

No condemnation

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Preacher: Peter Naylor

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... death penalty was what the Lord demanded. And that penalty, as it were, was designed to highlight God's view of this sin, the seriousness of it in the eyes of the Almighty, and the death penalty was also a token of judgment to come.

The death penalty was not the end of the matter. Those who died in their sin had yet another judgment to face. And so I ask you, first of all, to consider the situation of this woman.

Earlier that night she had gone out in search of her own pleasures. And doubtedly she had no idea that she was going to be caught, but suddenly, suddenly she was caught, and suddenly she had been pronounced guilty.

[9 : 22] And as far as she was concerned at this moment, within an hour or two, she was going to be dispatched into eternity. And it was a lost eternity.

Here was a lost and perishing sinner. That's what you're seeing. I ask you to imagine the woman's own thoughts. She must have realized that within the hour she would be dead.

Within the hour she would have left this scene, and all her pleasures had brought her to the mouth of hell. That's the woman's situation.

And now I want to talk to you about what happened to her. The first thing I would say to you is, in verse 3, we read these words.

They brought her. Sorry, it's verse 2, isn't it? No. It's verse 3.

[10 : 24] They brought her to him. They brought her to Jesus. They didn't stone her straight away, but they brought her to Jesus.

And their motives in bringing her to Jesus were black. They really were black.

They weren't just interested in her death, but they wanted his death as well. They wanted to trap him.

They were just using her as bait to destroy him. Moses says this, but what do you say? Let's hear you contradict Moses.

Let's catch you in your words. They brought her to Jesus, and their motives were wicked. But I would say this to you, that for me, that is the most wonderful and gracious providence.

[11 : 30] What a wonderful thing they did for that woman in bringing her to Jesus. There are many examples in the gospel of sinners who have been brought to him, and it has been the turning point of their lives.

You can think of the criminal, the thief on the cross. What an amazing thing that after that life of violence and rebellion, that criminal life, that brigand's life, after all of that, in the very last hours of his life, he should be nailed to the tree as it were in the very sight of the Savior.

Observing the Savior. And that was a crucial eternity changing thing in that thief's life. And so it is for this woman.

this act, they meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. They brought her to Jesus. Every one of us who have come to him in that way, we find an echo of this in our heart.

We can thank God for the day when he brought us to his Son. Whatever the providence was, whether we were born in a godly family, or friends brought us to Christ, whatever it is, coming to him is the moment of grace.

[13 : 01] And I, for one, thank God that I was brought to Jesus Christ to know him. They brought her to Jesus. Now, what I want to say to you this morning is I want to look at what Jesus did with her.

And really to focus on three things that he said to her. in verse 10, he looks up. This is the first thing.

Three things that our Lord Jesus says to this woman. In verse 10, he looks up and he says to her, woman, where are your accusers? Where are your accusers?

Now, we know where they were. Our Lord had dispatched them with a word. Isn't it such a wonderful scene?

At first, they come pushing this woman's case and he ignores them and writes on the ground. Carries on with his teaching. And then, because they press him, he stands up.

[14 : 07] Let him who is without sin among you cast the stone at her first. And that word from Christ tells them. It cuts them. And they go, beginning with the older ones and down to the answers.

Our Lord Jesus Christ dispatched her accusers with a word. He cut through their hypocrisy and sent them packing. And I want to, as it were, digress for a moment and remind you that that is one of the things that Jesus Christ does for all his people.

He silences their accusers. In fact, he silences the great accuser of the brethren, the devil. That is one of the things that Christ does for his church.

He silences every word, every mouth that is against them. No wonder Paul could write in Romans, there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

And that's the first thing. Woman, where are your accusers? Do you know, he is the king. And one of the duties of the king in Israel was to rescue the poor and the oppressed, the needy.

[15 : 23] He will rescue the needy when he cries. Well, this woman didn't even cry, but there he goes in and he stops those who would kill her. He sends them away.

He silences their accusations. So, that's the first thing. These wonderful words. Woman, where are your accusers? And then, the second thing he says to her.

