

No Condemnation

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[0 : 00] If you have an ESV version of the Bible, you may have noticed an unusual notation just before the beginning of this passage.

If you have other Bibles, you may also have it also. So on the ESV, it says, The earliest manuscripts do not include 753 to 811. You guys seeing that?

Yeah. So for that statement, that could raise some questions for us. So I'm going to do something slightly unusual today. And instead of preaching one sermon like I usually do, I'm going to preach two sermons.

So you guys will be leaving here at about 2 p.m. No, it will be two short messages. The first message is going to be about the trustworthiness of God's Word. It's going to be a topical message dealing with this issue, explaining what's going on in this passage.

And the second message is going to be from this text. But because I'm convinced that this text is not actually part of Scripture, I'm going to ground it in other parts of Scripture that actually teach what this passage is trying to teach.

[1 : 08] So first, what does it mean when it says that the earliest manuscripts do not include chapter 753 to chapter 8, verse 11?

So it's referring to the fact that there are many different manuscripts upon which our English translation of the Bible is based. Because the Bible, the New Testament was written in Greek, Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic.

And we do not have the originals, the original manuscripts of the Bible. And to be honest with you, that's probably a good thing for our sake.

You remember, for example, Moses used that bronze serpent to heal people who were illnesses. And then the Israelites prostituted themselves to that bronze serpent and used it as an idol.

I mean, can you imagine if we had actual original manuscripts of the Bible? I could imagine that being a source of idolatry very quickly for people. And so it might just be better that we don't have it.

[2 : 08] But if we don't have the original manuscripts, for that reason, people have to combine and really look at all the different manuscripts that are available to us in order to ascertain what exactly was originally written, what the original text was.

And that's what we call textual criticism. And textual criticism is the science of studying and comparing all extant copies of ancient documents to recover the original text.

Because they were handwritten. There's some variations between them. And there's a good reason to suspect that this passage was not actually part of the Gospel of John originally.

And there are two main categories of reasons for that. The first category is external. The external reasons for thinking that is you compare it to the other manuscripts and then realize that a lot of the earliest manuscripts, the best manuscripts, don't have this passage.

And the internal reason for this is that if you look at the Gospel of John itself, it seems to be more consistent if you take this passage out rather than leave it in.

[3 : 11] So I'm going to explain that in a second. So the external reasons. So first, so this story that we just read is missing from all of the Greek manuscripts of John before the 5th century.

And this was written in the 1st century. So that's pretty alarming, right? So it's not in any of them. In all the writings of the church fathers commenting on the Bible and on this book in particular, they don't seem to know about this passage at all.

So a lot of church fathers wrote commentaries on the Bible and on the Gospel of John, and they write about all the other passages. But when they get here to 742, they skip right to 812 as if they didn't even know it existed.

And then thirdly, none of the church fathers in the East, the Eastern Church, cite this passage at all until the 10th century. And finally, when this story finally begins to appear in the Gospel of John, instead of appearing consistently in one place, it appears in three different places.

So it appears in two other parts, three other places in John. And in one instance, it shows up after Luke 21, 38, which shows us that maybe this story was circulating on its own, and the scribes decided to find a place for it somewhere where they thought it might fit.

[4 : 25] And there's also good internal reasons to doubt that this was part of the passage. And the very simple one is, it's very abrupt, the way it begins.

And if you take out 753 to 811, it flows very seamlessly from the previous verse to the next. And then secondly, this is more subjective. Mark and Matthew and Luke refer consistently to the scribes and the Pharisees.

That's kind of like a stock phrase that they use a lot. But John never uses that phrase. He prefers to refer to them, the Jewish opposition to Jesus, as simply the Jews.

And the word scribes is never mentioned, but in this passage, where he says the scribes and the Pharisees. So it's not part of his normal vocabulary. So considering all of these things, the best scholars, the biblical scholars in the world, for example, Don Carson, who teaches New Testament at Evangelical Divinity School, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, he writes, the evidence is against the efforts to prove that this narrative was originally part of John's gospel.

And modern English versions are right to rule it off from the rest of the text, or to relegate it to a footnote. And then similarly, Brutz Metzger was probably one of the most influential New Testament scholars and textual critics of the 20th century.

[5 : 45] He taught at Princeton Theological Seminary. He writes, the evidence for the non-Johannine origin of the pericope of the adulteress is overwhelming. It's just a fancy of saying, wait, I'm saying this paragraph was probably not written by John originally.

