

## THE GUILTY WOMAN

**Key Verse: John 8:1-11**

**Key Thought: Jesus will Fight for you**

On March 22, 1824, an incident known as the Fall Creek Massacre took place in Madison County, Indiana. Six white men murdered nine Native Americans from the Seneca and Miami tribes and wounded another. Among the nine dead were three women and four children. The six men were arrested, tried and sentenced to death.

One of the men, a young man named John Bridge Jr., was sentenced to die by hanging for his part in the massacre. His execution date was set for June 3, 1825. His father, John Bridge Sr. and his uncle, Andrew Sawyer, were also to die on the same day. The other three men had previously been executed.

As a large crowd gathered to witness the execution, they were expecting the governor to pardon all the accused. With no sign of a pardon however, a sermon was preached, and the crowd waited expectantly. John Bridge Jr., along with the others, watched as his father and uncle were hanged.

Finally, John Bridge, Jr. was led to the gallows and the rope was lowered over his head. As the hangman waited for a signal, a cheer arose from the back of the crowd. A stranger rode forward and looked the condemned man in the face. "Mr. Bridge, do you know in whose presence you stand?"

Bridge shook his head no.

The stranger said, "There are but two powers known to the law that can save you from hanging by the neck until you are dead, dead, dead; one is the great God of the Universe, the other is J. Brown Ray, Governor of the State of Indiana; the latter stands before you."

As the governor handed the hangman a written pardon, the governor announced, "You sir are pardoned."

In an instant, what appeared to be a hopeless situation became a door of hope. John Bridge Jr. went back home, settled down, opened a dry goods store and died peacefully, fifty-one years later!

I told you that story to now ask you this:

Can you imagine the fear that must have gripped the heart of that young man as he watched his father and his uncle die, knowing that he was next?

Can you imagine the terror as he was led onto the gallows and that noose was placed around his neck? It must have been a moment of terror that few have ever experienced!

Our text tells us about a woman who knew just how John Bridge Jr. must have felt. The guilty woman, whose story is related here, knew that kind of fear. As she is brought trembling into the presence of Jesus, she knows in her heart that she is about to be stoned to death.

When this woman met Jesus, her life changed forever. Her sin was forgiven. Her guilt was removed. Her fear turned to peace. What appeared to be a hopeless case suddenly became a time of forgiveness, salvation and joy.

Let's imagine the scene. It is very early in the morning. Jesus is sitting in the Temple. A crowd has gathered around Him as He teaches them the word of God. It is a scene of peace and tranquility.

Suddenly, the quiet is shattered by the commotion of an approaching crowd. Angry male voices are shouting. There is sound of a struggle. With a trembling voice, a woman cries out for mercy.

In the next moment the crowd reaches Jesus, and an upset, weeping woman is thrown at His feet. Her accusers launch their attack against her. They claim to have caught her engaged in a horrible sin. They bring her to Jesus, and they demand that He answer a simple question: "We caught this woman in the act of committing adultery. The Law of God says this woman should be stoned to death. What do you say about this woman and her sin?"

Notice with me the facts of her story that teach us about the marvelous grace of God as we consider The Case of The Guilty Woman.

## **I. THE SINNER AND HER GUILT**

a) **The Woman and Her Sin** - This woman was caught in "*the very act of adultery.*" Evidently, this woman was betrothed to be married. I say that because betrothed women who were found guilty of adultery were stoned, while married women were strangled.

She was caught having sexual relations with a man to whom she was not engaged. She was guilty of a terrible sin, of that there was no doubt. Her guilt is beyond question.

Let me just say, adultery is a vile sin. We have whitewashed it in our day, and we call it “an affair.” God calls it adultery and He says it is a sin!

It’s easy to see why.

- . It breaks the Law of God; It violates marriage vows.
- . It breaks hearts and destroys families.
- . It cheapens sex, and it destroys trust.
- . It shatters dreams, and it is horrible, evil, and inexcusable.
- . It *should* never happen, but it does.

Yet, as horrible as the sin of adultery is, it is no worse, in the eyes of God, than any other sin, ***James 2:10***. All sin is evil in His sight.

