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**What Jesus Came To Do (Part 2)**

**John 8:1-11**

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Does anyone get a little nervous when you're driving down the road and you pass a police car? I know I do. The first thing I do is take my foot off the gas pedal and look at my speedometer to check how fast I'm going. Then I usually hit the breaks. Most people get a little nervous when a police officer starts to follow them down the road. You're thinking, uh oh, what did I do now? No matter how nice law enforcement officers are, when they put on that uniform and get in that car, they strike fear in the hearts of people. There's a certain stereo type that goes with the job.

This experience is very similar to how many people experience God. He strikes fear in their hearts. For them, God is like a spiritual cop, rather than the Savior He wants to be. For them, God is up in heaven with a night stick, pacing back and forth, waiting for us to mess up so He can whack us – send a little hardship into our lives, a little illness, a little stress. Or He's got a light and He's shining it right in your eyes as He asks you incriminating questions you don't want to answer – questions that make you feel bad about yourself. A lot of people think of God like that, He's parked on the side of our lives and He's watching from the bushes to see if we're breaking His law. Then He'll write us out a sin citation and leave it there in our minds so in the middle of the night when we can't sleep, we think of it and we toss and turn, knowing we're guilty and wondering what the consequences will be.

The problem is when we view God as a spiritual cop, we tend to want to avoid Him, hide from Him. It's an image that makes us want to distance ourselves from God, run the other way. Today we're going to look at an interaction Jesus had with an individual that challenges us to think differently about God. It's the story about a woman who found herself at the wrong place at the wrong time, doing the wrong thing. She thought it was a coincidence. But as we will see – it was a God-incidence.

We read in the eighth chapter of the gospel of John, beginning with the first verse, "***Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives but early the next morning He was back again at the temple. A crowd soon gathered and He sat down and taught them.***" The thing to notice here is the word "crowd." Everywhere Jesus went He drew a crowd. People wanted to hear what He had to say. No doubt some of them were there to find fault with Jesus, to catch Him going against the religious authorities. Faultfinders are a sad bunch of people. They can't hear what Jesus is saying, how He came to set them free, because they're too busy finding fault with Him. The faultfinders were there that day.

It says, ***“As He was speaking some teachers of religious law and some Pharisees brought a woman they had caught in the act of adultery and they put her right in front of the crowd.”***

What’s going on here? Adultery isn’t something someone can commit alone. So where’s her partner? Why isn’t he brought before Jesus? A little investigating leads us to realize that this whole thing was staged by the religious authorities to allow the man to escape. The woman is the only one brought before the crowd, which was totally unnecessary. They could have put her in private custody while they talked to Jesus about her, but they didn’t because they were eager to humiliate her in front of everyone. This kind of abuse of women is still going on in parts of the Middle East today. Let’s keep looking at what happened and we will see that Jesus was a champion of women. He won this reputation by the way He treated women. He included them in His circle of friends. Women even traveled with Jesus and the disciples, working side by side with Jesus in His ministry. Openness to and inclusion of woman went completely against the accepted customs of the Jewish people. Men weren’t even permitted to talk to their own wives in public, let alone a single woman or another man’s wife. The Jewish officials were eager to trap Jesus and find fault with Him so they staged the whole thing. These religious faultfinders weren’t really concerned about justice at all or they would have tracked down the man involved. They were just concerned about finding fault with Jesus and they didn’t care if they humiliated a woman to do it. But Jesus did.

The story goes on, ***“They made the woman stand before the crowd, and said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commands us to stone such women. Now what do you say?’ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.”*** The key word here is the word “trap” because that’s what this whole thing was about. They wanted to find fault with Him so they could discredit Him and not have to listen to Him. They wanted to get rid of him by having him arrested. So what was the trap?

If Jesus said the woman should be stoned, He would incite a riot and the crowd would stone her to death. That would get the attention of the Roman government and they would come after Jesus because Jews, under Roman law, were not allowed to take matters of capital punishment into their own hands. If He said she should **not** be stoned, He would be going against the Law of Moses and nobody but nobody goes against the Law of Moses without being condemned.

The religious leaders were feeling pretty smug at this point. They had trapped Jesus in a no win situation. They were probably high fivin’ each other saying, “We got him now.” Then Jesus does something very odd. It says, ***“Jesus bent down and began writing in the dirt with His finger.”***

Everyone must have been craning their necks trying to see what Jesus was writing. But they couldn’t make it out so the Pharisees press Jesus for an answer. The Bible says, ***“He stood up and He answered***

*them, ‘If any one of you is without sin, let him cast the first stone.’ Then He stooped down and continued writing in the dirt again.”* An amazing thing began to happen. One by one the crowd began to leave, beginning with the oldest and wisest, until everyone was gone and it was just Jesus and the woman. The Bible says, *“Jesus stood up and said to her, ‘Woman, where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?’ ‘No one, sir,’ she said. ‘Then neither do I condemn you,’ Jesus declared. ‘Go and sin no more.’”*

What’s going on here? What are we supposed to walk away with? What are we supposed to gain from this encounter with Jesus? Very simply this: Jesus came not to condemn us but to transform us and set us free from a life of sin.

