

Neither do I condemn you.

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Date: 26 April 2026

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[0 : 00] Okay, I'm going to read a piece of scripture to start today. The title of today is Neither Do I Condemn You.! See, I can change the name of my sermons as well.

Threw me into confusion last week and John renamed his sermon suddenly without warning. And I thought I was on the wrong bit. But anyway, Neither Do I Condemn You, I've renamed this today. We're looking at John 8, verse 1 to 11. If you want to turn there in your Bibles, if you want to follow on the screen, that's great because that's there as well. It's in the NIV version.

So I'm going to read this now. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts where all the people gathered around him. And he sat down to teach them.

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group.

[1 : 01] And Jesus said, Teacher, this woman... Sorry, I'll say that again because I've completely messed it up. And they said to Jesus, that's better. Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.

In the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say? They were using the question as a trap in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.

Again, he stooped down and wrote on the ground. Must have been quite unnerving that. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time.

The older ones first. Until only Jesus was left. With the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, Woman, where are they?

[2 : 19] Has no one condemned you? No, sir, she said. No one, sir. Then neither do I condemn you, Jesus declared.

Go now and leave your life of sin. So that's the passage we're looking at today. I think it's probably worth saying because you might pick up a Bible and find that this is a noted bit of passage.

It's got a little note with it. Scholars think it's unlikely that this account was part of the original contents of the Gospel of John. I better put my glasses on. It appears to have been added to later accounts and manuscripts at different places in John itself.

And one manuscript places it in Luke 21 verse 38. And because of this, there was initially some early doubt among scholars about whether it should be included.

With other manuscripts having it marked to indicate this doubt. I know in my own Bible, it's written in smaller type and there's a little note on it to say that it wasn't in early versions.

[3 : 32] However, I don't want to go down that rabbit hole because we'll never get out of it if we go up there. I'm sure. After all, I think the basis is if you believe that God has divinely ordained the Bible as it is, that it's God-breed, and that it was written by men, that's a very important factor, as the Spirit moved them.

And acknowledging that we know the Bible as we know it today probably took as long as 1,500 years to be written and collate. The fact that manuscripts changed during that time isn't perhaps something that we should give a reason to quickly dismiss it.

After all, I mean, I know from my own experience that being the man that I am, I often forget things when Sue sends me to the shops. And she's very quick to remind me when I come back.

And I also fail to remember the things and do the things that God tells me to do sometimes. And God's Spirit has often had to remind me about them.

So bear in mind the organic and living nature of the Word. I tend to settle myself, okay, that what God has put before us today is what God wants us to see, to meditate on and apply in our lives. [5 : 05] So that's a bit of background, just really. I thought it worth mentioning that. It's interesting as well that this passage starts with a but in verse 1. Not usual.

It was used to tell me it's going to never start your sentences with a but. But this one does. But it makes more sense if you include it. And in many Bibles, it's actually included with either chapter 7 after verse 53 or at the beginning of chapter 8 with 53 sort of pulled in at the side because they fit together, really.

They make a lot more sense. Either way, together, it makes a more sensible reading because it offers us a contrast, I think. As John shared last week, the Pharisees were arguing with Nicodemus about the identity of Jesus.

Okay? I like this bit in verse 52 where they really get snotty and they say to Nicodemus, you from Galilee as well. Yeah? You're just favouring him.

Look into it and you'll find that a prophet never comes out of Galilee. They were wrong, of course. Because Jonah came from Galilee. But anyway, the bit I want to really draw your attention to right at the start, really, it's verse 53 slash verse 1.

[6 : 21] And it says this. There's all this kerfuffle going on about the identity of Jesus. People really questioning, is this one the Messiah? And I think this verse sums up the Pharisees at the time.

Then they all went home. They all went home to their comfortable little existences in their little houses as if nothing momentous was happening. Let's get this straight.

We're looking at the most momentous time in history. The fulfilment of Jewish prophecy in the Old Testament. You know, you could argue that actually the whole of history is written for this point. There is no point in history without this point. And the people around them, perhaps the less well-educated ones, the ones who are willing to hear, they're saying, no one speaks the way this man Jesus does.

No one does the things that Jesus does. No one loves the way that this man does. You know, you think it's at least a major crisis for the leaders at the time, don't you?

[7 : 38] You think this is a time for them to be really introspective, maybe get together, you know, have an all-night Senate or something like that. You'd think that they would be doing that, wouldn't you?

But nah, they're going home. They're going to be comfortable. They're going to keep things as they are, keep the status quo. Do you know in our lives, at times God wants us to shake it up a little bit. And sometimes He comes and He uses circumstances and situations to shake our life up a bit. Because today is the day of salvation. Today is important in God's diary.

