

# God's Grace for Sinners, Sufferers and Saints

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[ 0 : 00 ] Starting at verse 53 we read, They went each to his own house, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple.

All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst, they said to him, Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery.

Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such woman. What do you say? This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him.

Jesus bent down and wrote his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.

And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the oldest one.

[ 1 : 25 ] And Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus stood up and said to her, Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?

She said, No one, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn you. Go. And from now on, sin no more.

Again, Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

This is the word of God. Thank you, Angie. This will be on shortly. There we go. Well, good morning, everybody. If you don't know me, my name is Kevin.

I'm one of the pastor guys in this church. That was a reference to Alan saying he's the youth guy. But okay, we'll let that one slide. It's good to see you all.

[ 2 : 29 ] And a warm welcome if you are new to Watermark this morning. Won't you join me? Let's pray together and ask God to speak to us from his word. So, Father God, Lord Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, the three in one, the triune God, we come before you this morning.

As we've said so many times, we come to worship and adore you, to give you the praise that is due to your name. Father, we come to your word because we want your opinions and your word to shape our lives.

We don't want to be shaped by the views of just our culture. We don't want our worldview to be shaped by our own hearts, God. We want our lives to be shaped by you. And so we come to your word this morning.

Father, as we look at this passage, we pray that you will send the Holy Spirit to speak to us. God, we're not here to hear the opinions of man. We're not interested in some new understanding or philosophy.

We want to know what you have to say. So come and speak to us, we pray. Come and open the eyes of our hearts to see you. God, I pray this morning we will understand the deep compassion and the tenderness of God.

[ 3 : 37 ] As Celeste read to us this morning from Psalm 103, that God, you have compassion for us. You'll even exceed that of a parent for their child. I pray we'll know that and we'll experience that this morning.

God, I pray that we'll experience the wonder of the gospel again. And I pray that God will experience you calling us to walk in freedom and joy. And so come and have your way, Lord, we pray.

In your wonderful and your gracious name. Amen. So as Oscar reminded us, we are doing this series called Gender, Sex, Relationships, and God.

And we are on the final one. Today is the last one of those series. And we've been looking at these really important topics or themes over the last five weeks or so. And the reason we've done that is twofold.

One of the reasons is because these are themes or topics that our culture speaks about all the time. And we want to have our views shaped by what God's Word says more so than what culture has to say.

[ 4 : 40 ] We don't just... These really important topics, we don't want our worldview shaped by Netflix or social media. We want to say, what is the God that made us? What does He have to say about these topics?

A Christian is not just someone who intellectually believes that God exists or that Jesus was a real man. A Christian is someone who's coming to say, God, my life belongs to You.

I've surrendered my life to You. I've been transferred from the kingdom of my own kingdom to the kingdom of God. And so, Lord, You come and shape my life. You come and lead me and guide me. And so, we've been looking at these topics for that reason.

But the other reason we've been looking at these topics is because these things of marriage and sex and gender identity and sexual attraction and singleness and gender identity and dysphoria, these aren't just theoretical ideas.

These aren't just some theory. These are really real things that all of us grapple with. And these are areas that also have the tendency to cause the most pain in our lives and the most heartache.

[ 5 : 46 ] As Chris mentioned a few weeks ago, when it comes to relationships and sexuality, all of us are both sinners and sufferers to varying degrees. And so, what that means is every one of us needs to experience the redemptive, healing grace of Christ in these areas of our lives.

And so, we've been looking at these topics for the last couple of weeks. Now, some of us may carry real shame in these areas of our lives. Maybe because of stuff that we've done.

Maybe because of what has been done to us. For all of us, the easiest thing in the world, the temptation, is just to bury it in the past, to try and just move on with life and pretend that it's not there.

But I think all of us know that that doesn't really help, right? Just covering over something, pretending that it's not there, doesn't really deal with it. It's kind of like when you go to your fridge and you open, you see that thing in the back that's been there for way too long and it's not looking very healthy.

You can close the fridge and just ignore it, but that's not going to deal with the problem, right? And so, what you want to do in these really deep, meaningful areas of life, we want to shine the light of the gospel and allow for Christ's redeeming, healing grace to shine there.

[ 7 : 03 ] And so, that's what today's passage is all about. And today, we're going to look at an instance when Jesus Christ comes face to face with some of the most intimate and painful and broken areas of our lives.