So for some of us, if you think about this, and then we think about the fact that there's discrepancies among various biblical manuscripts, it raises an alarm for some of us.

Does that mean that the Bible is unreliable? Does that mean that the original manuscripts of the Bible were not passed on faithfully to our generation? What if there's all these variations, then how are we supposed to know which one is the correct one?

And if a part of it is not true, not to be trusted, then how can we know we can trust any of the other parts? So these are the questions that I'm hoping to answer for you because I think it's of pastoral importance.

But I want to assure you that there's no need to panic because the truth is that until the invention of the printing press in the 15th century, no one expected different copies of books to be identical because they never were because they're always hand copied by fallible people.

- [6 : 56] And there's mistakes in sight, hearing, judgment, knowledge. And most of the variations that we find are in insignificant areas such as just minor grammar or spelling.
- And many of them actually came about because the scribes were trying to recover the original. They're saying, well, I don't think this is supposed to be there. I don't think this grammatical error is supposed to be there.
- I don't think this was, so they tried to fix it to what they thought was the original. And that's the result in a lot of the variations. And this passage and the end of Mark in 16, 9 to 20 are the only two passages in the entire Bible where such a significant chunk of it has been added to the text.
- So really there's nothing like this in the rest of scripture. And so just to tell you, so people, Christians have existed for the last 2,000 years.
- And before the 15th century, all these things that we might now be alarmed by, they never caused a crisis of faith for any of those believers as they were reading those Bibles. And let me provide some context and to inspire some confidence in the scripture that we have, that that's what God intended for us to have.
- [8 : 10] And so, because we're not the only ones that study ancient literature, right? So a lot of people study ancient literature. The Bible's not the only ancient literature. And I'm a classicist by training.
- So in college, I studied the classics, meaning literature from the classical period for maybe like 8th century BC to 5th century AD, Greco-Roman world literature.
- And one of the books I read was Homer's Iliad, right? You guys know about it. And it was written in the 8th century BC. And it was one of the most popular works of ancient literature.
- So it's actually one of the best preserved than compared to the other ancient literature. And there's 647 ancient manuscripts of Homer's Iliad before the advent of the printing press.
- And the earliest of those manuscripts is from the 10th century AD. So it's 1,700 years removed from when the original thing was written.
- [9 : 06] And yet, when I read that in class, in college, when we're taught that they say with 100% confidence, that's what Homer wrote, and you're reading what Homer wrote, right? And in the same way, I also read Euripides' tragedy called Medea.
- And there's only 12 surviving manuscripts. And the earliest manuscript they have is 900 years removed. From when it was written, right? So that's, again, yet people teach that, saying this is what Euripides said.
- And you can be confident that as you read that. And just mention a couple more briefly. Caesar's Gallic Wars, 10 copies only, surviving. 1,000 years removed from the original.
- Aristotle's Poetics, five copies remaining. 1,400 years removed from the original. And then compare that to Scripture. The New Testament here, let's see. There's a total of 5,801 Greek manuscripts.
- And there's even more if you count the ancient handwritten manuscript translations. 10,000 Latin manuscripts, 9,300 manuscripts in other languages, like Syriac and Coptic.
- [10 : 12] That adds up to a whopping total of 25,000 manuscripts of Bible, of the New Testament by itself. And the earliest Greek manuscript that has been found is actually of the Gospel of John, which we're in.
- And it's dated around 125 A.D., which is less than 100 years and possibly even less than 50 years removed from the original.
- Not 1,400 years removed like Homer's, not 900 years removed like Euripides Medea. No ancient literature is nearly as well attested as Scripture.

And the more data you have, the more opportunity you have to correct the error. So think about it this way. If you imagine there's only two copies of the Gospel of John, and one of them has this story of the adulteress, and one of them doesn't.

Then, I mean, you really can't tell them whether it was supposed to be in there or not, right? You kind of have to flip a coin. But the more you have, let's say you have thousands of them, then you can consider the age of the documents, how accurately preserved they were, and also where they came from, the geographic diversity of the documents, to determine whether or not, what text was original.

[11 : 26] And that effort, textual criticism of the Bible, has been so successful that the most renowned biblical scholars conclude this. So F.J. A. Hoare, for example, says, after a lifetime research and study, he says, not more than 1,000th part of the whole New Testament is affected by differences of reading.

