one way or the other, no matter what it takes. They were filled with self-righteous hatred toward Jesus.

They kept stressing their point. "They persisted in asking Him" (v. 7a). They kept the pressure on Jesus. Come on, tell us teacher, what do You say?

### **JESUS THE SAVIOR (8:6-9)**

As the Pharisees kept pushing their question, with the intent of trapping Him, "Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground" (v. 6b). I don't know what He wrote. No one does. I have heard many wild ideas in my life, but none are of any value. We simply don't know what He wrote in the sand. It is really not important to us. What is crucial is what follows.

Jesus, will you kill the woman or kill the Law of Moses? Will you compromise your religious principles or kill the person?

My wife and I with some friends watched the summer performance of the epic tale of King Arthur and Queen Guenevere. You will recall in the play that King Arthur's most trusted and renowned knight Lancelot gingerly slipped his toe across the marital boundary. It started with an innocent look. Just a look, without premeditation or an evil intent. However, it was a short, slippery step from a look to lust, from infatuation to the bed of infidelity. The look led to a touch. The touch sometime later led to a kiss. The kiss led to adultery.

the bed of infidelity. The look led to a touch. The touch sometime later led to a kiss. The kiss led to adultery. And the adultery led to tragedy.

Mordred, who caught Guenevere and Lancelot in their unfaithfulness taunted the King. Of course, Lancelot escaped, but Guenevere was captured and sentenced to death by the court. In the climatic scene where Arthur is called upon to give the signal to commence the execution, Mordred taunts him with wicked joy.

"Arthur! What a magnificent dilemma! Let her die, your life is over; let her live, your life's a fraud. Which will it be, Arthur? Do you kill the Queen or kill the law?"

Ok Jesus, what will You do? You are the teacher of the Law. You teach with authority. Let us hear Your answer. Kill the Law or kill this sinner?

### ***Jesus stooped wrote in the sand (vv. 6b-8).***

As these religious leaders persisted in questioning him, Jesus stood up and invited any one among them who was sinless, not guilty of general sinfulness, to throw the first stone. By this statement they could not possibly say Jesus rejected the law. Jesus specifically enjoined them to throw the first stone. Go ahead, you are right, the Law says stone her. She is guilty. Now, *you*, which one of *you*, is sinless? Moreover, if they threw the stone they would have been guilty of breaking the Roman Law against capital punishment! Only the Roman government in Jesus' day could execute a criminal. That is why the Jewish religious leaders manipulated Pilate to execute Jesus! They didn't have the authority to execute Him.

Jesus straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (v. 7). Then Jesus again "stooped down, and wrote on the ground" (v. 8).

### ***The Silence (vv. 9-11).***

I think a deathly silence fell over that crowd. The audience who had been listening to Jesus, the Master Teacher, anxiously listened for His answer. They had been in rapt attention waiting.

Then the Pharisees and scribes who hauled the woman in suddenly abandoned her, one by one. "They began to go out and continued one by one." They were preoccupied with their own sin! "And when they heard it, they began to go out [and continued] one buy one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she had been, in the midst" (v. 9).

What would you say to this poor humiliated sinner? What word of hope would you offer her? Would they be biting words of indignation and scorn? Would you take the opportunity to really scold her and set her straight? How do you deal with sinners, caught in the very act?

## **JESUS FREELY OFFERS SALVATION (8:10-11)**

"And straightening up, Jesus said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?'" (v. 10). "No one, Lord" (v. 11a).

### ***Jesus offers forgiveness.***

This condemned woman needed grace. (Jn. 8:11, 12:46-47; Rom. 8:1)

I can hear the legalists now screaming, "You liberals preach grace!" Jesus preached grace! Paul preached grace! A world of lost sinners needs grace! We need God's free gift of eternal life. We need salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

The woman did not make any excuses (v. 11). She was guilty. She knew it. She stood condemned. She didn't have to be convinced of that fact. She needed grace. She did not deserve it. "The wages of sin is death." "The soul that sins will surely die." She couldn't earn it. She was a spiritual pauper in the need of the riches of God's marvelous grace.

Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go your way; from now on sin no more" (v. 11). Let those words soak in. "Neither do I . . ." "Neither do I condemn you."

How could Jesus offer such a sinner no condemnation? He did it the same way He does to us. He knew that He was going to the cross to die for her sins. "For while we were still helpless" sinners. That is the way all sinners are. Helpless. A helpless sinner doesn't merit forgiveness. A helpless sinner doesn't earn forgiveness. "For while we were still helpless [sinners], at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6).

Moreover, "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (v. 8).

To every guilt-ridden sinner who puts their trust in Jesus Christ as their savior the LORD God comes today and whispers in your ear "neither do I condemn you." "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

Do you have that sense of peace and forgiveness? "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). You can have that peace right now by acknowledging your need of God's forgiveness and putting your faith in Jesus Christ alone to save you. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, that no one should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Ask Him to save you right now believing that He died for you on the cross and rose from the dead.

### ***Responsibility of the woman.***

Now that you are saved what is your responsibility as a saved sinner? It is the same as the woman in our story. Jesus told her literally, "Stop your sinful habit." Make a clean break with sin. A. T. Robertson observes it is imperative of prohibition, "No longer go on sinning."

Jesus did not tell the woman to clean up her act and then He would forgive her. He said, "Neither do I condemn you; go your way; sin no more." He said, now that you are saved, don't continue with your sinful lifestyle. He didn't say be obedient and then I will save you. He forgave her. He saved her by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

When you are saved by grace you want to live Christ now that you have been saved!

### ***Some Abiding Principles***

- Even a wicked sinner can be saved today. There is salvation for all who will put their faith in Christ.

I don't care what happened last night, last month, last year, or whenever in your life. What I do care is that

I don't care what happened last night, last month, last year, or whenever in your life. What I do care is that you will come to Jesus and receive the free gift of eternal life right now. Acknowledge to Him that you need His saving grace and forgiveness. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall saved." "Whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him" (John 3:17). "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36).

- Resolve in your own heart that from this day on to live a life consecrated to Jesus Christ. "Go . . . sin no more." You live the Christian life the same way you began, by grace through faith alone in Christ alone. You have the Holy Spirit within you to strengthen you and deliver you from temptation.
- Correcting wrong starts with forgiveness, not rebuke. There is a keen reminder here that whenever we confront wrong we must be truly humble, not proud. We must take a long hard critical look at our own lives. Galatians 6:1 reminds us, "Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to yourselves, lest you too be tempted." Never were those words truer than in our day. Don't let the temptation of religious pride ensnare you. If you are in a position where you deal with those who are trapped in sin ask God for wisdom, and do not try to bring healing by yourself. Have an accountability group. The privilege of condemning wrong is based on righteousness, not knowledge. Are you without sin? Any sin? Are you spiritual enough to restore the one caught in a trespass? If you're not, then don't. Let a more mature believer be the caregiver (Matthew 7:1-2).
- Take a few moments right now and celebrate your freedom in Christ. "It is for freedom that Christ set you free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1).

If you need more help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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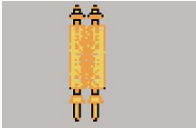
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