Certainly, some sins carry greater consequences than others. For instance, adultery can destroy your marriage; you might acquire a sexually transmitted disease; or a multitude of other terrible things can happen. Contrast that with someone who takes a piece of candy from a store without paying for it. That happens and only God and the shoplifter know anything about it.

We look at those sins and we think they are worlds apart. While they do carry vastly different consequences if the sinner is caught, in God’s eyes, however, they are the same thing. They are both sin!

Sin, regardless of how large or how small we think it is; it is just a reflection of the depravity that exists within the human heart. In fact, even if we could somehow live our whole lives without committing a single sin with our bodies or in our minds, we would still stand guilty as sinners before the Lord!

***“As it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. “Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes.”***

***Romans 3:10–18***

*“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,”*

*Romans 3:23*

Each of us is just as guilty of sin as this adulterous woman, our problem is that we simply won't admit to it. And, admitting that we are a sinner is the first step towards finding forgiveness.

**b) The Woman and Her Shame** - This poor woman was grabbed up from the place where she was engaged in adultery. In their haste to bring this woman to Jesus, her accusers may not have given her sufficient time to get properly dressed. She is exposed physically. She is humiliated.

Beyond that, her true spiritual condition is exposed for all to see. Everyone knows what she is and what she has done. She is brought to public shame. I wonder if she saw just how shameful her sin was in the eyes of the Lord?

Sin is a shameful thing!

. It is shameful when it is being committed.

. It is shameful when it is a sin of the heart or a sin in the flesh.

. It is shameful when it is done in the open, or when done in secret.

The sinner will always be brought to shame, if not before other people, surely before the Lord.

For, no matter how skillfully sin is hidden from the eyes of others, Jesus knows all about it.

*“The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good,”*

*Proverbs 15:3*

One day hidden sin will be revealed for all to see. That is the Lord's clear statement.

*“What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.”*

*Luke 12:3*

**c) The Woman and Her Sentence** - This woman was guilty, and the men who accused her were correct; she deserved to die. The Law of God said so.

***“If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress are to be put to death.”***

***Leviticus 20:10***

***“If a man is found sleeping with another man’s wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.”***

***Deuteronomy 22:22***

Adulterous women who were engaged were stoned to death, married women were strangled, and if the woman was the daughter of a priest, she was to be burned to death.

These types of execution sound harsh to us, but they were instituted to protect the sanctity of sex, the holiness of marriage, and the moral purity of the nation of Israel.

Of course, there was a little problem with their accusation: Where was her partner?

Both were supposed to die for this sin! The man may have been part of this scheme to attack Jesus. He may have been allowed to slip away. Regardless of where the man was, this woman was guilty, and she deserved to die.

Again, there is a lesson here for us: nobody gets away with sin! Sin demands a price, and that payment always comes due. If you are not saved, you need to know that there will be a payday associated with your sin. The ultimate price will be paid when you die. If you die without Jesus, you will go to Hell. From there, you will one day stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and be cast into “the lake of fire.” The Bible calls that “the second death,” and that is the future every lost soul faces. The only hope any sinner has, is found in Jesus, as He is the only hope anyone has in this world or the one to come. Jesus is the only way!

This woman is trapped! What can she do? She can’t deny her sin; she was caught in the very act of adultery. To whom could she plead her case? The Law condemned her. The crowd condemned her. The religious establishment condemned her. No one would speak for this woman, but while she didn’t know it yet, she had found One who would stand for her!

Oh, the foolishness of these scribes and Pharisees! In their effort to humiliate this woman, and to discredit the Lord, they brought her to the best possible place. They brought her to the very man who could deal with her sins in grace and forgiveness. They brought her to the one man who could save her soul!

Let me just remind all the guilty sinners in this room, Jesus loves you, and He cares about you. He is the sinner's Friend! In His day, Jesus was known to hang out with notorious sinners. Jesus isn't concerned about His reputation, He is only concerned with your eternal soul!

## **II. THE SOLICITORS AND THEIR DECEIT**

a) **Their Shameful Scheme** - These religious legalists were attempting to pin Jesus on the horns of a dilemma.