And so, we're going to look at John 8, verses 1 to 12 that Angie read to us this morning. Now, a brief disclaimer. If you've got your Bible in front of you, one thing you'll probably see is this section is often bracketed off in your Bible or there might be a footnote that says in most manuscripts, in the ancient manuscripts, this passage wasn't there.

And so, what's happened here is most historians and commentators will agree that this passage wasn't originally part of John's gospel in the earliest days.

When John wrote and compiled his gospel, this passage probably wasn't in there. And there's a couple of reasons for that. One, we know because the most ancient manuscripts don't have it in there. But the second one is because the kind of writing, the language that John uses, that this passage uses, actually doesn't really correspond with much of John's language at all.

It actually fits much better with Luke's writings. And one of the earlier manuscripts in Luke's gospel actually has this passage towards the end of Luke's gospel in chapter 21, right before Jesus goes to the cross.

[ 8 : 19 ] And so, most commentators will say this probably wasn't part of John's original gospel, but it probably is a historical account that did actually happen because it corresponds so well with what we know about Jesus and the scribes and the Pharisees.

And it was part of oral tradition that was later on added into scripture. Okay, so that's just by way of disclaimer. So, let's dive into this passage and see what happens here because what we see in this

passage fits so well with what we see in the rest of the gospels and what we see about Jesus. And so, the passage starts off with this. It's telling us that Jesus spent a night in the Mount of Olives. And in the rest of the gospels, when Jesus spends the night on the Mount of Olives, he's always there spending the night in prayer.

And he comes down after spending this night, probably in prayer, he comes down to the city of Jerusalem, he goes to the temple, and he engages in dialogue and discussion in the temple courts, in the outer courts, in the courts of the Gentiles.

Now, what would happen was, there's the original temple, and then there's this court area outside, and all sorts of religious leaders would come, and they'd gather, and their disciples would gather, and passerby would gather, and they would discuss things, and debate things, and look at the scriptures, and they'd have this dialogue, and this discussion.

[ 9 : 37 ] And so, that's what happened. Jesus is there, and he's having this discussion with all sorts of people around him. And into the midst of this crowd, a bit of a raucous is getting dragged along.

Everyone looks and sees what's happening, and there's a group of men that have got a lady, a young lady, maybe she's tied up with rope, or maybe they've strong-armed her. They drag her into the crowd of people, and they throw her at Jesus' feet.

And they say, Teacher, we know what God said. This lady has been caught in the act of adultery. And you know what God told Moses.

We know what God told Moses. We've got to stone such women. But, Teacher, we also know that you like to talk about compassion, and forgiveness, and turning the other cheek, and all that kind of stuff.

So, what should we do? Tell us, what is your philosophy? What does your teaching say we must do with her now? What's going on here? Well, verse 6 actually tells us, because, look at verse 6.

[ 10 : 39 ] It says, they said this to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. In other words, they're setting a trap for Jesus.

And it's a good trap, because what's happened here is that no matter how Jesus answers, one way or the other, he's going to get himself in trouble, right? If Jesus, on the one hand, says, oh, well, that's a little harsh.

I mean, come on, we've all made mistakes around here. None of us are perfect. She's a first-time offender. Let's just let her go. Then, that'll confirm their suspicions that Jesus doesn't take God's word very seriously.

Remember, Jesus has already got them on edge because of the way that he treats the Sabbath, the way that he welcomes sinners, he touches lepers, unclean people. Jesus welcomes people. He has meals with prostitutes and tax collectors. So they're really suspicious of him and they don't think he's very serious about God's word. And so if Jesus is kind of saying, oh, let's just be gracious, then they feel like they can nail him.

[ 11 : 42 ] They can confirm their suspicions that Jesus is a heretic, he's a false teacher, and they can reject him and denounce him. But if, on the other hand, Jesus says, oh, you're right, that's what God's word says, I guess we better honor God's word.

Let's get our stones and let's go and stone her now. Well, they know that Jesus has a following amongst particularly the common people, the people that don't fit the boxes of the religious people. Those that are marginalized and are often ostracized on society, those are the ones that love Jesus. So if Jesus says, okay, let's go stone her, he's going to be discredited amongst the very people that are following him.