He says, has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you. Those words. I do not condemn you.

And I ask the question, how did the Lord Jesus say that? Was he exploiting a loophole in the law?

Well, since there is no witness now, since there is no accuser, you are free to go. Was he exploiting a weakness, a loophole, not a bit of it?

[16 : 27] Was he going soft on sin? Was he saying, well, under the new covenant this is not as bad as under the old? Far from it. Was he sweeping aside and cancelling the law?

No. He insisted that every jot and tittle would be fulfilled. Do not think that I came to abolish the law and the prophets. Our Lord Jesus would never do that.

Was he simply saying to her, well, we must forget it. We must draw a line under it. We must start with a clean sheet. No, none of that. None of that. I asked the question, how did our Lord Jesus manage to say to her, I do not condemn you, when he knew that she was guilty?

And you and I know, I think, that there was only one way that our Lord Jesus could ever speak those words. there was only one way.

The penalty of the law had to be suffered. There was only one way he could say that to the woman. That is, if another took her sin and her punishment.

[17 : 43] The law had to be satisfied somewhere else. And I think you and I know that when our Lord Jesus said to this woman, neither do I condemn you, he was, as it were, saying it in full anticipation of the certainty of Calvary in six months' time.

You are not condemned because your guilt, your sin, your condemnation will fall on another. and the one on whom it would fall was standing before her.

No wonder Isaiah speaks as he does words that I personally read at many communions. All we like sheep have gone astray.

We have turned every one to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Our Lord could only say these words to the woman in the knowledge that the Lord would lay on him the iniquity of this woman.

Neither do I condemn you. Peter writes in 1 Peter chapter 2 who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree that we having died to sins might live for righteousness by whose stripes you were healed.

[19 : 19] There we have it in that line. The great atonement. Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Behold the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep. Neither do I condemn you. And then woman where are your accusers?

Has no man condemned you? Neither do I condemn you. But he hasn't finished. And thirdly go and sin no more.

Go and sin no more. Now that is a command to the woman. It is a call to her to repent.

Put away this life of adultery. End it go and sin no more. But you know in the context of grace it is more than a command.

[20 : 32] It carries as it were in it a promise. When our Lord Jesus says to this woman go and sin no more there is also a promise involved in that word.

Because we do not have the strength to go and sin no more. Every time we rise up and say well I will go and sin no more in my own effort.

We fall. We go back to the sins which trap us or we commit new sins. Go and sin no more. I cannot do it. There is a promise in here.

Here is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. This is a promise of grace. You see in this command as it were having drawn the woman away from her accusers having pronounced the forgiveness of her sins.

He lays out the promise that the Holy Spirit will take her forward. This is grace. Not effort. Not effort.

[21 : 34] But grace upon grace. The blood of the atonement and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. No wonder when our Lord finishes with the woman.

He turns and says to the crowd and his disciples, I am the light of the world. I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in darkness.

So, this morning, when we look at this scene in the temple, it brings us right to our Lord Jesus Christ and what he does for us.

He is the one who is really described as the sinner's friend. He is the Messiah King who redeems his poor people when they cry to him.

He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one who at Calvary cast out the ruler of this world, silenced the accuser of the brethren.

[23 : 00] He is the one who has washed the saints in his blood. He is the one whose perfect obedience, his unassailable righteousness, clothes us in white.

He is the one who pours out his Holy Spirit on his people so that they may have strength from above to follow him.

As Isaiah said in chapter 44, I am he who formed you, I will help you, I will pour out my spirit upon you and upon your seed.

May God grant that he will do that, even for our children. When we come here and we see Christ, we remember him crucified at the table, we commune with him, our living Lord, when we draw from God the blessings and the benefits purchased for us and reserved for us in the heavenly places, when we think of the great mercies of our God here, and we also remember those that we love, who are as yet outside Christ, and we pray for them.

Lord, would you spare and have mercy upon them as you have mercy upon me. Oh, may God grant us to find a view of Christ at the table, that adulterous deliverer, our Saviour, and our God.

[24 : 42] Amen. Amen.