

WHEN NAILS TAKE THE PLACE OF STONES

I. John 8:1-11

A. Before we dive into our text this morning, there's something you should know about John 8:1-11: Even though these verses appear in over 900 manuscripts that include the gospel of John, they don't appear in the oldest Greek manuscripts. Sometimes they appear in another section of John. Sometimes they appear in Luke. That said, most believe the narrative is consistent with the whole of the gospels, that there's nothing questionable or apocryphal about them, and biggest scholarly concern seems to be the textural placement and authorship. I asked a Bible translator at a seminar many years ago about these and his explanation was consistent with what all my Bible translations say: While it may or may not belong in this spot, it belongs. And that totally resonates with me...

B. John 8:1-11 (ESV) takes us to the heart of the story...

V1-2: *1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2 Early in the morning He came again to the temple. All the people came to Him, and He sat down and taught them. (So where are we at? The Temple in Jerusalem.)*

2) V3-4: *3 The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst 4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. (First question is, where's the guy? Adultery is one of those sins you can't commit by yourself. You can lie, steal, cheat, worship idols, and curse God by yourself but adultery's different. The accusers continue...)*

3) V5-6a: *5 Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" 6a This they said to test Him, that they might have some charge to bring against Him. (There's a little bit of law-twisting going on here but Jesus ignores it.)*

4) V6b: *6b Jesus bent down and wrote with His finger on the ground. (So what did Jesus write in that temple dirt? Did He just doodle because He was in a pickle between the Law of Moses and the law of the Romans? [Trust me, Jesus was never in any pickles!] Did He scribble the sins committed by each of her accusers? Did He write the names of women who these guys had known intimately and I don't mean their wives? Did the Word-Made-Flesh, the Divine finger that inscribed the first set of Ten Commandments, write them here again? This side of heaven we will never know.)*

5) V7-8: *7 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." 8 And once more He bent down and wrote on the ground. (So what did He write this time? More of the same? Additional sins? Additional names?)*

6) V9: *9 But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before Him. (When Jesus spoke, add to that what He wrote in the dirt, the Spirit of God put power on it, conviction came, their consciences were stabbed, the air became way too heavy to float stones.)*

7) V10-11: 10 Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" **11** She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more." (Jesus did not condone her sin. Two families may've been wrecked because of this. What if ladies it were your husband she'd been with? What if she was your wife gents? But Jesus forgave her! Nails would soon take the place of the stones. Jesus would go to the cross to pay for her sins. He would bear her punishment. He would bear her guilt and shame. He'd also do the same for you and me!)

C. 700 years before this woman's time, a prophet who said our righteousness was like filthy rags, wrote about her atonement and the One who would carry it out. He was writing about our atonement as well! Isaiah 53:4-6 (NIV) says: 4 Surely He took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

D. Like this woman caught in the act, we would be delivered from sins' punishment and also from its power over us. One day we will be freed from its presence altogether. Romans 8:1-3 (NLT) affirms it this way: 1 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. 2 And because you belong to Him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. 3 The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent His own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving His Son as a sacrifice for our sins.

E. I just finished a book about American POWs during the Vietnam War and how brutally they were treated. Such terrible atrocities! The same thing happened to Allied POWs at the hands of the Japanese in WW II. Ernest Gordon, in his book, Miracle On The River Kwai writes about Scottish prisoners, forced by their captors to build a jungle railroad. One day a shovel came up missing. With gun in hand, the enraged Japanese officer in charge threatened to execute all the prisoners if whoever was responsible didn't confess. Finally one POW stepped forward. The officer put away his gun and then picked up a shovel and beat the man to death right where he stood. The horrified prisoners picked up the bloody corpse as they were marched to a second tool check. The second count revealed no missing shovel. A miscount had taken place the first time. Word quickly spread throughout the camp that an innocent man died to save them all. And that gives us all a tiny smidgeon of a glimpse as to what Jesus has done for us...