And so on one hand, this is Jesus' dilemma. Uphold the law and he discredits himself amongst the people with whom he's established a following, deny what God has said to his people in the Old Testament and he'll discredit himself amongst the religious leaders and they can denounce him. And so they reckon they've got him. They've got him cornered, right? Except, of course, they haven't got him because this is Jesus and Jesus is perfect. And so in this passage, I think God wants to show us a couple of things.

[ 12 : 52 ] And the first thing he wants to show us is the heart of sin. The heart of sin. In this passage, we see sin manifested in different ways.

There's the obvious sin of the lady and her adultery, right? Okay, we'll get there. But what Jesus wants us to see, there's something far more sinister, something far more dangerous that's going on underneath the surface.

In a way, Jesus wants us to see the cancer of sin that's taking place in these religious leaders. You know, you and I all know that when you, that it's possible to have cancer raging inside your body and yet on the outside, you look completely fine.

You look healthy, you look fit, there's nothing wrong, but inside, there's this battle going on within you. And what Jesus is doing here is he's holding up an x-ray machine so that these religious leaders and all of us can see what's going on under the surface.

He wants us to see the heart of sin, the symptoms, okay, cool, we'll get there, okay. But he wants us to see what's going on underneath the symptoms, what's really going on underneath the surface here.

[13:59] And so here we have this outward and this inward reality to sin. And Jesus is going to show us that the inward reality, the hidden reality, is far more dangerous, far more insidious for followers of Jesus.

Because Jesus is going to show us that what these guys are grappling with is not just sexual sin, it's the sin of self-righteousness and pride. I've got a friend called Andrew Haslam.

He leads a church in London. And many years ago, I remember listening to a podcast of his, and he said this. He said, Christians don't just repent of their bad deeds, they repent of their good deeds done in self-righteousness and pride.

And when he said that, it hit me like a ton of bricks. I can still remember exactly where I was driving in Cape Town when I heard that. I thought, oh my goodness, that's profound. Christians don't just repent of our bad deeds, we repent of our good deeds that are done in self-righteousness and pride.

And what Andrew Haslam was showing us there is that sin is far more insidious, the sin of self-righteousness and pride is far more dangerous than just what we do with our lives and what is outward we manifest.

[15:09] And so notice a couple of things here with these religious leaders. Notice firstly their lack of compassion and their empathy. Why did they bring the woman to Jesus in the first place?

It wasn't because they had outraged at the moral decay of society. You know, people these days, really, the things they get up to, that's not why they bring the lady to Jesus. They've done it to set a trap.

They don't care about her. They're using her as a tool. They're using this lady as an instrument for their own political means. They're using her as a trap so that they can trap Jesus for their own political agenda.

They don't care rocks about this lady. They don't care if she dies or doesn't care. They don't care about it. Who do they care about? They care about themselves. Notice also their partiality or their favoritism.

The religious leaders, they come to Jesus and say, oh Jesus, we've got a problem. You know, Deuteronomy says in such instances we're going to have to stone the woman. We're going to have to drive the evil out of our community.

[16:11] See, that's true but Deuteronomy also says that what about the guy? I mean, it's not only the lady that's guilty. The guy is not innocent in this situation. Both of them are condemned but where's the guy?

He's nowhere to be found. Why? Because they've got an agenda. They've got an agenda. Their partiality, they're criticizing the one and they're turning a blind eye to the other.

But most importantly, notice their duplicity. Notice how they are more aware of the sins of others than their own insidious self-righteousness going on in their own hearts.

In the Old Testament, in order for someone to be condemned or convicted, you needed two witnesses, at least two witnesses, eyewitnesses. And they had to be eyewitnesses. They couldn't infer that this is probably what happened.

They had to see the event. And so here they come to Jesus and they say, Jesus, this lady has been caught in the very act. Now, commentators have often asked the question, how did two or more witnesses catch her in the act?

[17:20] Well, I mean, maybe they, you know, stumbled into a bedroom, but what were they doing in there? Okay. Maybe this couple were doing it in broad daylight. Okay, well, that's unlikely. I mean, think first century conservative Jewish values, unlikely.

What could have been happening, we don't know, but commentators have long suspected that what was actually happening is these religious leaders set her up as a trap. Maybe they got a guy and they said, listen, we'll pay you some money if you sleep with her and we'll be watching and we'll make sure that we'll storm in at the right moment.

