The One Qualified to Throw a Stone Didn't

On Judgment, Mercy, and the Heart of Christ

by Oludare Akinbo

"He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." — John 8:7 NKJV

"Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." — John 8:11 NKJV

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." — Matthew 5:7 NKJV

We live in a time where the pressures on a believer are real and relentless. Pressure from without, pressure from within, and a cultural environment that grows more hostile to genuine faith with every passing year. But one of the most dangerous pressures the church faces is not external at all. It is the quiet, corrosive tendency of those who have received grace to become the most ungracious toward others who are struggling. It is the spirit that picks up stones.

This reflection is not a call to ignore sin or minimise its consequences. It is a call to handle the reality of human failure — in ourselves and in others — with the same mixture of truth and mercy that Christ demonstrated in the most famous confrontation of His ministry. It is a call to remember, before we judge, that the only One who ever had the right to throw a stone chose not to.

> *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*
>
> **— Ephesians 6:12 NKJV**

The enemy — described in Revelation 12:10 as 'the accuser of our brethren' — is subtle and strategic. He studies weaknesses, exploits circumstances, and at times even uses relationships to trip believers. He does not merely want a person to fall. He wants the fall to be witnessed, amplified, and condemned by those who should be the agents of restoration. When the church becomes the instrument of the accuser rather than the hands of the Healer, something has gone profoundly wrong.

We must be clear about one crucial distinction, however. There is a difference between those who stumble in human frailty yet genuinely strive to grow past their failures, and those who deliberately embrace and celebrate evil. This is not a call to indifference. God sees that difference clearly, even when people do not. And it is precisely because He sees it clearly that His dealings with the struggling believer are marked by patience and redemptive purpose, not hasty condemnation.

A Journey, Not an Arrival

A believer's life is one of transformation, not instant perfection. We are called to grow, to overcome, and to yield daily so that Christ may be formed in us. Scripture is unambiguous about this:

> *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*
>
> **— Ephesians 2:10 NKJV**

> *He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*
>
> **— Philippians 1:6 NKJV**

These are not simply comforting words. They are a theological statement about the nature of the Christian life. God does not begin a work and abandon it. He does not invest in a soul and then discard it at the first sign of struggle. His promise — 'I will never leave you nor forsake you' (Hebrews 13:5) — is not conditioned on perfection. It is grounded in His own unchanging faithfulness.

This means that growth involves struggle. There will be moments of weakness, missteps, even failure. But God's posture toward His own is redemptive, not destructive. He is not a taskmaster counting failures; He is a Father watching the road, waiting to run toward the returning child.

The Apostle's Honest Confession

This struggle is not theoretical. It is deeply human. And even the apostles testified to it with a candour that should forever silence the kind of self-righteous certainty that makes stone-throwers of believers.

> *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.*
> **— Romans 7:14 NKJV**

> *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.*
> **— Romans 7:18 NKJV**

Paul is not writing these words as a new convert still finding his footing. He is writing them as a seasoned apostle, a man who has planted churches across the Roman world, who has been caught up to the third heaven, who has endured beatings, shipwrecks, imprisonment, and the daily pressure of care for all the churches. And still he writes: 'in me, that is, in my flesh, nothing good dwells.'

This is not the language of a man excusing sin. It is the language of a man more spiritually mature than most — precisely because he is fully aware of the tension between human nature and the divine standard to which he is being conformed. It reveals something that is counter-intuitive but deeply true: spiritual maturity does not eliminate the awareness of struggle. It deepens it. The closer you draw to the light, the more clearly you see the dust.

He goes on to describe an internal conflict — wanting to do good, yet encountering another law within him that resists that desire. He calls this 'the law of sin which is in my members' (Romans 7:23). This is not a failure of faith. It is the honest anatomy of life in a redeemed but not yet glorified body. Every serious believer knows this experience. The tragedy is not that we feel it. The tragedy is when we pretend others should not.

THE SACRED TENSION

There remains within the believer a nature that resists the fullness of Christ we are being formed into. The journey is not instant transformation but progressive conformity. Yet this must be clearly balanced: grace is not permission to take sin lightly. We do not settle in the struggle. We receive mercy and pursue transformation — simultaneously, without apology for either.

Not condemned, yet not complacent.

Not perfect, yet pressing toward perfection.

Not finished, yet faithfully being formed.

> *Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*
> **— Matthew 5:48 NKJV**

The word translated 'perfect' comes from the Greek *teleios* — meaning 'complete, mature, brought to its intended fullness.' It speaks not merely of flawlessness but of a life steadily growing into alignment with God's nature. As The Passion Translation renders it: 'Since you are children of a perfect Father in heaven, become perfect like him.' This is the language of destination and direction, not of a standard met by effort in a moment. It is the lifelong trajectory of the believer — not an arrival, but a sustained movement toward One.

The Second Wound: When Believers Become Accusers

What is far more damaging — especially to a fragile or struggling soul — is not the fall itself, but the reaction of fellow believers when the fall becomes known.

