

John 8:2-11 (NKJV)

²Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. ³Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, ⁴they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. ⁵Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?”

⁶This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. ⁷So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” ⁸And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. ¹⁰When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

43-08-01-Pharisees Caught Red-handed

legalism, condemnation, conviction, forgiveness, sin, holiness

John 8:2-11 (NKJV)

Jesus uses conviction, not condemnation, to change people’s hearts.

INTRODUCTION: (text as Scripture Reading and NKJV throughout)

–*Temple guards*, sent to arrest Jesus, were themselves *arrested* by His words– John 7:45-46. Then the officers came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, “Why have you not brought Him?” The officers answered, “No man ever spoke like this Man!” Nicodemus spoke up in v.51, “Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?” But the majority had already made up their minds: “*Let’s get rid of this false teacher!*” –In Ch.8, they try a new strategy to *catch* and *condemn* Him. But like “the officers,” they get caught by Christ’s words. Instead of “*The Woman Caught in Adultery*,” my title is “*Pharisees Caught Red-handed*.” He *caught* them but didn’t *condemn* them. **HOM.idea.** But they set...

- I. A Trap for Jesus– v.2-3a**, *Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery.*
- A. Some Bible scholars think this passage is inauthentic, but:
1. Eusebius reports that Papias heard John tell this story. *ALSO...*
 2. It aligns with Christ’s character seen elsewhere in the Gospels (as in John 4, when He ministered to a Samaritan adulteress.)
- B. But perhaps the strongest reason for this story’s authenticity is its history of effective application by the Holy Spirit:
1. Over the years, God has repeatedly used this passage to convict legalists of their hypocritical vindictiveness and judgmentalism.
 2. But just as often, He’s used it to convince people trapped in sinful behaviors that He came *not to condemn sinners but to save them, to give them a fresh new start and an abundant new life!*)
- C. Jesus used a trap meant to catch Him as *a way to catch sinners*, so He could set them free from two different kinds of sin:
1. This story portrays those who condemn the sins of others without seeing their own sins. (They’re blinded by vindictive legalism.)
 2. It also portrays those who see their sins but are making *no effort to be rid of them*. (These are blinded by moral laxity.)
 3. Because Christians can have both of these problems, this story is

for us. (We cannot read it without seeing ourselves in it.)

TRANS: In the eyes of legalistic *Pharisees*, Jesus had gone too far. He kept rebuking them for *religious pride* and *unbelief*, as He did in— **Mat 21:31b**, “Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.” Wanting to silence Him, they planned catching Him in...

II. A Double-bind— v.3b-5. *And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?”*

A. They thought they’d trapped Him, regardless of how He replied:

1. If He didn’t support the death penalty prescribed by OT law, all would see that He was a *false teacher* for rejecting God’s Word.
2. If He said to obey the Law, He would demolish His popularity as the “friend of sinners”—as well as incurring severe political wrath, because Rome alone had jurisdiction over the death penalty.

B. Jesus surely must have discerned their motive— v.6a, *This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him.*

1. *Were they really concerned about the Law?— Lev 20:10*, “The man who commits adultery with another man’s wife,... the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.” (*So... where was the man?*)
2. In **v.6b**, *Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.* (Perhaps He wrote that OT verse in plain sight, or maybe, “*Where’s the guy?*” to expose their hypocrisy.)

TRANS: If Jesus *did* quietly write **Lev 20:10** in the dust, **He was using conviction, not condemnation, to change their hearts.** Finally, in **v.7a**, *when they continued asking Him, He did speak up, and...*

III. The Pharisees Were Caught Red-handed— v.7b-8. *He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.*

A. We’ve no clue what He wrote, either the *first time* or the *second*:

1. If it was the 10 Commandments (first half of them, followed next by the rest), the last commandment had a phrase that might have convicted each of them: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.”
2. But some think He added to the *convicting power* of His words by writing down their own personal sins for all to see.

B. Whatever He wrote, it gave them *time to consider their hypocrisy—*

v.9, *Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.*

1. God loves and wants to transform legalistic hypocrites— 2 Pe 3:9b, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.
 2. The Pharisees needed changed hearts and fresh starts as much as the adulteress. (**Jesus didn’t condemn them but convicted them**, so that *at some point, hopefully, they would change their ways.*)
- C. But, just as His love for the Pharisees didn’t ignore their religious hypocrisy, neither did it condone this woman’s sordid lifestyle— v.10-11, *When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”*

CONCLUSION:

—This story shows the depth of Christ’s compassion, but also the depth of sins *from which He came to save us*. Condemning others for sins that have hurt us or society makes us like the Pharisees. Jesus gave a severe warning in **Mat 6:15**. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Any stones held to throw at others must drop out of our hands and hearts, perhaps onto the very spot where the finger of God has written down our own sins right in front of us.

—This woman “*caught in adultery, in the very act,*” didn’t need her sins traced out in the soil. She was already *self-condemned*. Jesus, gently told this guilt-ridden woman, “*Neither do I condemn you;*” but with firm conviction, He added, “*go and sin no more.*” God made sure this story was preserved in Scripture as a mirror for self-reflection. It captures not just Pharisees and adulteresses, but every one of us, calling us all to confess our need for forgiveness and urging us, by the convicting power of His example, applied by the Holy Spirit, to seek changed hearts... and changed lives.