

THE ACCUSATION

# God's Double standard



We're on number 9 of our 9 issues with the Bible. And number nine goes like this: **God operates from an inconsistent, even a double standard.** For example:

**Lev 20**

**10. `The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.**

Yet when God comes to earth as a man, He says this to an adulterous woman:

**John 8**

**11. ... "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."**

**A LOOK INTO THE LAW**

Let's start by taking a **look at the Law God gave through Moses...**

From the beginning of Israel as a nation, this was the legal and moral code that the nation lived by.

And in that law, adultery was considered **one of the three gravest sins**. The adulterer and the adulteress were to be put to death- no exceptions. If we look in Leviticus 20, we'll find capital punishment for all kinds of sexual misconduct. And on top of that, the Jewish Mishna gives the details of the sentence. In some cases it was strangulation, in others stoning, and interestingly, if adultery involved a priest's daughter, she was to be burned alive. PK's have always had it rough!

The Law was serious business- **no mercy, no exceptions; simply justice**. That's what it was for. The Law was given for **three great lessons**

1. The Law **teaches us right from wrong**; good from evil, as God sees it.
2. The Law **proves God's standard** of goodness is beyond human nature- we can't keep it as a way of life.
3. The Law illustrates the **true ugliness and consequence of sin**- through the sentence of justice.

That was the Law; and the Old Testament holds a long record of people who suffered the consequences of failing the Law.

**~So, how do we match up the tenderness of Christ with the hardness of the Law?**

**~Is the only explanation: God holds a double standard?**

Before we even start, let's consider a fact of reality that came naturally to the ancient Jews, but as enlightened modern-day believers; we tend to have a problem with it:

**Romans 9**

**15. For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."**

**16. So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.**

**17. For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "Even for this same purpose I have raised you up, that I might show My power in you, and that My name might be declared in all the earth."**

**18. Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.**

**19. You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?"**

**20. But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?"**

**21. Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?**

**Clay pots were made for everything;** from urinals to vessels of priceless perfume. *If you were a pot, what would you rather be?* But if you are the creator of pots; you don't ask the clay what it wants to be. **It simply is what it is.** The creator creates and; it is whatever the CREATOR says it is.

And there's a **second factor in the grand equation of creation; humanity's guilt.** In the beginning, man failed God. -Then when God revealed the standard by which He exists, through Law- we continually failed that. We do to this day. So no member of the human race is in a **position to question God's standards. We are all imperfect, so by perfect justice, we deserve to be sentenced.**

There is a **milestone in understanding spiritual reality-** when it comes to the goodness of God, we don't deserve any. If and when it comes, it will have to be for some other reason. **If humanity simply gets what it deserves, we are all in a lot of trouble.**

God is creator and sovereign over all reality. **He can do whatever He wills to do.** Of course, that's **not entirely true**, because by His nature, He must remain faithful to Himself; to attributes like *perfection, wisdom, justice, and love...* lucky for us!

So, there's what we deserve, by the Law of God, and the tenderness in the love of God; what can possibly bridge the two? **The bridge is MERCY.**

**Let's go back to that fateful day** in Jerusalem and see what was really going on:

### John 8

1. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.  
2. But early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.

3. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst,

4. they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.

5. "Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"

6. This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

7. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

8. And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

9. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

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."**



To understand; **we need to understand all the factors that are in play.** First...

- **We're dealing with a change in moral standard, but it's not God's; it's man's-**

In the early days of Israel, as they trudged through the desert- they were a homeless nation with nothing to hang on to but the promise of God. When they were a fledgling nation surrounded by powerful enemies- they held to the promise of God. The Law was strictly enforced; it was a pretty tight ship! But just like us, when it seemed they could do it on their own, they became very slack in their relationship with God.

As a matter of fact; by the time of Jesus; the upholding of the Law became a matter of convenience- if you could pay; if you were liked, or not liked. It is said that there was **very little sentencing for adultery** because adultery was rampant. A husband dared not indict his wife, because he could easily find himself accused. So, it was probably something of a rare sight to see a mob like this- pulling some poor woman along.

- **The accusers are violating the very law they are pretending to uphold-**

**Lev 20:10** states both the man and woman were to be sentenced, but they brought only the woman.

- **The accusers were perverting the heart of the Law-**

Adultery was going on all around, but unfortunately, it was only this poor woman who served their need. She just happened to be the right person at the wrong time! It wasn't about upholding the Law, she was an expendable pawn. They were using her to try and trap God, Himself.