That's 0.1% of the New Testament. And then F.F. Bruce writes, the variant readings about which any doubt remains among textual critics of the New Testament affects no material question of historic fact or of Christian faith and practice.

Meaning the different readings that are there, it's inconsequential things. Now, what about the Old Testament? Let me just mention that briefly. So it's not as well attested as the New Testament, but it is still far better attested than any of its ancient contemporaries.

So there's about 11,000 Old Testament manuscripts in existence. And the Bibles that we have is based on the Mesoretic text, which is a text of the Old Testament, a complete text from the 9th century A.D.

And until recently, that was the oldest one we had. That was the most reliable one we had. Until in the 1950s, just five decades ago, six decades ago, there was a discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which actually was exhibited at the Museum of Science a few years ago.

[12 : 48] And they found well over, you know, I mean, well over hundreds of documents. And they had every book represented in the Old Testament except for the Book of Esther.

And they were dated as far back as 200 B.C. So it pushed back the oldest manuscript date for the Old Testament by 1,000 years, over 1,000 years. And this is really cool.

And I just saw this in September 2016, so last year. And the New York Times published an article about the computer scientists at University of Kentucky. They just perfected a new technology which allows them to unfurl, digitally unfurl damaged text that previously no one was able to unfurl before.

And one of those texts was a 2,000-year-old En Gedi scroll, which had a text, two chapters out of the Book of Leviticus. And when they compared that to the Masoretic text, it was exactly identical, 100% identical to what we had.

I mean, that's unbelievable. So we can be confident that what we have in the Old Testament and New Testament is what God intended for us to have. And that, I want to tell you, is a historical miracle.

[14 : 00] I mean, if you think about it, because the Bible is not a short book, as you all know. It's 40% longer than War and Peace, right? And some of you, I mean, some of us may not even have read it cover to cover yet, yet this book has been hand-copied, written by hand, thousands and thousands and thousands of times by people like us over thousands of years.

And not a few people have tried to destroy the Bible, right? Emperor Diocletian, the Roman emperor, tried to wipe the face of the earth with all the Bible. He wanted to destroy all the Bibles, and he issued an edict of such in 303 AD and declared two years later that he succeeded, but he didn't, right?

And still today, the Bible is the most widely read and sold book in the world. 3.9 billion copies sold worldwide over the last 50 years. I think Harry Potter's third or something like that, so it's like, doesn't even come close to the copies sold.

And this is, and if you subject other ancient literature, religious texts of other faiths to the same sustained, rigorous criticism that the Bible has endured, none of them will be remaining.

They will be roundly discredited. And we have, this is not a historical accident. It's God's providential care for us and preserving his word for us.

[15 : 22] Because he says in 2 Timothy 3.15, scriptures are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. And all scriptures breathe out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Because God gave us scripture to make us wise unto salvation, because God gave us scripture to equip us for every good work, he also ensured that it would be passed on faithfully to future generations.

I hope that stirs, you know, your love for God and for his word, that he, this is a precious book that we have. God preserved it. And it's such an incredible first for us to live in this generation with more access to the Bible than ever before.

And that we speak English. I mean, we have a number of translations from the original Bible when so many cultures, so many languages don't have any. And as I was preparing this, I was reminded of a YouTube video I saw of missionary footage in China when they brought a suitcase full of Bibles to Chinese believers who had never had their own Bibles before.

If you guys haven't seen it, I'd encourage you to look it up. Chinese Christians get their first Bibles. And as you look at that, there's like a, I mean, it's like a football game here or something like that.

[16 : 47] They're cheering. And as they open the suitcase, there's a joyous stampede to the suitcase. Everybody grabs one and they're holding it like this. Many of them in tears of gratitude, crying that this is what they were waiting for.

This is what they were looking for. And one woman in particular stands up and crying, holds the Bible to her chest like this and says, this is what we needed the most. It's a precious book that God preserved for us so we can encounter God, so we can get to know Jesus and know salvation.

Let's treasure it and cherish it and trust, trust it and read it. New Year's a good way to start that.

So that's the first sermon. Now let's turn to the text. Since it's been a little, there's been some times past, so I'm gonna read it again.

Chapter 753 to 811. They went each to his own house, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

[17 : 58] Early in the morning, he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and taught them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery.

And placing her in the midst, they said to him, Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now, in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such woman.

So what do you say? This, they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.

And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.

And once more, he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones.