F. Romans 5:6-8 (AMP) says it very clearly: 6 While we were still helpless, powerless to provide for our salvation, at the right time Christ died as a substitute for the ungodly. 7 Now it is an extraordinary thing for one to willingly give his life even for an upright man, though perhaps for a good man, one who is noble and selfless and worthy, someone might even dare to die. 8 But God clearly shows and proves His own love for us, by the fact that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

G. I still have no idea what Jesus wrote in that Jerusalem dirt when stones were about to fill the air. Nobody but The Writer knows. But this same Writer is still in the business of writing names in The Lamb's Book of Life. I pray often that all your names

are written there. The same for all your loved ones. An innocent Man died so your name could be inscribed on that roster. Make sure that it is... Make sure...

* Close with Prayer...

[Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff](#)

[John 8:1-11 \(ESV\)](#)

1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. **2** Early in the morning He came again to the temple. All the people came to Him, and He sat down and taught them. **3** The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst **4** they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. **5** Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” **6** 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. **7** 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.” **8** And once more He bent down and wrote on the ground. **9** But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before Him. **10** Jesus stood up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” **11** She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.”

[Isaiah 53:4-6 \(NIV\)](#)

4 Surely He took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted. **5** But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed. **6** We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

[Romans 8:1-3 \(NLT\)](#)

1 So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. **2** And because you belong to Him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. **3** The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent His own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving His Son as a sacrifice for our sins.

[Romans 5:6-8 \(AMP\)](#)

6 While we were still helpless [powerless to provide for our salvation], at the right time Christ died [as a substitute] for the ungodly. **7** Now it is an extraordinary thing for one to willingly give his life even for an upright man, though perhaps for a good man [one who is noble and selfless and worthy] someone might even dare to die. **8** But God clearly shows and proves His own love for us, by the fact that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The Missing Shovel

Ernest Gordon's Tells a story in *Miracle On The River Kwai* about Scottish soldiers, forced by their Japanese captors to labor on a jungle railroad. Under the strain of captivity they had degenerated to barbarous behavior, but one afternoon something happened.

A shovel was missing. The officer in charge became enraged. He demanded that the missing shovel be produced, or else. When nobody in the squadron budged, the officer got his gun and threatened to kill them all on the spot. It was obvious the officer meant what he had said. Then, finally, one man stepped forward. The officer put away his gun, picked up a shovel, and beat the man to death. When it was over, the survivors picked up the bloody corpse and carried it with them to the second tool check. This time, no shovel was missing. Indeed, there had been a miscount at the first tool check.

The word spread like wildfire through the whole camp. An innocent man had been willing to die to save the others! The incident had a profound effect. The men began to treat each other like brothers.

When the victorious Allies swept in, the survivors, human skeletons, lined up in front of their captors (and instead of attacking their captors) insisted: "*No more hatred. No more killing. Now what we need is forgiveness.*" Sacrificial love has transforming power.

- From Ernest Gordon, *Miracle On The River Kwai*, adapted by Don Ratzlaff in *Christian Leader*.

Bonus Rations for Further Nourishment

The Life of Jesus (Gospel of John) Adulterous Woman

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8v-4t87954>

"Hallelujah, What A Savior" - Fox Hounds

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6N6q4ijEyfs>

"Jesus Paid It All" - Kim Walker-Smith

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ymkl0t0FOcw>

Leviticus 20:10 (ESV)

10 If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

Deuteronomy 22:22-24 (ESV)

22 If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman. So you shall purge the evil from Israel. **23** If there is a betrothed virgin, and a man meets her in the city and lies with her, **24** then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death

with stones, the young woman because she did not cry for help though she was in the city, and the man because he violated his neighbor's wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Jesus Paid It All

Words by Elvina M. Hall, 1865; Tune by John T. Grape, 1868 - Public Domain

I hear the Savior say,
"Thy strength indeed is small;
Child of weakness, watch and pray,
Find in Me thine all in all."