- **The response of Jesus is more than meets the eye-**

**Jesus writes on the ground.** This is where it gets interesting; did you ever wonder: What did Jesus write that was so effective that it silenced an entire mob?

**It wasn't merely writing.** To simply "write" in the original Greek would be the word "graphein." But the word used here is "katagraphein", meaning, to "write against."

Jesus wrote some kind of list that **made the accusers so uncomfortable** that they eventually dropped their stones and slunk away in silence. -In some form, He was writing all the little "nasties" they did when no one was looking. Perhaps it was even a list of their own adulterous partners. Whatever the details, it caused their conscience to stop them in their tracks. **They did not have the right** to do what they were doing.

- **There is the first phrase of mercy**

**"Neither do I condemn you"**- Jesus did not claim to be a legal magistrate. This time, He did not come as judge; He came as mercy in the flesh. He came, not to accuse, but to be the payment for our crimes.

Now a lot of people like to stop right here. But if Jesus did, that would not be perfect mercy. In **no way did Jesus accept the woman's sin**. There's no real mercy in telling the deathly sick they are not really sick.

- **Then comes the second phrase of mercy**

**"Go and sin no more"**

It wasn't carte blanche, it was a second chance. It wasn't that judgment was discarded, it was only deferred. The mercy **was not deserved**, it was a gift; it was payment that would soon be crucified for her. It was giving her time to move her life in another direction before ultimate and final judgment did come. That is what mercy is!

- **His response didn't disregard the Law but fulfilled it.**

As individuals, **humans are slow learners**. As a race, we are incredibly thick-headed. From the time of Moses to the time of Christ it was a **three thousand year lesson**. The Law showed us the standard and justice of God. It took 3 millennia to learn what real goodness looked like; and that we couldn't possibly measure up to it. But **mixed in with the Law was a hope**. The Law pointed to a Savior who would come and do what we could not do for ourselves. He would bring empowerment, and He would bring choice. - That is what mercy is!

When that woman was taken and thrown at the feet of Jesus, the hardness of the Law met the tenderness of its fulfillment. **Justice met mercy**. Sin was still sin; but now there was a **second chance**.

We might ask, "*But why her? What about others who were stoned?*"

**Two things-**

-Isn't it interesting, that it wasn't God who was set on exacting the punishment, but guilty people? **God showed mercy to the person that men condemned.**

-Secondly, if ten people were about to die, even deserving to die, and you saved one- isn't that still mercy?

- **The mercy came, not because the woman believed in God, but that God believed in the woman.**

There is a lesson here for all of us that I couldn't put better than William Barclay, so I quote:

"Go, and sin no more." Here was no easy forgiveness; here was a challenge which pointed a sinner to heights of goodness of which she had never dreamed. Jesus confronts the bad life with the challenge of the good.

...

He said: "Go, and sin no more." He believed that with his help the sinner has it in him to become the saint. His method was not to blast men with the knowledge--which they already possessed--that they were miserable sinners, but to inspire them with the unglimped discovery that they were potential saints. ~Barclay

God believing in us, that's what mercy is!

#### CONCLUSION

**The standard has never changed; it has always been perfect justice.** For a time mercy stayed behind the altar. But when the time was right, it rose to a cross and took the legal sentence we deserved. **Mercy** is the only thing that can give us the time, the power, the judicial answer, and the direction to let goodness blossom.

**Mercy has a shape- it is a cross.** Mercy has a color, it is blood red. Mercy has a name- God's only begotten Son. Mercy believes in you- your potential. God believes in your potential, do you? Mercy gives you a chance to respond. **Do you believe enough to respond?**

Some may think, **"I haven't really done anything that bad, in fact, relatively speaking, I'm a pretty good person! So, why do I have to worry about getting what I deserve?"**

It is crucial we understand this: **God, and God's Kingdom are perfection.** -Perfect goodness is devoid of any nature or signs of evil. You are that, and part of that Kingdom, OR YOU ARE NOT. Ask yourself; **are you perfect?** ...If not; **you are in need of something more than you DESERVE.**

**Does God have a double standard?** No, justice and mercy, have always been the flip sides of a single, continuous story. It's the story of God's unfolding rescue.

**Kathy and I are going to sing about this;** it's about three minutes long. We are going to give you three minutes or so to do three things:

1. Take a moment of honesty- YOU ask God what you deserve
2. Whether you've accepted it or never have- do a little serious business of asking Him to **take you a little deeper into His mercy**. Let the peace of it settle in.
3. Let it settle in to the point that, when you leave this place, **you will pass on mercy** to others. -Because, that's what mercy does!