Breakthrough – Part 2

# Overcoming Condemnation

## (John 8:1-11)

Welcome. Last Sunday we began our new series “Breakthrough” because I know that some of you are facing challenging circumstances, it might be your family, your friends, your job, or your health, but I want to assure you that we serve a God who can still breakthrough. In other words, we serve a God who has great things planned for us, who still performs miracles, and who still brings about radical change in our lives, because he loves you, he sees you, he knows where you are, and he knows what you are walking through.

Now, I know there are some of you in this room who would say that life is good. You’ve got a nice house, with a family, a dog and a cat, a good job and some money in the bank. And I am so thankful for that, but the reality is that it’s amazing how fast that can change. With just one phone call, one text message, your whole world can turn upside down. And I recognize that many of the problems that we face in life today aren’t really that big because we can solve most of them on our own.

But what happens when you run into a problem that you can’t solve, a situation that your money in the bank can’t fix, you know like when the doctor tells you, “There is nothing else we can do?” Well, those are the times when we need a breakthrough, when we must position ourselves for a miracle, trusting God to do what only he can do. And that is certainly not the time to give up, allowing fear to overwhelm us, but we must choose to believe, praying for a miracle, and positioning ourselves for breakthrough.

Today I want to share with you the story of a woman caught in a compromising situation. It’s found in the eighth chapter of the gospel of John if you are following along in your Bible. And I want you to put yourself in the place of this character, not standing at a distance where you can remain detached and uninvolved, but entering into this scene, into this traumatic moment in her life, so that you can feel the power of this text.

As we read the Word of God, I want you to consider how you would respond when your faith is challenged, you are being tested, and you find yourself in a compromising situation. The text begins in verse one, saying,

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“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 and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery” (John 8:1-4).

“In the Law Moses commanded 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. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger” (John 8:5-6).

“When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one 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. 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” (John 8:7-9).

“Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:10-11).

Now, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought this woman to Jesus claiming that she had been caught in the act of adultery, but the truth is they were just using her as bait to trap him. And so, they allegedly caught this woman, but they were just using her to catch Jesus, and so it wasn’t really her that was on trial. It was Jesus who was on trial when they said,

“In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" (John 8:5).

And if he said don’t stone her, he would have spoken against the law, and been subject to arrest. If he said stone her, then he would have defeated his purpose for coming, because the Bible says,

“God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:17).

Jesus recognized that this was just a mock trial and that they had caught this woman just like we would go out and get worms to go fishing. In other words, it was Jesus that they were trying to catch, and so it was really Jesus who was on trial, and she was the bait lying on the ground trembling, surrounded by her accusers with rocks in their hands.

What’s interesting is that this was nothing new, Satan, our spiritual enemy has been doing this from the very beginning. His desire has always been to catch God in a trap, which is why sin entered into the world in the first place. Sin was the bait, and so when Satan said to the woman,

“Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1).

We’re not unaware of his schemes. We recognize that Satan didn’t care about their diet, he didn’t care about the forbidden fruit, he had only one agenda and that was to put God in a compromising situation because he knew that God loved Adam and Eve. In other words, Satan knows that God hates sin and so if he could deceive Adam into doing what God hates, putting what God hates into what God loves, suddenly Adam himself would become the bait and God is caught in a predicament.

And so, it was a setup, this is what we discover here in John chapter 8, it’s the same thing we find in Genesis chapter 3; Satan is trying to find something that he can use against God, to hold over him, trapping him in a corner, and forcing him to save what he hates in order to kill what he loves. This is the story that begins in Genesis, and so God began doing what he was doing in the beginning. The Bible says,

“Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground” (John 8:8).

Now, I am sure that most of you remember when we first met God in Genesis that he was down on the ground playing in the dirt. And the Bible says,

“God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7).

And so, since Satan was up to his same old tricks, without any new strategies, Jesus responded like he had in ancient days gone by. Reliving those first days of creation, he stooped down on the ground again, playing in the dirt and acting out what happened in the book of Genesis.