Refrain:

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

For nothing good have I
Whereby Thy grace to claim;
I'll wash my garments white
In the blood of Calv'ry's Lamb.

And now complete in Him,
My robe, His righteousness,
Close sheltered 'neath His side,
I am divinely blest.

Lord, now indeed I find
Thy pow'r, and Thine alone,
Can change the leper's spots [*leopard's]
And melt the heart of stone.

When from my dying bed
My ransomed soul shall rise,
"Jesus died my soul to save,"
Shall rend the vaulted skies.

And when before the throne
I stand in Him complete,
I'll lay my trophies down,
All down at Jesus' feet.

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

“They bewailed innocence maltreated, goodness persecuted, love bleeding, meekness about to die; but my heart has a deeper and more bitter cause to mourn. My sins were the scourges which lacerated those blessed shoulders, and crowned with thorn those bleeding brows: my sins cried “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” and laid the cross upon His gracious shoulders. His being led forth to die is sorrow enough for one eternity: but my having been His murderer, is more, infinitely more, grief than one poor fountain of tears can express.”

Quote by John Piper

“Life is wasted if we do not grasp the glory of the cross, cherish it for the treasure that it is, and cleave to it as the highest price of every pleasure and the deepest comfort in every pain. What was once foolishness to us — a crucified God — must become our wisdom and our power and our only boast in this world.”

Quote by Martin Luther

“Learn to know Christ and Him crucified. Learn to sing to Him, and say, ‘Lord Jesus, You are my righteousness, I am your sin. You have taken upon Yourself what is mine and given me what is Yours. You have become what You were not so that I might become what I was not.’”

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

“The general religion of mankind is “DO,” but the religion of a true Christian is “DONE.” IT IS FINISHED is the believer’s conquering word. INCARNATE LOVE has fulfilled His self-imposed task. Jesus, as the Substitute for sinners, was condemned to die, and He died that He might finish the work of our redemption. Your sins have sustained their death-blow, the robe of your righteousness has received its last thread (cf [1Cor 1:30-note](#), [2Cor 5:21-note](#)). It is done, complete, perfect. It needs no addition; it can NEVER suffer any diminution. Oh, Christian, do lay hold of this precious thought. I may not be able to state it except in weak terms, but let not my weakness prevent your apprehending its glory and its preciousness. This thought is enough to make a man leap, though his legs were chained with irons, and to make him sing, though his mouth were gagged. We are PERFECTLY ACCEPTED in Christ, and our justification is not partial (cf [Ro 5:1-note](#), [Ro 5:9-note](#), [Ro 8:30-note](#)). It does not go to a limited extent, but goes the whole way. Our unrighteousness is covered. From condemnation we are entirely and irrevocably free. ‘Consummatum est. The work is done, redemption is accomplished; the salvation of My people is forever secured. Sin will never be mentioned against them anymore, forever. Oh, wondrous deed of Deity! Oh, mighty feat of love accomplished once for all!’”

Taking A Bee Sting

By Ned Brockwell

A father was driving his car with his young son sitting in the front seat. A bee entered through the open window. Normally, we are fearful of bees, not wanting to be stung. But some people, like the young boy, are deathly allergic to bee stings. The boy was petrified with fright when he saw the bee; all he could do was to scream! The father

instantly reached out with his hand and caught the bee. Then, he squeezed it tightly with his hand. The boy looked at such bravery with rapt amazement. Then the father opened his hand, and the bee started to fly once again. Sure enough, the boy gave in to fear and started to panic. But with a firm and reassuring voice, the father said to his son. “Son, don’t worry! It’s okay! The bee can’t hurt you! His sting is in my hand. And so God did the same for us in Christ, grabbing hold of sin, strangling it, and removing its sting!

Why Didn't Jesus Write Any Books in the Bible?