The Bible doesn’t tell us what happens to the woman. Just like the rich young man, we are left to wonder what happened next. We don’t know if she went back to her life of sin, or if she went on to follow Christ. We only know that she had the opportunity to see Jesus face to face and hear Him say, *“Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”*

This woman came face to face with her own sin. She was caught in the act. Then she came face to face with the Savior of the world and she experienced being forgiven. She was given another chance. More than anything, this passage reveals the heart of God – the character of God. It’s like a window into the very heart of God where we can see what He is really like. There are four things we can learn about God from this passage.

**First, He wants to replace our GUILT with GRACE.** As we hear the story, it’s tempting for us to identify with the Pharisees. After all, the woman was guilty. It’s also tempting for us to identify with Jesus and see ourselves in His shoes. We want to feel morally superior to others because we’re church folk. We don’t do the things unchurched people do. There’s only one problem. Jesus was morally superior but he didn’t look down on the woman. We may think we’d be as kind and forgiving as Jesus, when in reality we’re far more likely to be condescending and judgmental like the Pharisees. We think we’re so gracious, but really we’re as faultfinding as any one of those teachers of the Law.

Before Jesus can replace our guilt with his grace, we have to come face to face with our sin. Daily we are to acknowledge our sins before God in order to receive His grace. Romans 6:14 says, *“Sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”*

**The SECOND thing we learn about God is that He wants to replace your SHAME with SALVATION.** Grace is a daily thing, something we are to receive daily. Salvation is an eternal thing. Guilt accuses. Guilt says, "You did it wrong", but shame is something that comes a little later. Shame comes when you realize you can’t change what you’ve. Shame comes as a result of knowing you’re guilty. It’s what make you want to run and hide. It’s what leaves you feeling worthless and estranged

from God and from other people. **God wants to take our SHAME and replace it with the joy of our salvation.** God wants you to experience joy in His presence – knowing you’re forgiven and your slate is wiped clean. God remembers your sins no more and you would be wise to forget them too! Give them to the Lord and don’t take them back. You have nothing to be ashamed of once you’ve given your sins to God. They’re not yours any more. They’re His and He’s paid the penalty for them on the cross. We give Him our guilt and He gives us His grace. We give Him our shame and He gives us His salvation.

The Bible says, *“His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave Him great pleasure.”* (Ephesians 1:5) The Bible says, *“For since we were restored to friendship with God... we will certainly be delivered from eternal punishment by His life. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God – all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us [on the cross] in making us friends of God.”* (Romans 5:9-11)

**The THIRD thing we learn from the woman’s encounter with Jesus is that God wants to be our FRIEND.** He’s enabled us to be friends through what Jesus has done for us on the cross. He wants us to enjoy being with Him. In fact, He wants us to pursue him.

What kind of a friendship would I have with someone if I never pursued the relationship and I always made the other person initiate getting together? - Not much of one. It would only be a matter of time before that friendship dissolved into non-existence. Friendships take mutual pursuit. James 4:8 tells us, *“Come near to God and He will come near to you.”* We have to pursue God. We have to take the initiative to talk to God. If the woman caught in adultery would have turned and ran away when she saw all the accusers gone, she never would have spoken to Jesus and heard those wonderful words, *“Neither do I condemn you. Go and leave your life of sin.”* We have to pursue a relationship with Jesus.

God longs for us to relate to Him. He waits for us to relate to Him. He places Himself in our lives so that we will encounter Him. It’s not a coincidence that you and I experience His presence – it’s a God thing. He longs for us to talk to Him. He longs for us to spend time with Him. He longs for us to come into His presence, exposed as it were before Him and yet not afraid – respectful, but not ashamed. He longs to replace our guilt with His grace. He longs to replace our shame with His salvation. He longs for us to know Him and enjoy Him.

The Fourth thing we can learn from the encounter the woman had with Jesus is that God wants us to live a life free of SIN. He told the woman, “Go now and leave your life of sin.” You see, God knows how sin hurts us. He knows how sin destroys us. He knows the guilt and shame we experience because of sin and how disruptive these things are to our relationships with Him and with others. He

wants us to go and sin no more. He wants us to leave our life of sin and pursue a life in relationship with Him.