For you, today is important. Let's not treat it like it's just another day. Because it's not just another day. It's the day the Lord has made. There's purpose in this day for us.

So the Pharisees, the religious of Israel, what they've done so far in this major crisis is they've called everyone else who believed stupid. They've tried to get Jesus arrested.

[8 : 45] They've accused Nicodemus, a very well-respected Pharisee, an influential guy. They've accused Him of some kind of regional nepotism, you know. You only favour Him because you're from Galilee as well, you know.

After all this, you'd expect some sort of soul-searching introspection. But they all went to their own homes, to their place of rest and their place of safety.

Let's compare and contrast that with Jesus. Here is the Messiah, the chosen one. Rather than going off to a place to rest, of family and comfort, He goes to a place of safety, yes, but a place of separation and seclusion.

Most likely, a night of prayer and little sleep to seek His Father's will for the next day of ministry, driven by the things of God.

The Pharisees were asleep on the job and we have to make sure we're not asleep on the job. They weren't even awake to the Messiah standing right in front of them, speaking right to them.

[9 : 59] Jesus, however, knew He was alert to the importance of the time, of each day, of His purpose and His position under the Father's word, under the Father's word and the Father's authority.

He knew it and He says Himself in John 5, 30, By myself, I can do nothing. I judge only as I hear and my judgment is just.

For I seek not to please myself, but Him who sent me. May that be our prayer, eh? May that be our prayer. that I seek to do the will of Him who put me here on earth.

Contrast that with a high-handed, proud standpoint of the teachers of the law and Pharisees, confident in their own righteousness, unwilling to listen to the words of guidance and the opportunity that the Father was graciously giving them through His Son.

To the point where they say, well, if you don't believe what I believe, you're stupid. Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in Him?

[11:17] No. So it can't be true. You can't be right because we ain't heard. How blind, eh? Now, now, in verse 2, it says, at dawn, Jesus again appeared in the temple courts.

That's a short night, I reckon, by any reckoning. Even if He traveled to the Mount of Olives, slept and came back, I think that makes that a short night. But I've got the feeling He might have pulled an all-nighter there, Jesus.

He did, you know. He did that quite a bit. I don't do it. I'm not so good at it these days, but He was good at it. Because He was driven and He wanted to hear what the Father had to say to Him.

And it says that He appeared in the temple courts where all the people gathered around Him, not summoned or there to fulfill their religious duties, none of that religiosity, but they were hungry and keen to hear what He said.

They knew there was something different about Him. They knew He got words of life. Where were the Jewish teachers of the law and the Pharisees? Were they, you know, meeting to discuss was Jesus really the Messiah?

[12:31] Shall we look into Scripture? Shall we see what the Messiah is going to be like when He comes? Were they? Sounds like they were doing some pretty dodgy stuff to me.

The people wanted to hear Jesus teach, but whereas He'd spent the night time seeking His Father's will to share with the people, it appears the teachers of the law and the Pharisees had spent their night not inquiring of God about Jesus' identity or truth about the Messiah, but laying a trap.

Verse 3, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made a stand before the group. They didn't just, just didn't pass judgment on her.

They embarrassed her, they denigrated her, how lacking in compassion, eh? God forbid that we're like that with people when we discover their weaknesses, that we in any way denigrate or embarrass them.

Verse 4, and they said to Jesus, this woman, let's make it nice and public now, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. Hmm, how convenient.

[13:49] What have you been doing during the night, Pharisees? What have you been up to? How come you've got this woman here now? In verse 5, in the law of Moses, we're told, well, commanded us, the law of Moses, sorry, commanded us to stone such women.

And then they throw it at Jesus. Now Jesus, what do you say? Well, it's a trap.

Yeah? And whenever I say that, I always think of that bit in Star Wars, where the fish-headed general goes, it's a trap! But it was, it was a trap.

Yeah? As it says in verse 6, they were accusing this, they were using this question as a trap in order to have a basis for accusing him. You see, Jesus could have said, take her away, do as you say, she's broken the law.

By the letter of the law of Moses, she should die. After all, the new covenant isn't yet properly in place, is it really? Jesus hasn't finished his work.

[15:06] Protecting his reputation should surely be his top priority. If Jesus says, stone her, his reputation for compassion and forgiveness would have been in question, making him perhaps appear even worse than the Pharisees he was critical of.

I'm not sure of the contextual evidence around this time to say whether these events, these sins were being monitored carefully by all the Pharisees and that judgment was being given out as it was in the scripture.

I think it's highly unlikely to be perfectly honest. There'd be lots of bodies and lots of stones about, I guess. So Jesus would have looked even worse than the Pharisees and of course that's what they were after, wasn't it?