Because they had to be more than one witness and they had to catch her in the act. Now, part of why we know this possibly happened is because when Jesus says, listen, the person amongst you that is without any sin, pick up the first stone.

In Jewish culture, what that didn't mean was that anyone who's never sinned at all because, I mean, that would never apply, right? Nobody is sinless. It didn't mean those of you that have never committed adultery.

What it meant is those of you that are innocent with regard to this action, in other words, you didn't know about it. You couldn't have prevented it in any way. There was nothing that you could have done to have stopped this.

[18:34] And what did they do? They dropped their stones and they slink off into the sunset. In other words, there's a good chance that these guys knew exactly what was going on. They either set her up or they were watching it taking place and they thought, time for our trap.

We've got a plan. But here's the thing. While they're aware of her sinfulness and Jesus' apparent floundering of God's word, they are completely blind to their own self-righteousness and their pride. Friends, how do you know if you're proud? How do you know if you're proud? Well, one of the telltale signs is that we're far more aware of the failings and the brokenness and the shortcomings of those around us than of ourselves.

We find it easy to notice everybody else's failings and yet we're blind to what's going on in our own lives. And Jesus comes and He names their sin.

He calls them out. Jesus is going to speak to women in a while. That's right. But right now, He's holding up an x-ray machine. He's saying, let's see what's going on in your own lives and your own hearts. Let me show you the cancer that's ravaging your own heart.

[19:42] Now, what does this mean for us here in Watermark, 21st century Hong Kong? Well, what it means is, one of the things it means is when we talk about things like sex and marriage and singleness and gender dysphoria and same-sex attraction and all these things, it's possible for us as a church to be technically right, to technically obey what God's Word said.

We say, okay, I'm not sleeping with my girlfriend, can't check. Okay, I haven't had an affair with anyone, can't check. Okay, I'm right with God. And one of the things that Jesus wants to show us is that we can be technically right and yet our hearts can be filled with the same self-righteousness and the same pride as the religious leaders.

We can technically be right and yet be far aware of everybody else's faults and failings, pointing the finger at everybody else, lacking compassion and empathy, tenderness and grace.

And so throughout the Gospels, what Jesus wants to show is that the life that Jesus called us to, yes, it's a life of walking in the light, yes, it's a life of purity and holiness, sure, but it's also a life that doesn't just honor Christ with our bodies, it's one that honors Christ with all of our lives, heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Jesus says the life He's called us to is a life of humble obedience, of compassion and tenderness, of compassion with those that are struggling. The cancer of self-righteousness.

[21:08] Now, contrasted to that is we see the beauty of Jesus, the beauty of Jesus. And when we see the beauty of Jesus, I want us to notice three things here. Firstly, the heart of Jesus, secondly, the work of Jesus, and thirdly, the instruction of Jesus or the appeal of Jesus.

Notice what happens here. What does Jesus do? These guys come and they say, Jesus, we've caught it in the act, what should we do? And the first thing Jesus does is He bends down and He writes with His finger in the dust.

Now, side note, what was Jesus writing in the dust, right? Well, the answer is we actually just don't know. All sorts of people have come up with all sorts of theories and He was writing this and He was writing this.

Actually, we just don't have a clue, right? So here's the question. This is a bit of a sidebar. Why does the author, Luke or whoever it is, why does the author put this in here?

I mean, it doesn't add anything to the story other than maybe a little bit of tension. Why is it in the story? I think the best answer is this, because it really happened.

[ 22 : 21 ] If somebody is making the story up, why would they write that? It doesn't add anything to their story. The reason that it's in the story is because whoever the witnesses were that saw this, saw this happen.

Okay, does that make any sense? It's just a sidebar to say we can trust the arbitrary nature of Scripture sometimes. If someone was making this stuff up, they wouldn't put these things in. Okay, coming back. So Jesus is writing to his finger in the dust. The religious leaders, they're just on a one-track mind, and they carry on because verse 7 says, they continue to ask him, what should we do?

Jesus says this, let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her. Notice the heart of Jesus here.

Jesus says, these incredible words, and I can imagine the lady, she's lying on the ground, and she feels the rope that maybe has tied her slacken.

