

Series: Hope For Hard Cases

THE CASE OF THE GUILTY WOMAN

JOHN 8:3-11

Text: John 8:10

John 8:10

¹⁰ *When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?*

Introduction:

The story *The Scarlet Letter* written by Nathaniel Hawthorne centers on a woman named Hester Prynne, living in 17th century Boston.

Prynne is forced to live everyday under a cloud of disgrace and shame, after giving birth to an illegitimate child. The laws of the Puritan society in which she lived required her to wear a scarlet-colored "A" upon all her garments as a constant reminder that she was an guilty of adultery.

The sin of adultery is certainly not a new one, and in John chapter 8, the Scribes and the Pharisees, in an effort to trap Jesus with His words, brought to Him a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery.

Those self-righteous religious leaders did not care about this woman, and had no real concern for what would happen to her. To them she was only a pawn; a weapon they could use against Jesus of Nazareth.

Little did they know, however, that by bringing this sin-wrecked and shame-ridden woman to Christ, they were actually doing her a favor.

There are three things I want you to notice with me from the story of this woman, and her encounter with Christ. Notice first of all:

1. THE SIN THAT TAINTED HER LIFE

We know nothing about this woman and what had led her to this terrible day that is recorded in John chapter eight.

Somewhere in her unrevealed past, she began losing her grip upon everything decent.

We don't know the circumstances that led her into the arms of a strange man, nor how she was discovered and exposed. But when we meet her in John 8, she is the humiliated subject after being arrested by the Jewish authorities.

The roads to sin's ruin may be many, but they all channel into the same dead end. Notice with me a

couple of things about the sin that tainted this woman's life. Notice first of all:

A. The Seriousness of Her Sin

John 8:4

⁴They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act.

This woman was taken in adultery, "in the very act."

B. The Shame of Her Sin

In your mind, try to picture this woman as she is pushed in front of this crowd, and her crime is publicly and loudly announced. Can you see her in your mind?

Her head is down, her cheeks flushed with embarrassment, and her eyes blurred with hot tears of anger and shame. One moment she had been experiencing the rush of sinful pleasure; the next she was weakened by the nauseous feeling of being exposed.

The Bible reveals that one of the basic side-effects of sin is the sting of shame. After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, one of their first reactions was that of shame.

Genesis 3:7

⁷And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

There is a second truth we see about this woman in this story. Think with me not only about *the sin that tainted her life*, but notice also further:

2. THE SENTENCE THAT THREATENED HER LIFE

As you read on in John 8, you find that public humiliation was not the only problem that this woman faced as a result of her sin. This woman's sin was a matter of life and death.

The Scribes and the Pharisees brought this woman to Jesus with a question of what her sentence and punishment should be. Notice a couple of things about the sentence that threatened her life.

A. What Was Demanded

John 8:5

⁵Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?

These men were referring to the law of God that was given through Moses in Leviticus.

Leviticus 20:10

¹⁰ And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

While these men's motives were corrupt, their claim was correct. If you will notice, Jesus does not dispute what the Law of God says.

As we look at the sentence that threatened this woman's life, notice not only what the law demanded, but notice also further:

B. What Was Deserved

It is very easy to view this woman in this story as a sympathetic figure, especially against the backdrop of the arrogant and conniving Jewish religious leaders.

However, you must not forget that she was "caught in the act." Before she was publicly humiliated, she was privately sleeping with someone other than her husband.

Nowhere in this text does Jesus indicate that this woman's sin was "no big deal", or that it was not worthy of punishment. Though in the end He did not condemn her, He in no way condoned her either.

This woman stood in front of her accusers under the sentence of death. The law demanded it, and her sin deserved it.

Thankfully, that is not where the story ends. Notice with me a third truth we draw from the story of this woman.

Notice not only *the sin that tainted her life*, and *the sentence that threatened her life*, but notice also lastly:

3. THE SAVIOUR THAT TRANSFORMED HER LIFE

In the text, Jesus dealt wisely with the accusing Scribes and Pharisees.

John 8:7

⁷So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

One by one they each realized that they too were in some degree guilty. Rather than an execution, there was only an exit.

All the plaintiff's left, and the Bible says, "...and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst."

John 8:9

⁹ And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

The accusers walked away, but the accused remained in the presence of Jesus. She could have slipped off as well, as the last of the men walked away, but she chose to stay with Jesus.

Notice a couple of things that I believe happened.
Notice first of all:

A. What She Recognized About Him

Instead of carrying this adulteress to the authorities to judge her, these religious leaders had brought her to Jesus. In reality, he had no legal authority to pronounce any sort of judgment on this woman. He was a preacher and a teacher, not a civil judge.

Yet, after the Scribes and Pharisees walked away, this woman waited to see what Jesus would do with her. It was as if she was waiting for His judgment. It was as if she had recognized Him as some sort of authority.

Notice carefully how she addressed Jesus in verse 11.

John 8:11

¹¹ She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

She called him “Lord.”

Notice what Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 12:3

1 Corinthians 12:3

³ Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

While the convicting power of God drove the accusers away, it drew the woman closer.

Standing before the one man who had no sin, and could have justifiably thrown that first stone, this woman stood still, “and there by faith, she received her sight”, and saw in Jesus someone who could do something about her sin and her sentence.

In this transforming meeting with the Savior, notice not only what she recognized about Him, but notice also further:

B. What She Received From Him

John 8:10-11

¹⁰ When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? ¹¹ She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

This woman had been thrust before Jesus as a guilty, condemned adulteress. She walked away from Jesus forgiven and freed from her condemnation.

Jesus gave her two life-changing things – a pardon, and a plan. Notice, He said to her, “Neither do I condemn thee...” Though He could have justifiably called for her death, and as the sinless Son of God, could have taken her life Himself, Jesus spared her from punishment.

Notice what the Lord told Nicodemus in John 3:

John 3:17

¹⁷ For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Notice the plan He gave her. He said, “...go, and sin no more.” Jesus offered her a new life, and a new road. He gave her a plan for holiness.

Close:

There are some who live their life in the shadows of guilt and shame. They feel as if the sunshine of God's love hides itself from them because of the marks of their sin.

For those people, this story in John 8 serves as an encouragement. Jesus is not interested in condemning you any further. If you feel the burning shame and guilt of your sin, then He is ready to forgive you if you will just look to Him.

The old accuser may say you are guilty, and you are. But Jesus knows how to answer the accuser.