Yeah? That's what they wanted. Yeah? Yeah? Yeah? Yeah? Yeah? Yeah? Yeah? Yeah?

Conversely, if Jesus had said, release her, he would have been accused of breaking the law of Moses.

In Leviticus 20 verse 10 and Deuteronomy 22, 22, where it quite clearly says that both the man and the woman caught in adultery, both the man and the woman, where's the man?

[16:18] As well as the woman caught in adultery, should be put to death. Yet only a woman is brought to Jesus' attention. Further evidence, perhaps that this was a set-up.

Were the Pharisees testing Jesus' knowledge of Scripture? Or were they using some kind of local knowledge of goings-on, shall we say, to use the woman for their purposes?

Maybe even with the other guy's knowledge. Who knows? We don't know anything about the woman. We don't really know anything about what her background was.

What her lifestyle was like, except that she's been accused in this way. So what does Jesus say?

Well, I think it's quite powerful to think of this bit.

To start with, he says nothing. Absolutely nothing. In verse 6, he simply bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger.

[17:24] He just went down on his haunches and started writing on the floor. It's quite interesting that that takes him into a position lower than the standing woman, doesn't it?

The accused one. No one knows what was being written. I remember hearing someone suggest that he might have been writing out sins on the floor.

Jealousy. Hatred. Gluttony. Addiction.

All sorts of different things. He might have been writing those things on the floor. But to be honest, I don't think that that's important. I think what's important is we understand what comes next.

Perhaps Jesus was just playing games with the Pharisees. Letting them stew a little bit. As he knew they were playing games with him. However, perhaps, and I like to think this really, he was taking a minute to clearly hear the voice of the spirit of his father.

[18:55] As to what he should say in this really complex situation that they put him into. But he was unhurried by the demands of the Pharisees.

It's probably good to us remember, actually. Quite often, God doesn't push us time-wise. He doesn't tend to back us into a corner to make snap decisions.

And sometimes, when we're in a complex situation, it's good to just pull away. To just pull away and allow him to speak. Give him time to speak.

Calm our minds and our hearts so that we can hear him speak. Eventually, in verse 7, when they kept questioning him, Jesus straightened up and said to them, Let any one of you who is without sin cast the first stone at her.

Again, he stooped down and wrote on the ground. Fourteen words which spoke to the needs of everyone there.

[20:05] Quite interesting. He could have met the needs of the Pharisees. He could have met the needs of the woman and not the Pharisees. He could have met the needs of the crowd and not the Pharisees and the woman.

There were a number of different things and responses he could have come out with. But I love this bit in Matthew Henry's commentary which we've got on the next slide, I think. Christ neither found fault with the law nor accused the prisoner's guilt.

Sorry, excused the prisoner's guilt. He didn't say, it's all fine. It doesn't matter. Nor did he countenance or put up with the pretended zeal of the Pharisees.

Those are self-condemned who judge others and yet do the same thing. All who are in any way called to blame the faults of others are especially concerned to look at themselves.

If we look at the sins of others, let's just remember we need to be pure if we do that. And I find that tough. I don't know about anybody else. In this matter, Christ attended to the great work about which he came into the world.

[21:28] It was about his father's business. That was to bring sinners to repentance. Not to destroy. But to save.

He aimed to bring not only the accused to repentance. By showing her his mercy. But the prosecutors also. By showing them their sins.

They thought to ensnare him. He sought to convince and convert them. He declined to meddle with the magistrate's office.

He didn't want to play judge. Many crimes merit far more severe punishment than they meet with. But we should not leave our own work to take that upon ourselves.

To which we were not called. We were not called. We are not called to judge. I've been at church an awful long time now. Probably something like on and off.

[22 : 37] 48, 50 years. And the thing that hurts me so much. Is when Christian rises up against Christian. When Christian brothers judge Christian brothers.

Leave it to God. Everybody will stand one day before the judgment seat of God. And everybody will answer to him. Leave it with him. He's the judge.

He's the compassionate judge. He's the one who's provided for us. Sorry.

Losing my place a little bit. It's because I've mislmed him. So. There's no religious zeal here. Don't think of the Pharisees.

Some people think the Pharisees get a really tough deal from Jesus. You know. Because the good men trying the best to be good. But that's the whole point. They've forgotten about God.

[23 : 43] They've forgotten about the importance of listening to him. Of doing what he says. And the whole point of Jesus is. He's not there to just slag people off. What he's trying to do. Is he's trying to say. Guys you've got it wrong.

If I'm walking in the wrong direction. I want somebody to tell me. I'm going in the wrong direction.