[ 23 : 22 ] She hears and feels the thud of these rocks hitting the ground. First one, two, and then a whole heap as she sees these men, her accusers, slowly drift away.

And Jesus looks up and he says, where are your accusers? Has no one accused her? She says, no. And Jesus says these incredible words, neither do I condemn you.

Friends, just consider how remarkable it is that the sovereign God, Oscar led us in such an amazing prayer earlier. God immortal, invisible, the God only wise, the sovereign God of all creation, the one whom angels long to sing about, holy, holy, holy, the one whose scripture describes as lives in inapproachable light, the God that created the world, who has never once for one second in all creation ever sinned or ever had an immoral thought.

This perfect God of creation looks at this lady who has just been caught in the act of adultery and says to her, I do not condemn you.

John Stott says that this miracle is greater than all the miracles in the whole of the Old Testament. Jesus turning water into wine, Jesus walking on a storm-tossed sea, Jesus healing a dead, dying boy with a simple word, Jesus feeding 5,000 men and more with a snack lunch.

[ 25 : 07 ] All the miracles combined and together come nothing close to the simple words of Jesus that says, I do not condemn you. John Stott goes on to say, in this sentence and in the heart of mercy which lay behind it is all our hope and all our salvation forever.

Friends, what glorious words. Most of us will know the famous words of John 3, 16. The most famous words in the Bible, right? For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever should believe in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

But John 3 goes on to say then, verse 17, for God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through Him. Friends, Jesus Christ did not come into the world with a clipboard to grade your moral performance.

Jesus did not come with a grading sheet to see how well you measure up according to the standard, the IV standard of heaven. Jesus comes that we might be saved to Him.

Yes, it's true that if we will not name our sin, Jesus will do that. That is true. But Jesus does this in order that we might be set free, in order that we might own our sin and be saved through Him.

[ 26 : 27 ] Neither do I condemn you. In this sentence and in the heart of mercy which lay behind it is all our hope and all our salvation forever. Now when Jesus says, neither do I condemn you, Jesus does not say this for the same reasons that the religious leaders abandon their condemnation.

Right? They also walk out and they abandon their condemnation. They give up on their condemnation not because of their compassion but because of their hypocrisy as being exposed. Because they're confronted by their own sinfulness.

Jesus' lack of condemnation does not come from His guilt or His conscience or His modern view of tolerance. It comes from His abundant heart of tenderness and compassion and His grace towards sinners like us.

Friends, over the last five weeks we have touched on many deep and intimate and painful areas of our lives. We've asked the question about what do we do with our bodies and how do we honor Christ rather than selling our bodies in the pursuit of sin.

And as we said, for most of us these aren't just theories. These aren't just theological ideas. This is reality. This is pain. This is the shame that we carry in our lives.

[ 27 : 46 ] These are very real struggles that many of us grapple with in our day-to-day reality. For some of us it's grappling with same-sex attraction. For some of us it's gender dysphoria. Friends, for some of us here maybe you fell pregnant and you couldn't live with the shame of that and so you've terminated that life inside of you and now you live with the reality of that.

Friends, for some of us we've been unfaithful to our spouses and for the rest of our lives we'll live with the reality of that. Friends, for some of us it's the addiction of porn that feels like a rope around our neck.

And the truth is that all of us have compromised. All of us have made sacrifices and probably all of us here have felt the hurt and the pain of those, of others towards us.

All of us are both sinners and sufferers. And what that means, what Jesus wants us to see is that no matter what your past, no matter what you've done, no matter how tarnished your past, no matter how you stained your track record it is, no matter how disastrous your sin, no matter how radical you've sinned, the radical compassion of Christ towards you is able to cover the most devastating track record and past of your life.

Friends, there is nothing thank you, Elodie. Elodie agrees. Thank you. There is nothing in all the world that you can do that will disqualify you from the compassion of Christ your maker.

[ 29 : 22 ] Jesus Christ looks you and I in the eye and he says, if you're willing to own your sin, if you're not going to hide it like the Pharisees, if you're willing to own it, neither do I condemn you.

Friends, if that is not good news, I don't know what is. A little while ago, a friend of mine or someone very dear to me said this. He said, the great vaults of Christ's redemption and healing turn on the very small hinges of repentance.

Friends, there are vaults of redemption and healing that are more valuable and more precious than all the diamond fields of Russia and Namibia, the gold mines of wherever, the great vaults of Swiss bank accounts.