Too often, instead of restoration, there is rejection. Instead of compassion, there is condemnation. Instead of wise, redemptive correction, there is harsh exposure that seeks to shame rather than to heal. The person who came to the community wounded leaves it wounded more deeply. And sometimes they do not come back.

This pattern is not new. It is as old as the Pharisees. But its persistence within the church is one of the most grievous contradictions of our profession of faith. We declare a gospel of grace and then withhold grace from those who need it most visibly. We sing of a God who forgives seventy times seven, and then maintain detailed mental archives of one another's failures.

The Apostle James asks a question that still cuts: 'Who are you to judge another?' (James 4:12). And the context is important — he is not writing to pagans but to

believers. He is addressing the tendency within the community of faith to set oneself up as the arbiter of another's standing before God. This is not the role of any human being. There is one Lawgiver and Judge (James 4:12). We are not He.

> *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*
>
> **— Galatians 6:1 NKJV**

The word Paul uses is 'restore' — the same Greek word (*katartizo*) used to describe the mending of fishing nets (Matthew 4:21). The image is precise. A torn net is not discarded. It is mended — patiently, carefully, with the goal of making it fully functional again. That is the work Scripture assigns to the 'spiritual' believer: not the exposure of the tear, but its patient repair. And Paul adds the arresting qualifier: 'considering yourself lest you also be tempted.' The one who attempts restoration without humility is already on dangerous ground.

What It Means to Cover a Transgression

Scripture says something that requires careful handling:

> *He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends.*
>
> **— Proverbs 17:9 NKJV**

'Covering' a transgression is not the same as concealing sin or shielding wrongdoing from accountability. These two things are easily confused but deeply different, and the confusion has caused real harm in church communities across generations. When sin is hidden to protect a reputation, to avoid institutional embarrassment, or to shield a powerful person from consequences — that is not love. That is complicity. It enables the wrong to continue, it protects the wrongdoer at the expense of the wronged, and it corrupts the community that tolerates it.

True love does not collaborate with darkness. It brings sin into the light — but it does so with the goal of restoration, not destruction. The difference lies not in whether truth is told, but in why it is told and how. Is the goal the healing of the person and the health of the community? Or is it the satisfaction of exposing them? Is the spirit one of grief or of triumph?

We see this balance lived out with startling clarity in the life of David. His sin with Bathsheba was not ignored or quietly buried. God sent Nathan the prophet — and Nathan came not with a crowd of accusers or a public tribunal, but with a story designed to awaken David's own conscience. The confrontation was private, targeted, and redemptive in its aim. And it worked:

> *So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die."*
>
> **— 2 Samuel 12:13 NKJV**

Had Nathan's confrontation been designed to shame rather than restore, the outcome might have been very different. Had the sin been announced in the public square before David's heart was reached, the defensive walls might have gone up instead of the repentant tears. The method of correction matters. The spirit of the corrector matters. And the goal — always, irreducibly — must be restoration.

So the believer must hold a careful balance: refusing to expose people to disgrace unnecessarily, yet also refusing to hide sin in a way that prevents repentance. The covering that Proverbs commends is the covering of dignity, the restraint of gossip, the refusal of public shaming. It is not silence in the face of ongoing harm. These are not the same thing, and confusing them has cost the church dearly.

ON COVERING AND CONFRONTING

Love covers in the sense that it protects dignity, restrains gossip, and refuses public shaming. But love also confronts, corrects, and calls back to righteousness. The same Paul who said 'restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness' also said 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them' (Ephesians 5:11). Both are true. Both are necessary. Wisdom knows which applies when.

The Woman, the Accusers, and the One Who Stayed

Then comes one of the most piercing scenes in all of Scripture — and perhaps the most searching mirror the church has ever been handed (John 8:1–11).

The setting is the temple courts at dawn. Jesus is teaching. Into that morning gathering, the scribes and Pharisees drag a woman. She has been 'caught in adultery' — in the very act, they say. The language of the text is violent in its implication. She is thrown before Him. She is displayed. She is used — not as a person, but as a legal instrument, a test case, a way to trap the Teacher from Galilee.

Notice what is conspicuously absent: the man. The law of Moses to which they appeal (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22) specified clearly that both parties to adultery were to be brought. He is not there. This is not justice. This is a setup. The woman is guilty of sin — that is not in dispute — but she is being used, not judged. Her shame is the weapon, not the point.

The accusers, armed with law but empty of mercy, stand ready. Their confidence is absolute. Their judgment is swift. They have the text. They have the tradition. They have the crowd. And they have the woman in front of them, cornered and exposed.

Jesus knelt and wrote in the dust. Scholars have speculated for centuries about what He wrote. But what He did is clear enough: He refused to be drawn into the terms of their confrontation. He did not argue the law. He did not defend the woman's conduct. He did not play the game. He changed the question.

> "*He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.*"
>
> — John 8:7 NKJV

One by one, they left. Scripture notes carefully that they departed 'beginning with the oldest even to the last' (John 8:9). The older ones first — perhaps because they had lived long enough to accumulate enough self-knowledge to know better. The youngest were last, still clinging to the illusion of their own innocence. But they all

went.