If Jesus let the woman go without condemning her sin, He would be seen as being easy on sin. He could be labeled a compromiser and could have been arrested for violating the Law. If, on the other hand, He endorsed the stoning on this woman, He could then have been accused before Rome as a newcomer and a rebel, destroying His reputation as being the “friend of publicans and sinners.” They felt that no matter what Jesus said, He had no wiggle room.

We know this was a setup. It was an attempt to trap Jesus to get rid of Him. Either they could discredit Him with the people, with Rome, or in His relationship with the Law. This brings a couple of questions to my mind.

. How did they accomplish this? Did they witness a suggestive glance between two people and follow them to try and catch them in adultery? Did they orchestrate the adultery simply to destroy Jesus? If so, this would explain the lack of an accused male. The man could very well have been one of them!

How were so many men able to witness this act? Where was their compassion for the woman?

It's sad that they would use this woman to achieve their own selfish ends with no regard for the condition of her soul. It's obvious that she needed help. They didn't care. All they cared about was destroying Jesus and His ministry.

This just reminds us that religious legalists never change. They cared nothing about this woman, her sin, her soul, or her eternal destiny. They cared nothing about right and wrong. All they cared about was pressing their agenda, attacking their enemy, and promoting their brand of righteousness. Things haven't changed! All Pharisees are the same!

**b) Their Shocking Setback** - Their scheme might have succeeded had they tried it with someone else, but they were dealing with the Lord Jesus Christ, and He refused to play by their rules! When they attacked Jesus, they came against a man who knew what was in their hearts.

**1. *How Jesus Reacted to Them (V.6)*** - Notice how He responded to their accusations. While they were talking to the Lord, asking Him His opinion about the woman, her adultery, and the demands of the Law, Jesus did something very strange. He knelt and began to write on the ground. This is the only time we have a record of our Savior writing anything during His earthly life.

The question that has plagued the minds of Bible students for 2,000 years is this: What did Jesus write when He wrote with His finger on the ground? As I said, many people have put forth many possible answers to that question.

Today, I am going to give you a deep theological answer: I don't know, and neither does anyone else!

While I can't tell you with certainty what Jesus wrote, I can give you some things to think about. Let's speculate for a moment.

. Perhaps He was reliving the moment when His finger first touched the dirt. On that occasion, He formed a man from the dirt and breathed into Him the breath of life. Perhaps He was reflecting on how far humanity had fallen from that lofty beginning. A woman guilty of adultery. A crowd of men who claimed to love God, but who had no love for a sinner. It must have broken His heart. It still does!

. Perhaps He wrote the Ten Commandments. After all, it was his finger that wrote them in stone when He gave them to Moses. He wrote these words here in the dust. These words would be trampled underfoot in just a short time. When He gave Israel the Commandments in Exodus 32, it only took a short time before they too were trampled underfoot.

. Perhaps He wrote their names in fulfillment of *Jeremiah 17:13*, which says, “***O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.***”

. Perhaps He wrote the names of their girlfriends in the sand.

. Perhaps He was simply ignoring them. This is the most likely explanation for the Lord actions. When someone speaks to us and we busy ourselves with something else, it signifies that we do not esteem that person as being worthy of our attention.

Whatever the Lord wrote on the ground that day, it arrested their attention. They were convicted by His words, and they dropped their rocks, their demands for justice, and they left. He knows how to speak to our hearts as well, doesn't He?

***2. What Jesus Revealed About Them (V. 7-9)*** - When Jesus did speak, He stood back up and He said, “***Stone her! But let the man without sin be the one to cast the first stone.***” Jesus wasn't requiring that these accusers be sinless. If that was the case then no human would ever be able to render judgment in any matter, even in a court of law.

When the Jews carried out an execution of this sort, they took the accused to a high scaffold they had built over a pit. The Law required two witnesses to convict a person of a crime punishable by death. The accused and the two witnesses mounted the scaffold. One witness was required to push the accused off the scaffold into the pit. If the fall killed the accused, the execution was over. If they survived the fall, the other witness was required to cast a stone called “the stone of finishing” onto the chest of the accused. If the accused survived that, the others attending the execution took up stones and finished killing the accused. This was done to underscore the seriousness of making accusations against others.