By S. Michael Houdmann

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-write.html>

Question: *Why didn't Jesus write any books in the Bible?*

Answer: Many wonder why Jesus did not write any books or why anything He may have written was not preserved. Conspiracy theorists suggest His texts were hidden for nefarious reasons. Given the importance of the written Word ([2 Timothy 3:16](#)), it's natural to ask why Christ didn't record anything in writing. Scripture doesn't give us an exact answer. Still, we can make educated guesses. The most likely reason relates to humanity's habit of over-emphasizing certain things and ideas, while losing sight of the larger picture.

Speaking to the disciples at the Last Supper, Jesus said that He was going to leave the physical world ([John 16:5](#)). Then, shockingly, He said that His leaving was to their advantage ([John 16:7](#)). That would have been hard to understand at the time. However, it does make sense in hindsight.

So long as Jesus was physically present, the disciples would always rely on His presence to control their faith. Only when Jesus left, and the Holy Spirit came, would the disciples rely on a personal, internal connection to God's will. If Jesus had stayed physically present in this world, their every decision would have been delayed until they could ask Him His advice in person. The reach of the gospel would be limited by where He was, physically, at any given time. Obedience to God and the outworking of faith would have been focused on seeing or hearing a physical Christ—to the exclusion of interacting with other Christians or heeding the voice of the Holy Spirit.

As we consider why Jesus didn't write any books of the Bible, similar principles may apply. Even having the Bible, some ignore or downplay everything in Scripture other than the words of Jesus: the “[Red Letter](#)” groups. Beyond the fact that “red letters” are not designated in the original texts, that approach to the Bible can lead to setting aside important teachings from God. It's a misplaced effort to emphasize some of God's Word over other parts. In truth, everything in Scripture is from Jesus, because it's all from God.

If we had texts personally written by Jesus, many would go beyond honoring them to setting aside all other words of Scripture. Having a “book of Jesus” would invite people to ignore inspired statements outside that text.

If the physical scrolls of any book of the Bible survived, people would treat those objects as idols—just as they do with supposed “relics” associated with Christ. Jesus’ only earthly possessions when He died were His clothes; these were immediately taken by indifferent Romans ([John 19:23–24](#)). Had He left anything else, including writings, the relics would quickly have inspired idolatrous impulses. Something similar happened in the Old Testament, when people obsessed over [an item](#) associated with Moses ([Numbers 21:49](#); [2 Kings 18:1–4](#)).

Knowing human nature, God may have purposefully avoided giving us things to worship. This may explain why we know so little about [Jesus’ childhood](#) or His appearance. Such details would likely provide temptation and distraction far more than they’d tell us anything we need to know about God.

We don’t have an explicit answer about why Jesus never left writings of His own. Still, human weakness seems the best explanation. Discipleship relies on individual understanding and an appreciation for all of God’s Word. If we had a book of the Bible written by Jesus, we would be tempted to obsess over and even idolize it. As much as the disciples would have loved Jesus to stay with them, and as much as we’d love to have His handwritten words, our sin nature determines that not having those things is, ironically, better for us and our relationship to God.

Recommended Resources:

[The Quest Study Bible More insights from your Bible study - Get Started with Logos Bible Software for Free!](#)

Related Topics

[What is the Bible? Who wrote the Bible? How many books of the Bible did Paul write?](#)

[Who wrote the Book of Hebrews?](#)

[Did the writers of the New Testament regard their writings as Scripture?](#)

- While he is not the author of every article on GotQuestions.org, for citation purposes, you may reference our CEO, S. Michael Houdmann.