The Bible says, God created Adam from the dust of the ground, and he created them male and female. God clothed the lions and tigers with fur, clothed the birds with feathers, but…

“The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame” (Genesis 2:25).

And so, they were left naked, but when they fell into temptation, disobeying God and eating the forbidden fruit, they lost their innocence. The Bible says that Adam and Eve,

“Sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves” (Genesis 3:7).

And so, when the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking through the garden, looking at what he had created, they hid from the Lord. When God came looking for Adam, he and Eve put on camo and hid among the trees, and so the Lord God called out, "Where are you?" In other words, not necessarily where are you, but what are you doing hiding among the trees? Because God didn’t create Adam to put on leaves, he didn’t create him to hide behind stuff, he created him in his own image, the Bible says, male and female he created them (Genesis 3:8-9, Genesis 1:27).

Adam said,

“I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and so, I hid" (Genesis 3:10).

I’m so glad you came to church today because God wants you to know that you don’t have to put on leaves to please him. In other words, it’s not going to do you any good if you keep hiding, whatever you’re hiding behind. Maybe it’s the way you present yourself to your friends, those at work, in the community, or even coming to church, but it’s not you. Some of you are in camo, hiding among trees, hiding behind fig leaves, but that’s not the way God created you.

And today, as a believer, as a follower of Jesus, I don’t know what it is that caused you to hide from God, but he’s looking for you. And even if you messed up, even if you took of the forbidden fruit, he is looking for you and calling out,

“Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9).

In other words, he’s still looking for you, not the camo you, not that you behind the fig leaves, but the real you. God is looking for the honest you, the confused you, the anxious you, the one that he created in his own image. You see, he didn’t create you to cower in shame like that, he didn’t create you to be who you’ve become, but he still wants a relationship with you. And so, the Bible says,

“Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground” (John 8:8).

He’s reminiscing, remembering the innocence of those days when he first breathed life into you, and he’s wondering, where are you? You know who, the cheating you, the sinful you, the broken you, the fearful and trembling you. And today he wants you to come before him in truth, to come without the leaves, because he wants to remove your shame.

Now, don’t misunderstand me, I’m not encouraging nudity, but those fig leaves you’ve been hiding behind don’t stop God from seeing you. In fact, the Bible says,

“There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:13, NKJV).

And so, God knows where you’ve been, he knows what you’ve done, and he even knows the thoughts that are running through your head. He says, “I know you” and he’s waiting to see the real you. He knows you’ve made some bad decisions, he knows you took the fruit, but he doesn’t want you falling into that trap, he doesn’t want you to become the bait of Satan (John 5:42).

He wants you to come naked and unashamed, because he’s got you covered. You don’t need to hide behind those fig leaves, that camouflage, that false sense of righteousness, because he is your righteousness, he is your defense and your provision. And so, this is the gospel, the good news, when Jesus stooped down on the ground.

This is what the gospel is all about, when God came in the form of Jesus,

“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:6-7).

And so, it was God stooping down on the ground. He came down to that which he created,

“Though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

He bent down with his hands in the dirt and he started to write on the ground with his finger, ignoring her accusers, acting like he did not hear their questions, because God is always acting. You know that right? The Bible says that he speaks in parables, pretending, acting “like the blowing of a violent wind … or of what seemed to be tongues of fire” (Acts 2:2-3).

And on the road to Emmaus, when he came upon two disciples, they were kept from recognizing him because what? Because God is always acting. And so, sometimes he will act, just to see your reaction. And the Bible says,

“As they approached the village where they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us this … so he went in to stay with them” (Luke 24:28-29).

You see, Jesus was acting, he pretended that he was going farther, he acted like he was going to keep walking, just to see their reaction. And God is always acting which is why he said,

“Don’t forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:2).

In fact, some of you today, you thought Jesus was going to pass you by, but he was just pretending, just acting as if he were going farther, because he’s looking for your reaction, looking for some people who came to get a touch from God today. He’s looking for some people who won’t be satisfied with him walking by and not giving you what you came for.