Yeah. And Jesus is trying to do that. With the Pharisees.

He's trying to say. You've got it all wrong man. You've got it all wrong. Stop trying to pull me down.

And listen to what I'm saying. They're not bothered about upholding the religious law here.

They're more interested in what people think of them. And not falling into their own trap. Or maybe. Maybe just maybe. For some of them. There was a moment of self-realization.

And awareness. Of their own sin. Because they begin to go away. Over a period of time. First the older ones.

[24 : 43] Who are a bit like tired like me. Probably know when they're beat. Maybe a bit less zealous. Maybe a bit more wisdom. And they could see it.

When our plans are backfiring. And then the younger ones. The fact that they don't take the woman away. And carry out the sentence. Shows that they really don't care about her.

Or what she's done. There's no real desire. Even to carry out the religious law at the time. Now this was a manufactured trial.

Where Jesus placed. As judge. Merely to trap him. But Jesus says. You decide. Are you worthy? Go on. If you're worthy.

Do it. Make a decision. Eventually a stooping Jesus. Was left with the woman. Still standing there.

[25 : 38] Perhaps. Waiting for the blow. Of the first stone. Put yourself in that position. That never came. The interesting thing is.

She doesn't run away. From the judgment. Maybe at that point. When everybody's disappearing. And Jesus is preoccupied. Writing. I'd have legged it. I think. I'd have gone. Out of here.

This is my. Get out of here. But no. She doesn't do that. She doesn't run away. From the judgment. When God speaks to us.

Let's not run away. Let's not escape it. Let's listen to him. And be obedient. Then in verse 10. Jesus straightens up. And looks her full in the face.

And says woman. And by the way. The Greek translation of this word. Shows no disrespect. It's not. Oi woman. Get here. It's not that kind of woman. It's just referencing.

[26 : 36] Who she is. What she is. What she is. Where are they? Has anyone condemned you?

And I guess. Her eyes must have been full of tears. As mine are so often. No one sir. She says. And neither do I condemn you.

Jesus declared. Go now. And leave your life. Of sin. It's a beautiful picture. Of grace. Isn't it?

The Lord of glory. Him who was. And is God. Crouching.

In the earth. In front of this woman. In the earth. In the earth. In the earth. In the earth. beautiful picture of grace that the Pharisees who came to point out the sins of others and to confront Jesus and to arrest him are humbled and come face to face with an opportunity to reflect on and recognize their own sins.

[28 : 20] That's grace. And that of course is the first step to forgiveness. Romans 3 21 26 says but now excuse me apart from the law of God sorry but now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known to which the law and the prophets testify.

This righteousness righteousness to be right the ability to be right with God in every situation in every time is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

There's no difference between Jew and Gentile biblically knowledgeable or church illiterate for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement through the shedding of his blood to be received by faith.

and he did this to demonstrate his righteousness because in its forbearance he'd left the sins committed before unpunished.

[29 : 56] What a gracious God. He did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

maybe there's a misconception there and people think that Jesus let the woman go without punishment. Jesus didn't let the woman go without punishment he took it and bore the punishment for it on the cross.

It was going to happen. Jesus didn't just tell the woman go now and leave your life of sin he made it possible for her to live a life a new life a life empowered by faith in him and through the Holy Spirit. I'm coming to the end of what I'm going to say now. Do you know Jesus wants to meet you this morning? His word says that he's here this morning.

You see as the woman stood there before Jesus he forgave her because he was able to he had authority to forgive because his sacrifice on the cross paid the price of it all from the beginning of human history to the end of human history.

[31 : 36] next slide. It's your decision. It's your decision.

You decide. Who's best place to make right or righteous decisions for your life? Is it you?

In the stresses and the strains that come naturally? Through our life? In this life you'll have trouble Jesus says and we do. But where do we turn?

Is it you on your own? Or is it you and Jesus? He will never force his love and forgiveness on you. You have to take it. It's a free gift. Free in the sense that it's cost you nothing. Not free in the sense that it cost him everything.

[32 : 46] Just got a few questions for you to be thinking about as we finish now. Have I confessed my sins to Jesus? Have I brought all my rubbish to him? Because we know we've all got rubbish.

Call it rubbish rather than sin if you like. Because we know what it is in our hearts. Have I asked him to forgive me and claim that forgiveness by faith in his sacrifice for me?

And some of this might be gobbledygooks you might be what's he talking about? But inquire of the Lord. Come and talk to Jesus about it. Come and talk to one of us and we'll explain as best we can and we'll pray with you.

Some of us have been here a long time but is there an area in our life where God is challenging us to wake up a little bit and to make a change this morning?

Most important thing at all is am I willing to be obedient to him? Amen.