



[John 8:10-11](#)

(10) When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

(11) She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

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Consider that this woman caught in [adultery](#) is indeed an obviously sinful woman; she had a reputation as a loose woman. The Pharisees had caught her in the very act of cheating on her husband, and that was probably only one of her many sins. We would likely not be wrong in calling her a wicked woman.

In every way opposite to her is [Jesus Christ](#), sinless and perfect. The Pharisees, themselves sinful, attempt to force Him, a Man of unimpeachable character, to condemn a sinner—to them, a foregone conclusion: "And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" ([John 8:3-5](#)). However, Jesus' approach to the situation is poles apart; His reaction and attitude throughout this vignette is completely contrary to that of the Pharisees.

In their reading of the Old Testament law concerning the punishment for adultery ([Leviticus 20:10-11](#); [Deuteronomy 22:22](#)), this was an open-and-shut case: The woman had been caught in the act, they had two or three witnesses, the law was clear, so there should be a stoning! This appears to be unequivocal. The law does indeed prescribe the death sentence by stoning. What more proof does Jesus need?

Despite everything weighing against the woman, Jesus approaches the matter differently. He clearly understands that the woman had sinned. He realizes there were witnesses to that effect. He knows the law and the penalty, but He does not leap to a verdict of condemnation.

Recall that, for some time, He does nothing but write on the ground ([John 8:6](#)). He lets the matter simmer. While the carnal Pharisees agitate for answers and demand action, Jesus patiently waits. [God](#) works with us in the same way. We can become infuriated when God fails to answer us immediately after we say, "Amen," but giving us time for things to work out is a consistent pattern with Him. We can be certain that He does this when we are accused before Him, even when we are guilty as charged, as the remainder of the passage in John 8 shows.

Because we are so familiar with the character of Jesus, we can appreciate how shocking His statement in [John 8:11](#) is: "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." One would expect a just God to say, "This is the law. This is your infraction, so this is your punishment." But we understand that God is love and that He is gracious and merciful, so when He does not say, "I condemn you to be stoned," we tend to pass over it without thinking.

However, first-century Jews would have been astounded to hear such a thing! They may have been the most judgmental people who have ever lived on the face of the earth. One little infraction of the law was enough to condemn a person. Excommunication was so common a practice that people stood in great fear of the Pharisees (see [John 9:22](#)). What Jesus says was a radical concept, one that contradicted everything they had been taught.

Moreover, Jesus had every right—as God in the flesh, to whom the Father had committed all judgment ([John 5:22](#))—to condemn her to death, but He shows mercy. He does not react in anger to reinforce how bad her sin was. He does not even preach at her. He simply commands her not to sin like this anymore, and He lets her go to work it out for herself.

However, He does not pass up an opportunity to teach the crowd: "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of [the world](#). He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" ([John 8:12](#)). He teaches that He, being that Light, has given us an example to follow in situations like this. A sinner condemned to die produces nothing. Only with further life and light will he or she have the chance to [repent](#) and grow in character.

That is how God works with us, and are we not happy that He reacts to our sins with patience and mercy? So we should forbear with our brethren ([Colossians 3:12-13](#)).

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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