There are vaults of redemption and healing and it's accessible to every single one of us. This is the heart of Jesus. There is nothing, nothing that you can do that will out-sin Christ's compassion and tenderness for you.

And so as we talk about these things and as we carry the pain and the shame of our lives, friends, you are not disqualified. Jesus moves towards us. The heart of Jesus.

[ 30 : 40 ] Secondly, the work of Jesus. Now, when Jesus says, I do not condemn you, Jesus is not just being loose and easy with God's call for holiness.

Jesus is not just being modern and tolerant. Typically, when we are confronted with sin in our lives, there's typically two ways to handle it. The traditional or the religious way of handling it, maybe the moralistic way of handling it, is through self-atonement, through our moral performance.

So we try and perform or merit our way towards God's forgiveness. We think, if I can do enough, if I can serve enough, if I can give enough, if I can do enough stuff, God will be pleased with me and I'll earn my way into His good books.

The problem is that as we've already seen, that leads to either self-righteousness and pride when we do it or failure and despair when we don't. The other way of doing it is the more modern way of doing it, the relative, the way of tolerance, which is to say, hang on, who says that's sin anyway? We're all sinners. Who are you to say what's right or wrong? Who are you to judge me? What's right for you may not be right for me. What's right for me may not be right for you. So we just relativize it.

[ 31 : 56 ] But the problem is that if we downplay or re-relativize sin, we don't actually deal with the reality of it. And so for instance, you can say, oh well, you know, who's to judge, who's to say what's right and wrong anyway?

But try and say that to somebody whose child has just been sexually molested. You can't just say, oh well, you know, we live in a modern age and everyone's doing it these days and who's to say what's right or wrong anyway?

Relativizing sin doesn't deal with the pain and the agony and the anguish. It doesn't set us free. Jesus Christ doesn't do either of these things. Jesus doesn't say like modern culture, well, no one's perfect, everyone's doing it.

Just as long as you have good intentions, I'm sure you didn't mean to harm anyone. But Jesus also doesn't like traditional culture say, right, go to the temple and earn your forgiveness. Go offer the sacrifices, do this, pray 10 times a day and then you'll be forgiven.

Jesus does something altogether different. Jesus comes and he invites her to experience his forgiveness. Jesus is serious about sin.

[ 33 : 05 ] He's realistic about the fact that she's an adulterer. He's realistic about the deadly consequences of sin. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in no way undermines or diminishes the rightness of God's holy commands.

He's not downplaying the seriousness of sin. He calls her actions for what it is. Her guilt is real. But then he says, I do not condemn you. Now how does Jesus do that?

Why does Jesus say, I do not condemn you? Well, the one reason we already looked at is because of his unbelievable compassion, his tenderness. But the other reason is this.

Because Jesus is going to take her guilt upon himself. Friends, it's not only the compassion of Jesus, it's the sacrifice of Jesus.

You see, compassion is wonderful and compassion is amazing. But compassion doesn't bring about justice. Compassion doesn't justify God's righteous law.

[ 34 : 08 ] people. The reason Jesus could say those words and the reason Jesus could say those words to us is because in a few short days after saying this, Jesus Christ would go to the cross and he would take her condemnation, he would take our condemnation upon himself.

Friends, God fully intended for the sin of adultery to be punished to the full extent that his righteousness and his justice demanded. And yet it was just that she would not bear the condemnation of herself.

Jesus Christ, the only sinless man, the one man in history who rightly could condemn her, does not condemn her because Jesus takes the condemnation upon himself. Jesus says you are guilty but you're not condemned because Jesus who is not guilty will himself be condemned.

Jesus will allow himself to be condemned in her place so that all those who hope in him and trust in him though guilty can go free. Friends, remember the words of Isaiah 53?

Isaiah the prophet writes about this coming suffering servant, the one who will one day go to the cross and he writes about him and says he will be wounded for our transgressions. He will be crushed for our iniquities.

[ 35 : 22 ] Upon him will be placed the punishment that will bring us peace and with his stripes we will be healed and we all like sheep have gone astray. We have turned away every one of us his own way but the Lord has laid upon him the sin of us all.

