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*"His mercy is always driven toward our weak points and in so doing He raises us to a level of esteem that only He can grant."*

There she was, on the ground at the feet of Jesus. She had been publicly exposed and left feeling humiliated and embarrassed. She was a woman according to law, who deserved this kind of treatment. She had been allegedly caught in an act of adultery. This was a dreaded sin because under the foundation of Mosaic Law it meant that she, as well as her partner, could be immediately put to death through stoning. But no partner is present. The only people present to offer witness to *her* sin are a bunch of Pharisaic men and we are not sure as to what their motives are for being present. We don't know if they have trumped up these charges, we don't know if in fact they have

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## PASTOR'S *Perspective*

something to protect in keeping the man's identity unknown. What we surely know is that they are trying to trap Jesus. You see this story comes about as a part of a whole inquiry in chapters 8-12 of John's gospel where religious authorities and leaders are trying to figure out just who this Jesus character really is. They have heard his pronouncements about His relationship with the Father and they have even heard Him declare that He is the light of the world and the light of life. They have been trying to get Him to "hang" Himself in other words. If nothing else you have to give Jesus credit. He is no fool. He is no stranger to controversy and in this instance able to quickly turn the tables.

The men want to see if Jesus will keep Mosaic Law or side with Roman law which forbade such punishment. Jesus then takes control of the situation. He kneels to the ground and starts writing. The men of the crowd have their eyes fixed intently on Jesus. They have been waiting for Jesus to say something but instead He is writing on the ground. They have been expecting some profound response from Jesus but He is writing on the ground. What is He writing? What is the significance of this action? What is He doing? The record sells us short in this regard. We do not know what Jesus wrote and speculation is probably an empty exercise. It is not important perhaps *what* He wrote but rather the important thing is *that* He wrote. What we do know is that after reading whatever it was that Jesus wrote the accusers started to scatter one by one. Something must have been written that tore them at the very seam of "their great big 'ol

judgmental hearts!" In fact it was so substantial that they couldn't even  
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bear the thought of it, so they just left. You see whatever the woman had done, if in fact she did anything, obviously paled in the face of the sin of these men. The far greater sin in this story is their obvious guilt. What kind of lives were they leading? What things had they done? Had they engaged the same act at some point in their lives that they were accusing the woman of? Jesus protects the woman by charging them all with sin. "Let anyone who is without sin cast the first stone," He declares.

Suddenly there is nobody present but Jesus and this woman. He turned His back on the accusers and turned His face toward the accused. What a great Savior He is! He makes of our accusers nothing but accords us as the accused the offer of His grace. You see Jesus' love is always focused on us. His mercy is always driven toward our weak points and in so doing He raises us to a level of esteem that only He can grant. When Jesus stooped down He got down to the woman's level. He cared deeply about sinners and here was a sinner in need of a Savior.

That's where you and I come into the picture. Jesus was able to pronounce her guiltless because He alone would take her sin and have it nailed to the cross. He alone could set her free. Picture yourself as this woman or maybe not as the woman but as one walking around everyday with the stain of sin on you. What would Jesus say to you if you were in the place of the woman? He would answer just as He did with her. "Neither do I condemn you." Paul in his letter to the Romans says it this way. "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!" Go and sin no more.