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An Unfinished Story

JOHN 7:53-8:11

Introduction

1. Have you ever read a story which lacked an ending, one which left you hanging?
2. The story which we find in John 7:53-8:11 is one such story.
3. It is another story about the scribes and Pharisees attempt to trap and discredit Jesus.
4. Within it, however, is the story I want you to notice.
5. It is a story about a woman whose shame is exposed for all to see.
6. To some she is nothing more than a pawn, a tool to be used.
7. To Jesus, she is far more.
8. Let's look at this story tonight and see what it is that God wants us to learn.

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I. Jesus' Pattern the Last Week of His Life

A. HIS NIGHTS WERE SPENT ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES (7:53-8:1)

"Everyone went to his home. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives." (John 7:53-8:1, NASB95)

1. Passover was an important time in Jerusalem.
2. Many had come from far away for this important memorial.
3. Each at the end of the day would return to their home or to the place where they were staying during this time.

4. Jesus, however, chose to retire to the Mount of Olives where He would spend the night (Luke 21:37).

“. . . at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet.” (Luke 21:37b, NASB95)

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B. HIS DAYS WERE SPENT TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE (JOHN 8:2)

“Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them” (John 8:2, NASB95)

1. During the closing days of His life, it was Jesus’ habit to teach in the Temple court each day.

“Now during the day He was teaching in the temple . . . “ (Luke 21:37a, NASB95)

2. On this particular morning, Jesus came early to the temple.
3. Because many were coming to Him, He sat down (the customary position of a teacher) and taught them.

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II. The Scribes and Pharisees Test Jesus

A. THEY BROUGHT TO HIM A WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY (JOHN 8:3)

“The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court,” (John 8:3, NASB95)

1. Jesus’ teaching was suddenly interrupted by some scribes (teachers of the Law) and Pharisees.
2. They bring a woman, who according to John, had been “caught in adultery” (κατειλημμένην — from καταλαμβάνω), “taken with her shame upon her.”
3. Adultery is not a sin which someone commits in isolation. Where was the man?

- a. Either the man was quick to get away, or
 - b. This was a deliberately set trap.
4. They made her stand “in the center of the court” where all could see her.

Slide 4**B. THEY SET THEIR TRAP (JOHN 8:4-6A)**

“They said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?” They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him.” (John 8:4–6a, NASB95)

1. They addressed Jesus as “teacher,” falsely showing respect.
2. They tell Him that this woman was caught “in the very act” of adultery.
3. They then put the question to Jesus as to what should be done with the woman — “Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?” (v. 5).
4. Under the Law which God gave to His people through Moses, stoning was the prescribed punishment for a betrothed virgin who was sexually unfaithful to her fiancé.

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5. This punishment was to be meted out to both individuals, the man and the woman (Deuteronomy 22:23-24).

“If there is a girl who is a virgin engaged to a man, and another man finds her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you shall stone them to death; the girl, because she did not cry out in the city, and the man, because he has violated his neighbor’s wife. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you.” (Deuteronomy 22:23–24, NASB95)

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6. In two other passages, Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22, death is prescribed for all unfaithful wives and their lovers, but the mode (such as stoning) is not laid down.

“If there is a man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, one who commits adultery with his friend’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” (Leviticus 20:10, NASB95)

“If a man is found lying with a married woman, then both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel.” (Deuteronomy 22:22, NASB95)

7. The scribes and the Pharisees were not interested in the intrinsic merits of the case, or that justice be done.
8. John lets us know that they were “testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him” (v. 6).
 - a. If Jesus said, “Stone her,” several things would most likely happen:
 - 1) He would be supporting a position that was not only unpopular but one which was probably no longer carried out in public life.
 - 2) He would no longer be known as “a friend of sinners,” one who was compassionate, quick to forgive and restore.
 - 3) He would find Himself in violation of the exclusive right of the Roman governor (Pilate) to impose capital sentences.
 - b. If He said, “Do not stone her,” they would say that He was teaching others to break the law of Moses, and that He was condoning and even encouraging people to commit adultery.
9. It seems the scribes and Pharisees had Jesus right where they wanted Him.