Friends, when Jesus speaks these stunning words and says I do not condemn you it's not just because of the abundance of his niceness it's not just because Jesus is a lovely old grandfather it's not just because Jesus is overly nice or avoiding conflict it's because in a few short days he's going to go to Calvary and the condemnation that she deserves and that we deserve will be placed upon him so that we can go free.

Friends, the heart of compassion of Jesus the work of Jesus on the cross but then thirdly and finally the appeal of Jesus. look at verse 10 and 11 with me.

Jesus stands up and he says to her woman where are your accusers has no one condemned you? She says no one Lord. Jesus says well neither do I condemn you.

Go and from now on sin no more. I meant to say this earlier but notice the order Jesus does not say go and sin no more and then you will not be condemned.

[ 36 : 58 ] That's how every religion in the world operates. It's how every moral philosophy in the world operates. Do the right thing earn your stripes meet the grade you will not be condemned.

Jesus doesn't say go and sin no more and if you're good enough for the next six months you will not be condemned. Jesus says you are set free now go and sin no more.

having flooded her with grace Jesus now calls her to a life of obedience and Jesus is not just pronouncing forgiveness on her he's calling her out of darkness and into light he's calling her out of death and into life when Jesus calls us to forsake sin he's not calling to minimize our joy he's wanting to maximize our joy look at verse 12 with me Jesus says I am the light of the world whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life Jesus is not just saying okay we've dealt with your past okay all the best to you Jesus saying you are not condemned now walk out of darkness and come and walk in the light walk out of death and come to find life in John's gospel whenever John uses the word life he's not just talking about breathing as opposed to not breathing he's not just talking about eternal life after we die he's talking about heaven invading our lives now he's talking about the fullness of life remember

John 10 verse 10 I've come that you might have life and life in the full life to abundance Jesus says whoever follows me will no longer walk in darkness but will have the light life and says come and walk with me come and experience fullness of life follow me what he's saying is leave behind your shame leave behind the darkness he's saying come and find peace come and find fullness of joy come and experience the security and the identity that you long for Jesus grace calls us out of darkness and into light and friends it's important for us to note that sin has such a profound effect on us it's able to wound us so deeply sin is really serious that's why Jesus calls us to repentance but in calling us to repentance Jesus is not laying us with guilt and shame he's calling us to freedom and life Jesus calling us to walk in light and in life and so

Jesus says to her where are they has no one condemned you neither do I sin no more now what does all this mean how do we apply this to our lives well there's really one application here and that is for all of us no matter where we are on our spiritual journey no matter whether we've been walking with Christ for 30 years or we've been walking with Christ for three weeks come to Jesus come to Jesus the one who is full of compassion and come to Jesus freshly today and follow him and walk in the light friends you've got to come to Jesus and receive his grace if you try and earn his grace you'll find yourself disqualified and unable to do it if you come to Jesus but you try and relativize your sin you try and say everyone is doing it you'll find that you'll never be free from it you'll never be set free it will always have a power on you the only way to truly be free from the condemning voices of the past from the enslaving power of sin in the present the only way to truly be free is to come to

[ 40 : 51 ] Jesus freshly today friends come to Jesus and bring your sin to him his sacrifice is enough to cover your sin friends come to Jesus and bring your shame to him his grace is enough to cover your shame friends come to Jesus and bring your fears to him his faithfulness is enough to carry you through your fears friends come to Jesus and bring your longings to him his love is enough to satisfy the longings of your heart let's come to Jesus right now let's pray together Lord Jesus Christ in this passage we see just a small glimpse of the cancer of sin but also the beauty that is Jesus Lord Jesus thank you so much for your amazing grace God your amazing grace that would save a wretch like us Father the truth is that every one of us have been tainted by the reality of sin every one of us need to come and drink deeply

God of the wonder of your grace Father each one of us need to come to the vault of your redemptive mercy and healing grace God and find our restoration in need there Jesus thank you that your heart of compassion and your sacrifice on the cross bids us it calls us to come and do that God Lord as we come to the communion table I pray Lord that you by your spirit will minister to us deeply God for those of us that carry guilt and shame for those of us that have been walking in the dark for those of us God that have been taking steps towards death rather than life Jesus won't you come and join near to us now won't you come and heal us and redeem us restore us and renew us come and call us back to yourself we pray in your wonderful and your gracious name  
Amen