So, the Jews demanded that one of the accusers cast the first stone, “the finishing stone.” That stone was supposed to be thrown first to stun the victim before the rest of the stones began to fall. I think what Jesus may have been saying to these hypocrites was, “He that is free from this particular sin, let him first cast a stone at her.” Adultery was rampant in that society. Jesus said as much when He called that generation an “adulterous generation.” In fact, God had instituted a means for a jealous husband to determine whether his wife was guilty of adultery.



The test was called “The Law of the Waters of Jealousy,” Numbers 5:11-31. If the wife was guilty, she would die. If she lived, she was innocent. However, if the husband was guilty, the test would not work at all. By Christ’s day, adultery was so prevalent that the test had been abandoned. These men were guilty, and they knew it!

Here’s the takeaway from this thought: adultery can be committed with the heart just as surely as it may be committed with the body! At this point, all the shouting came to a stop and all that could be heard was the dropping of their rocks and the shuffle of their sandals as they quietly slipped away. These men had been exposed before their fellow man, the accused lady and most importantly before the Lord.

Before we leave this thought, we should at least give these men credit for the fact that when they saw themselves as they really were, they stopped calling for the death of this woman. I want you to know that one of the hardest things you will ever do is see yourself as you really are! When you do see yourself as you are, you will be in a place to do something about it.

### **III. THE SAVIOR AND HIS GRACE**

If you will allow me, I want to backtrack for a moment. As I mentioned a moment ago, we will never know, this side of Heaven, just what Jesus wrote on the ground that day. And guess what? It doesn’t matter! What matters is this statement in verse 6, “But Jesus knelt down...”

Consider this:

When Jesus knelt that day:

- . He descended below the scribes, the Pharisees, his disciples, the crowds that had gathered in the temple, and even below the guilty woman standing before Him.
- . Her accusers had to look down to see her, now they had to look even lower to see Him!

Kneeling was not a new thing for Jesus! He often kneeled during His ministry.

- . He knelt to wash the feet of His disciples. He knelt to touch a poor leper.
- . He knelt to embrace little children. He knelt to catch Peter when He was sinking in the waves. He knelt to pray in the Garden of Gethsemane. He knelt to allow the Roman soldiers to beat Him with a cat o’ nine tails. He knelt to carry His cross to Calvary.
- . He knelt here to write in the dirt.

His kneeling is a picture of His grace. Let's notice how the Lord extended grace to this sinful woman. When Jesus knelt here, He knelt for this woman. When He stood up, He stood up for her too!

a) **How Jesus Confronted Her** - When the last rock had hit the Temple floor, Jesus stood up and faced this sinful woman. Standing there before her, He was the only One the world has ever known Who was qualified to take up those stones and execute her for her sins. When she faced Jesus, she was facing the ultimate judge! She came to a place where life came down to just Jesus and her. It always comes down to that! Eventually, somewhere, someday you are going to have to face Jesus. Eventually, somewhere, someday you are going to have to bow to Jesus!

I am sure that He has given you many opportunities in this life to come to Him. What have you done with those opportunities? You will either bow to Jesus Christ here, when you come face to face with Him, or you will bow to Him when you face Him on judgment day. Which would you rather it be? In the end, it always comes down to just you and Jesus. And what you do with Him will determine where and how you spend eternity.

b) **How Jesus Cleansed Her (V. 10-11)** The only One qualified to throw a stone refused to! Jesus dealt with her based on mercy and grace. She deserved judgment, but He gave her forgiveness! Those religious men condemned her and said she was worthy of death. Jesus saw someone who was worthy of His love. He saw someone worth saving.

Jesus looked at that guilty woman and said, ***“Woman, where are your accusers? Has no man condemned you?”*** His question is this, “Are there any witnesses against you? Has anyone passed sentence on you?”

Her answer is simple, ***“No man, Lord.”***

His forgiveness is instant, ***“Neither do I condemn you.”***

When this woman looked to Jesus by faith and received the grace He offered to her, her salvation was immediate. That's how it works for all of us!