[19 : 00] And Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus stood up and said to her, Woman, Where are they? Has no one condemned you?

She said, No one, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on, sin no more. Now, even though this is probably not part of scripture, it's very likely that the story actually happened because a similar story is preserved by a church historian named Eusebius.

And so it's probably happened. And it's consistent with the Jesus we see in scripture. And after all, John does concede in chapter 20, 30, that Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book.

So it's plausible that John perhaps told someone, one of his disciples, this story. It got written down and it was circulating by itself. And then later, several centuries later, it got included in the text.

So it's plausible. It's an event that probably happened. And this passage teaches that Christ fulfills the law given through Moses with his grace and truth. And so first, I'm going to talk about the law given through Moses.

[20 : 15] And then secondly, about the grace and truth that came through Jesus Christ. And so the rising action of this dramatic story is in verses 3 and 4 where scribes and the Pharisees bring a woman who had been caught in adultery.

And then they ask Jesus, placing her in front of him, Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now, there's something quite suspicious about this because first, you wonder how the scribes and Pharisees caught this woman.

Right? Because the Jewish law required that in order for a serious punishment to apply to someone, they have to be caught in the very act of that sin. So they had to have walked in on her committing adultery.

And adultery is not something that just kind of happens out in the open, right? It usually happens in closed doors, behind closed doors in secret. So then how did these scribes and Pharisees catch this woman in the act of adultery?

And then we begin to wonder, maybe this was perhaps staged. And perhaps the man involved in the adulterous relationship was in on this and informed the scribes and Pharisees of the upcoming rendezvous.

[21 : 24] And second, you also wonder what happened to the man involved in adultery. Because you can't commit adultery by yourself. Right? You need two people to commit adultery. Where is the man?

Leviticus 20.10 specifically commands, if a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

So where is the man? So the fact that the scribes and the Pharisees only dragged the woman to this impromptu court reveals kind of their chauvinism and possibly confirms our first suspicion that this adulteress was framed.

She probably did commit adultery. She was caught in the act, but she was nevertheless framed. And it seems, as is unfortunately the case in many cultures and societies around the world, people frequently will just wink at men who have extramarital relationships and let them continue to carry on their respectable lives.

But they had much harsher, severer punishment for women who have extramarital relationships. And so, when they ask their next question, they reveal their true motive in verse 5.

[22 : 36] Now, in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So, what do you say? And this, they said to test him that they might have some charge to bring against him.

So, they're not asking this question sincerely, but they want to lay a trap for Jesus. Because even though the Old Testament did prescribe the death penalty for adultery, in order to communicate the sanctity of marriage and to communicate the utmost importance of sexual purity, the penalty wasn't, historical evidence suggests, historically enforced.

The punishment was not enforced by the Jews. And one of the main reasons for that is because it was difficult to catch people in adultery. It was more common to suspect one's spouse of adultery. And the Bible prescribed different processes when you had suspicions of adultery for adjudicating such matters.

And this is not unlike, you know, this is similar to a modern example in Colorado, for example, they have law against adultery. Adultery is prohibited by law in Colorado.

But it's not punishable by law in Colorado. So it's kind of similar to that. So there is a punishment prescribed here, but it wasn't enforced historically speaking. And so the Pharisees, the fact that the scribes and the Pharisees bring this, even though they hadn't previously enforced this at all, they bring this to Jesus because they're not concerned with justice or holiness, but because they just want to test Jesus and put him between a hard and a rock and a hard place.

[24 : 07] And how are they doing that? How are they putting Jesus between a rock and a hard place? Because if Jesus denied the Mosaic law and said, no, we are not stoning this woman, then this would cause outrage among the observant Jews who believed in the law of Moses.

And this would immediately discredit Jesus as a teacher of the law. But if he enforced it, they would mean caving to the scribes and the Pharisees' duplicity and prejudice and contradicting his own example of showing compassion to the sinful, disreputable, and broken people as he has been doing consistently.

And not only that, he would also be violating Roman law because Roman law did not grant the Jewish court the right to administer capital punishments for cases like this. So either answer he would give, he would be in trouble, he would lose his following, he'd be discredited.

And so now that brings us to the climax of this traumatic story. And Jesus responds to their question with an unusual act and an unexpected answer. He says in verses 6 to 8, Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground.

And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her. And once more, he bent down and wrote on the ground.