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III. Jesus’ Responses

A. TO THE WOMAN’S ACCUSERS (JOHN 8:6B-9)

“But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court.” (John 8:6–9, NASB95)

1. How did Jesus respond? He “stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground” (v. 6b).
2. What did He write? We are not told.
3. Several suggestions have been given.
 - a. One commentator suggested that . . .
 - 1) The first time, He wrote, “Do not join your hand with a wicked man to be a malicious witness” (Exodus 23:1).
 - 2) The second time, He wrote, “Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent or the righteous, for I will not acquit the guilty” (Exodus 23:7).
 - b. An ancient opinion is that Jesus wrote the sins of the men who were accusing the woman:
 - 1) The normal Greek word for *to write* is *graphein*.
 - 2) Here the word used is *katagraphein*, which can mean *to write down a record against someone*.
 - 3) In Job 13:26, Job said, “You write (*katagrapsas*) bitter things against me.”
 - ❑ It may be that Jesus was confronting these men with a record of their own sins.
4. The woman’s accusers were impatient with Jesus — perhaps they thought He was stalling — the kept pushing for an answer.

5. Finally, He said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her” (v. 7).
6. In other words, Jesus told them to go ahead and stone her, but that the first stone must be thrown by the man who was himself without sin.
7. Slowly, the accusers began going out:
 - a. The older ones left first because they were conscious of their own sin.
 - b. Those who had come to shame Jesus, left in shame.
 - c. One by one the crowd melted away until only Jesus and the woman remained.

Slide 9**B. TO THE WOMAN (JOHN 8:10-11)**

“Straightening up, Jesus said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.”” (John 8:10–11, NASB95)

1. For the first time, Jesus addressed the woman.
2. He did not ask her if she was guilty, only where her accusers were and if there was anyone who condemned her.
3. When the woman said, “No one, Lord,” Jesus responded by saying, “I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more” (v. 11).
 - a. Neither did Jesus condone her sin.
 - b. Instead, He told her to make a clean break with her sin.

Slide 10**IV. Jesus vs. Scribes and Pharisees****A. SCRIBES AND PHARISEES’ ATTITUDE**

1. Toward authority
 - a. They believed their authority gave them the right to condemn and the

- duty to punish.
 - b. They looked for every mistake, every deviation from the law.
 - c. They did not try to understand the circumstances which caused a person to succumb to temptation.
 - d. Neither did they seek to reclaim the wrongdoer.
2. Toward people.
 - a. They did not see this woman as a person at all.
 - b. To them she was a pawn in a game, the goal of which was, to destroy Jesus.
 - c. It is unlikely they even knew her name.

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B. JESUS ATTITUDE

1. Pity
 - a. She was a person with a name.
 - b. She was someone who Satan had caught in His snare.
 - c. She was someone who needed His help and healing.
2. The second chance
 - a. Jesus was not just interested in what this woman had been, but what she could be.
 - b. In saying to her, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more," Jesus was saying, "I know you have made a mess of things, but your life is not finished yet; I am giving you another chance, the chance to redeem yourself."

Conclusion

1. This story was left unfinished:
 - a. We don't know what ever became of this woman.

- b. Did she go "and sin no more," or did she return to her old lifestyle?
2. You and I, like her, have a story that remains unfinished. Each day we write a new paragraph or a new chapter. How will your story end?
3. If you have made some bad decisions in your life, decisions which have resulted in your life being stained with sin, that doesn't have to be the end.
4. Please know that Jesus came to this world to save people like you and me, people who have our share of regrets, people who need a second chance.
4. Even though our sins are as scarlet, He can remove them so that we are as white as snow.
5. Do you need to come to Him tonight?