**Romans 10:9 says, *“If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”***

It doesn't get any easier than that! Even small children can comprehend that truth and make it real in their lives. What about you? Have you taken this step of faith? Everyone who comes to Jesus by faith receives forgiveness for all their sins and absolute freedom from all condemnation!

**c) How Jesus Completed Her** - When Jesus cleansed her, He said, “Go and sin no more.” All her life, this woman had been subject to Satan. She had been a prisoner of her own lusts and desires. Jesus came to her and unlocked the shackles that bound her to her sin, and He set her free!

How her life must have changed! Think of her years later as she looks at her children and her husband. A family she would have never had if she hadn't met Jesus. Think of the other families that were spared the pain of her adultery.

Jesus specializes in taking wasted, ruined lives and saving them by His grace and restoring them to usefulness. Every person who comes to Jesus for salvation receives a new life!

In verse 10 Jesus called her “*Woman*”. He only used this term twice in the Gospel of John. Once in chapter 2 and again in chapter 19. Both times it was a title of honor applied to His mother Mary. It would be equivalent to the term “lady”. It was a term of honor given to a woman worthy of honor.

This woman was anything but a “lady”. Jesus has a way of seeing things that are not as though they were. In other words, He did not see this woman as she was, He saw her as she could become through Him! Jesus took a wicked, godless, carnal, sinful woman and turned her into a lady!

When Jesus looks at a life, He sees the person they can become through faith in Him. Just so you know, your life doesn't have to remain like it is right now. It can be better, it can be new, and pleasing to the Lord, but only if you will come to Jesus!

How was all this made possible? Why did the accusers drop their stones and leave the Temple? Why was the Lord able to forgive this sinful woman? Why is He able to offer people like us His grace and His salvation?

He can do all that and more because He stooped. Think about it!

- . He stooped to be born in a manger! Phil 2:5-8
- . He stooped to live in poverty! 2 Cor. 8:9
- . He stooped to work as a carpenter!
- . He stooped to eat with sinners!
- . He stooped to be hungry, tired and thirsty!
- . He stooped to sleep in a boat!
- . He stooped to sit on a well!
- . He stooped to spend time with tax collectors!
- . He stooped to touch lepers!
- . He stopped to be beaten!
- . He stooped to be spit upon!
- . He stooped to be ridiculed and mocked!
- . He stooped to be nailed to a cross!
- . He stooped to be crucified!
- . He stooped to bear our sins in His Own body!
- . He stooped to die!
- . He stooped to be buried!

Three days later, Hallelujah, He stood up!

When He did, everything changed! Sin, death, Hell, Satan, and the grave were all defeated!

***In Closing...*** I want to tell a story. It takes place at a special chapel service in an Ohio penitentiary, where the governor was to grant freedom to several convicts. The suspense mounted as it came time for the governor to announce the names of those selected. "Reuben Johnson, come forward and receive your pardon!" No one responded. The chaplain directed his attention toward Johnson and said, "Reuben, it's you, come on!" But the man looked behind him, supposing there must be someone else by that name. Then, pointing directly at him, the chaplain exclaimed, "That's right, you're the man!"

After a long pause, he slowly approached the governor to receive his pardon. Later when the other prisoners marched to their cells, Johnson fell in line and began to walk with them.

The warden called, "Reuben, you don't belong there anymore. You're a free man!"

I just want you to know that your life does not have to be lived out in the prison house of sin. You do not have to be a slave to your passions. You do not have to die and go to Hell.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, stooped for you! He came to this world and died that you might live. He came to set you free. He can deliver you from the sins that torment you. He can deliver you from dead religion. He can give you a new life. All you need to do is accept His grace just like this woman did. When you do, salvation will be the result!

*This poor woman's story speaks to us today.  
This story teaches us that no sinner is too far gone.  
It teaches us that no one's guilt is too deep.  
It teaches us that no one is beyond the reach of the grace of God.  
This is a story of hope amid hopelessness.*

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Place: FCA  
Time: 10:30am  
Date: Sunday, November 17, 2024  
After Service: "Who You Say I Am"