[25 : 28] So what's going on, right? What is Jesus writing? Why didn't John, or why didn't whoever, why didn't they tell us? We want to know what he wrote on the ground. And no one knows what he wrote on the ground, even though biblical scholars and pastors and teachers have been debating this for centuries.

No one knows exactly what he wrote on the ground. And I don't think that's given to us because it's not important what he wrote on the ground, but it's important that he wrote on the ground. And the reason why is this, because in the entire Bible there's only two other instances where it speaks of writing something with one's finger.

Can you guys think of that? You don't have to answer out loud, but it's Exodus 31 and Deuteronomy 9. Both talk about the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone written with the finger of God.

And Jesus writes with his finger on the stony ground. So, that's a powerful statement. That's a subversive statement. The scribes and the Pharisees said in legalistic arrogance in verse 5, Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women, but Jesus tells them, I am the God who wrote the law.

Moses commanded you, I am the author of the law. And then in light of that truth, the attempt of the scribes and the Pharisees look quite pitiful, doesn't it?

[26 : 54] And Jesus bends down, writes with his finger. Then, he gives an unexpected answer to go with his unusual act.

He says, Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her. Now, this is a direct reference to Deuteronomy 17, 6-7.

It says, On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses, the one who is to die shall be put to death. A person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. The hand of the witnesses shall be the first against him to put him to death and afterward the hand of all the people.

So you shall purge the evil from your midst. So the law, by putting the burden of enforcing the death penalty on the witnesses themselves, it bound their conscience to make sure that they can't be false witnesses bringing a false case because they are going to have to have the blood of that innocent person on their hands if that's what they're doing.

So they have to be the first to throw the stone. And Jesus knows this, so he says, No, I'm not going to be the one to cast the stone. You're the witnesses. You be the first to cast the stone if you're the witnesses and true witnesses.

[28 : 05] And also, in Deuteronomy 19, 16-9, it's specified that if a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother.

So you shall purge the evil from your midst. So when Jesus says, Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her, he's not expecting or demanding sinless perfection.

He's not saying, No, only if you're perfect can you judge this woman. That's not what he's saying. What he's saying is that if you wish to put this woman to death for adultery, then you better not be guilty of yourselves.

You better testify to your innocence by being the first to throw the stone at her. Now, the woman was not without guilt. She was an adulteress. But the scribes and the Pharisees were also not without guilt because they framed her.

They were complicit in this, bringing this woman to this court. They were duplicitous. They were malicious witnesses that Deuteronomy 19 was talking about. And they deserve to be punished in the same way that this woman, in the same way they intended to punish this adulteress.

[29 : 19] And so Jesus, who made the law, who wrote the law, of course, knows the law better than the scribes and the Pharisees. And so without denying the Mosaic law, he cuts right through their hypocrisy and duplicity and then he appeals to their conscience.

So you can imagine the tense standoff, Jesus resuming riding with his finger on the stony ground. And the scribes and the Pharisees kind of looking about each other to see if any one of them dared to cast the first stone.

And one by one, they walk away. They came to shame Jesus, but they walk away in shame. And when at last, only Jesus is left standing with the woman, he says to her, Woman, where are they?

Has no one condemned you? And then she responds, No one, Lord. And Jesus continues, Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on, sin no more.

Jesus pardoning this woman, forgiving this woman, shows that he, shows his divinity because Old Testament taught and the Jews have been teaching faithfully.

[30 : 34] Forgiveness, pardoning for sin is an exclusively divine prerogative. Because sin is always committed against God, the lawgiver. It is only God who can pardon for those, pardon those who have broken the law.

And Jesus here assumes that prerogative because he is the son of God. And even though he is uniquely qualified to judge this woman, to condemn this woman as the sinless and perfect son of God and son of man, yet he chooses to pardon her.

But, grace is not the only thing he gives her. He also speaks the truth to her because he tells her, sin no more. Because grace doesn't mean we get a free past and we get to sin as much as we want from now on, right?

Because Jesus tells her, sin no more. No condemnation also means no more sin. Those who have been pardoned from sin ought to live as those who have nothing to do with sin.

That's how God intends for us to live. Jesus extends grace but he also brings truth. Now, before I go into exhorting you on the basis of this passage, let me ground this passage in other parts of scripture to make sure the scriptural authority rests behind it.

[31 : 50] And you have seen the consistent picture of this throughout the Gospel of John. John 1.17 in the prologue which is really the thesis of the Gospel of John, it said that the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

And Jesus here is fulfilling that statement. Yes, the law was given through Moses but Jesus here brings the grace and truth of God to the world. And likewise, John 3.17 which we also went through said, for God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.