The Five Solas of the Reformation

SOLA SCRIPTURA: This slogan means “*Scripture Alone*.” This truth declares that the Bible alone is our only authority for faith (what we believe) and conduct (how we live). The Bible alone is God’s Word written. It is without error, it is authoritative, it is sufficient for all things pertaining to life and godliness. It must be preached and taught and lived

out. *"All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness: so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."* (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

SOLA GRATIA: This slogan means *"Grace Alone."* It answers the question of who does what in salvation. Many think that salvation is a "grace and..." project. If this is true, then "grace is no longer grace" (Romans 11:6). The Bible is clear, salvation is all of grace and grace alone because "salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). *"(He) who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.."* (2 Timothy 1:9)

SOLA FIDE: This slogan means *"Faith Alone."* Faith alone is the instrument of our salvation. Salvation is not by works; it is by faith, that is, trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. Even saving faith is a gift of God's grace. *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

SOLUS CHRISTUS: This slogan means *"Through Christ Alone."* It is in Christ alone that we have salvation. In His perfect life and substitutionary death, alone we have salvation. Through Him and Him alone, we have the forgiveness of our sins and are declared righteous before God. *"He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."* (Titus 3:5-7)

SOLI DEO GLORIA: This slogan means *"To God alone be the Glory."* It is the great goal of all of God's purposes in Jesus Christ. All that God does, He does for His own glory. He created all things for His glory. He sustains and rules over the world and our lives for His glory. Our salvation is all by grace through Christ for all His glory. One important thing to notice, the word *alone*. God and God alone is worthy of all glory and praise! *"For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen."* (Romans 11:36)

- Author Unknown

The Five Solas of the Reformation

James Montgomery Boice

"1. Scripture alone. When the Reformers used the words sola Scriptura they were expressing their concern for the Bible's authority, and what they meant is that the Bible alone is our ultimate authority—not the pope, not the church, not the traditions of the church or church councils, still less personal intimations or subjective feelings, but Scripture only. Other sources of authority may have an important role to play. Some are even established by God—such as the authority of church elders, the authority of the

state, or the authority of parents over children. But Scripture alone is truly ultimate. Therefore, if any of these other authorities depart from Bible teaching, they are to be judged by the Bible and rejected.

2. Christ alone. The church of the Middle Ages spoke about Christ. A church that failed to do that could hardly claim to be Christian. But the medieval church had added many human achievements to Christ's work, so that it was no longer possible to say that salvation was entirely by Christ and his atonement. This was the most basic of all heresies, as the Reformers rightly perceived. It was the work of God plus our own righteousness. The Reformation motto *solus Christus* was formed to repudiate this error. It affirmed that salvation has been accomplished once for all by the mediatorial work of the historical Jesus Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone are sufficient for our justification, and any 'gospel' that fails to acknowledge that or denies it is a false gospel that will save no one.

3. Grace alone. The words *sola gratia* mean that human beings have no claim upon God. That is, God owes us nothing except just punishment for our many and very willful sins. Therefore, if he does save sinners, which he does in the case of some but not all, it is only because it pleases him to do it. Indeed, apart from this grace and the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit that flows from it, no one would be saved, since in our lost condition, human beings are not capable of winning, seeking out, or even cooperating with God's grace. By insisting on 'grace alone' the Reformers were denying that human methods, techniques, or strategies in themselves could ever bring anyone to faith. It is grace alone expressed through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ, releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from death to spiritual life.

4. Faith alone. The Reformers never tired of saying that 'justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone.' When put into theological shorthand the doctrine was expressed as "justification by faith alone," the article by which the church stands or falls, according to Martin Luther. The Reformers called justification by faith Christianity's "material principle," because it involves the very matter or substance of what a person must understand and believe to be saved. Justification is a declaration of God based on the work of Christ. It flows from God's grace and it comes to the individual not by anything he or she might do but by 'faith alone' (*sola fide*). We may state the full doctrine as: Justification is the act of God by which he declares sinners to be righteous because of Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone.

5. Glory to God alone. Each of the great solas is summed up in the fifth Reformation motto: *solus Deo gloria*, meaning 'to God alone be the glory.' It is what the apostle Paul expressed in Romans 11:36 when he wrote, 'to Him be the glory forever! Amen.' These words follow naturally from the preceding words, "For from him and through him and to him are all things" (v. 36), since it is because all things really are from God, and to God, that we say, 'to God alone be the glory.'"

- James Montgomery Boice, *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace?* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2001), pp. 65-149.)