And so, Jesus stooped down on the ground and acted as if he didn’t hear the woman’s accusers. Now, the woman was already on the ground, but Jesus comes down to her level, because he knew that she couldn’t come up to his. I love that because Jesus comes down to our level, that’s why we praised him like we did this morning, because we can never come up to his standard, we all fall short of his glory, and so he came down and got in the dirt where we are.

Jesus stooped down to be on the level of an adulterer, acting as if he did not hear her accusers, but they pressed him, and they pressed him, and the Bible says,

“When they kept on questioning him, (finally) he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. And again, he stooped down and wrote on the ground" (John 8:7-8).

Some of you need to know that you’re not by yourself, you may not understand how it’s going to turn out, but you’re not by yourself. You may be trembling, and your heart is pounding, but you’re not by yourself, because when you are down on the ground, Jesus comes down on the ground with you. He comes down to your level and that’s what he promised,

“Surely I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20).

And that’s so important, because everybody will stand with you when you’re winning, but we have a God that will be with us even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. That’s the kind of God that we serve, you don’t have to face it by yourself, he’ll go with you into the courtroom and the operating room. He’ll be with you always, in the therapy, in the counseling, and in the empty room.

This woman was trembling, maybe covering her head, just waiting for the rocks, but the rocks never came, because when Jesus said, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." The Bible says,

“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” (John 8:9).

In other words, all you could hear was the sound of rocks falling to the ground as one by one, the men dropped their rocks. The older ones first and then the younger ones, until the only one without sin, the only one eligible to stone her was left, but he never looked up, he never said a word, he just wrote in the dirt.

There was nothing but the sound of shuffling feet as the men left and the Bible says that Jesus straightened up and asked her,

“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared" (John 8:10).

In other words, I got you out of it, but that doesn’t mean I approve of it. I didn’t let them kill you, but that doesn’t mean that you’re not guilty. And so, he says, “Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11).

I wonder if there are some of you who have been living with the threat of a memory, something you did, maybe the threat of what somebody wants to do to you, maybe the threat of exploitation, and you fear that at any moment everything could be taken away. Or maybe you’ve lived with someone who will never let you forget what you did, and yet they seem to have amnesia about what they did, and all of your life you have been cowering under the threat.

Today, I want you to know that you are not there by yourself, Jesus is with you and you don’t have to live your life like that. Even though you were wrong, you don’t have to spend the rest of your life in shame and humiliation. You don’t have to be fearful of going out in public just because somebody threatened to bring you back to the place where you are caught.

Jesus doesn’t condone sin, but you need to know that it is not incurable, it can be washed away. In fact, when Jesus began his ministry he said,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives…" (Luke 4:18-19, NKJV).

Some of you were wondering if you can ever be free again, or if you’ll ever be whole again because of the threat of your past. And today Jesus declares freedom to the captives, freedom to the oppressed, and he wants you to be free.

Unfortunately, I’m afraid that there are some of you who haven’t been able to let it go, you haven’t been able to enjoy your freedom in Christ, because you are haunted by the guilt. Some of you feel the condemnation of something that you did or something that was done to you, but Jesus did not die and shed his blood so that you could spend the rest your days trembling on the ground waiting for the next rock to hit you.

Yes, what they did was wrong, what you did was wrong, but you can be guilty without feeling condemned. In fact, the Bible says,

“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

And for some of you it’s not other people, you’ve condemned yourself, you’ve been throwing rocks at yourself. It’s not that God hasn’t forgiven you, it’s not that other people haven’t forgiven you, but you haven’t forgiven yourself.

And so, today, I want you to let it go, to receive the forgiveness of God, to call upon the name of Jesus, and cross over from death to life. Jesus said,

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24).

As we close, I want to encourage you to be transparent, to be real with God, and just let him know how you feel. Tell him where you hurt, where your scarred, where you’re grieving, where you are upset, where you’re worried, and above all just be honest. Would you be transparent, just dropping the leaves, coming to him naked and unashamed just like he created us?

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