So Jesus here doesn't condemn her. He's consistent with what the picture of him that we have seen throughout the Gospel of John. He pardons her. Just as he approached the Samaritan woman who had been outcast, who had been outcast because of a lot of her illicit sexual relationships and in the same way he approached her and offered her eternal life, Jesus here pardons this adulteress.

But on what basis does Jesus do that? Because this woman betrayed her husband. Husband's trust she renewed on her marriage oath.

Family is the building block of society and marriage is the bedrock of the family. Yet she violated that sacred marriage bond. And not only that, she sinned against God.

[33 : 15] the holy God who gave her the good gift of marriage and who designed marriage to be a lifelong commitment between a man, one man, and one woman.

How can Jesus simply say, neither do I condemn you? Where's the justice? Where's God's holiness? Jesus can offer forgiveness forgiveness to those who believe in him only because he knows that he is headed to the cross where he will die to take away the sin of the world.

But his atoning death on the cross no matter what enables him to forgive, extend forgiveness to us, no matter where you have been, no matter what sins you have committed in your life, that's the only basis in which Jesus can say to us, neither do I condemn you.

Now go sin no more. Perhaps you don't think of yourself as much of a sinner. Maybe you think you're a good person unlike the adulteress in this story.

But Matthew 5, 28 tells us that everyone who looks at a woman or a man with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. God cares not only about our actions, he also cares about our sinful heart.

[34 : 36] And when we look within ourselves, we know that we all fall short of God's standard for us. We're all, without Christ, just dead trees. And it doesn't matter how many fruit you staple onto this dead tree, the fruit doesn't last, right?

Because the tree's dead. That's our hearts apart from Christ and his transforming work through the Spirit. So we all need to come to Jesus and hear him say to us, neither do I condemn you.

Go and from now on sin no more. Maybe you're very aware, you're keenly aware of your sin. Maybe you're so aware of it and so ashamed of it that you have sinned in your life that you've never shared with anyone else.

what Proverbs 28, 13 teaches us, whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

Maybe you fear judgment, maybe you fear losing something, a reputation, your job, whatever it might be. Your instinct of self-preservation is misleading you in this case because healing lies in confession and it's not enough that you confess to God between you and him alone.

[35 : 52] James 5, 16 says, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. Sin wants to lie hidden.

Sin wants to remain isolated because that's where it is strong. That's where it eats away with guilt. When sin is brought into the light, that's where it withers.

That's where it loses its strength. And only community where we can have people, sinners, confessing their sins to each other is a community formed around the cross of Jesus Christ.

That's the only place where we can dare to be a sinner. So dare to be a sinner today. Confess your sins to Jesus and to one another and hear him say to you, neither do I condemn you.

Now go and leave for like you said. Perhaps you are already a believer and you do confess your sins.

[36 : 57] But maybe you don't take repentance, reformation of your ways seriously. Now I'm saved now so I don't have to worry about continuing to make progress, continuing to be sanctified because I'm going to die and go to heaven anyway.

But then remember then, Jesus didn't stop at saying, neither do I condemn you. He also said, go and from now on sin no more.

If you are abusing the grace of God and paying little heed to obedience and sanctification, then you're in mortal spiritual danger because God's saving grace, his justifying grace is also the same sanctifying grace.

It matures us. As J.C. Ryle, a Puritan pastor, he writes, the Christian life is not like animal life which grows up to a certain point and then stops. Rather, it is like plant life which grows and keeps growing in strength and vigor all its days.

That's how we were meant to live. Now leave the life of sin. Go and sin no more. So then, for all of us, no matter where we are on that spectrum, no matter where we have been, Jesus is sufficient for all of us.

[38 : 10] Because no matter where we are in our spiritual walk, we need him. And as we see in this passage and in other scriptures, never was there a more gracious Savior.

Never was there a more just and truthful Lord. The law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

There is no condemnation today for those who entrust themselves to Jesus. So I ask you, plead with you, every one of you, do that today. Let's pray together. God, we thank you, we praise you for your mercy.

we thank you that you are a gracious Savior so that we can approach you without fear.

It is your love for us that compels our love for you. So now we ask God that you would help us, you would make us, Trinity Cambridge Church, a community defined and motivated by this grace you have shown us.

[39 : 44] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.