And Jesus was left alone with the woman.

Here is the stunning theological centrepiece of the scene. The one Person in that courtyard who actually had the right to condemn her — the sinless Son of God, the only one who could have thrown the stone in full justice — did not. He was qualified. He chose not to use His qualification. And then He spoke:

> *Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you? … Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.*
>
> **— John 8:10–11 NKJV**

Let us be precise about what Jesus did and did not say. He did not say 'what you did does not matter.' He did not say 'sin is not real.' He did not erase the moral reality of adultery. He said: 'I do not condemn you' — and then 'go and sin no more.' Both halves of that sentence are essential. Remove the first, and you have a harsh moralism that crushes the broken. Remove the second, and you have a cheap grace that enables ongoing harm. Jesus held both, in the same breath, to the same woman, in the same moment.

This is the heart of Christ: truth without compromise, yet mercy without hesitation. It is the standard that the church is called to embody — and the standard by which the church most consistently falls short.

The Lingering Spirit of the Pharisee

What a contrast to what we often see today — not only in culture at large, but within the community of faith.

Those who have received grace sometimes become the quickest to deny it to others. The spirit of the Pharisee — self-righteous, condemning, eager to expose, satisfied by another's shame — still lingers in places where humility and compassion should be

the defining characteristics. We post the failures of others. We rehearse them in conversation. We construct neat theological categories that place us safely among the righteous and the fallen person safely beyond reach.

But we forget what we are:

> *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*
>
> **— Romans 3:23 NKJV**

> *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*
>
> **— Matthew 5:7 NKJV**

The Beatitude is not simply a moral instruction. It is a description of the way the Kingdom works. Mercy begets mercy. Judgment invites judgment. The measure we give is the measure that returns to us (Matthew 7:2). This is not a threat — it is a description of a spiritual reality. The believer who cultivates the capacity for mercy is not only obedient; they are also, in a profound sense, protecting themselves.

The Pharisees in John 8 left the courtyard — but they left without anything they came for. They had lost the argument, the crowd, and the morning. More importantly, they had lost the moment of grace that Jesus was offering them as much as the woman. They could have stayed. They could have watched Him forgive her and been changed by it. They chose their stones instead.

Every time we choose condemnation over compassion, we make the same choice they did. We walk away from an encounter with grace, carrying nothing but the weight of our own judgment.

Love That Reaches, Restores, and Refuses to Weaponise

The love that Scripture calls believers to embody is neither sentimental nor soft. It is, in fact, the most demanding form of human engagement with another person.

> *Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*
> **— 1 Corinthians 13:7 NKJV**

> *It does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.*
> **— 1 Corinthians 13:6 NKJV**

Notice the precision of verse 6. Love does not rejoice in iniquity — it does not celebrate sin or pretend it is harmless. But neither does it rejoice when iniquity is exposed. There is no satisfaction in another person's moral failure, no sense of vindication when someone who seemed more righteous turns out to have fallen. That kind of response — the subtle pleasure in the public downfall of another — is the opposite of what Paul is describing.

The German word *Schadenfreude* — the pleasure derived from another's misfortune — has no Christian equivalent because there is no Christian version of it. It is simply incompatible with the love that 'bears all things' and 'hopes all things.' Hope, Paul says, is one of love's defining characteristics. And hope applied to a person who has fallen means this: I believe, because God has said it, that this is not the end of their story.

The depth of the compassion Christ modelled is captured precisely in one of the most significant words in the Greek New Testament: *splagchnizomai* — written in Greek as:

σπλαγχνίζομαι

It appears twelve times in the New Testament, and eight of those twelve describe the emotional response of Jesus Himself. It is the word used in Matthew 9:36 when He looked at the harassed and helpless crowds. It is the word used in Mark 1:41 when He reached out and touched the leper. It is the word at the very centre of the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:20), where the father sees his returning son while he is still a long way off and is moved by it before he takes a single step.

The word is built from *splagchna* — the innermost organs, the bowels — because in the ancient Greek and Hebrew world, the gut was considered the seat of the deepest

human emotions, in the same way English-speakers locate feeling in the 'heart.' *Splagchnizomai* means literally 'to have the bowels yearn.' It is not a measured, calculated response. It is not the compassion of someone who has weighed the situation and decided that mercy is the appropriate policy. It is a visceral, interior upheaval — something that happens to a person before they decide to let it.

And notice what always follows it in the Gospels. Every single *splagchnizomai* moment is immediately followed by action: healing, feeding, forgiving, raising, running. The compassion never stays internal. It moves the hands.

In Luke 15:20, the father — a dignified older man in a culture where such men did not run in public — hiked up his robe and sprinted down the road. Aristotle had written that 'great men never run in public.' In the ancient Near East, an older man running meant exposing his legs, an act considered deeply undignified and shameful. The father absorbed that shame willingly. He did not wait for his son to reach the door. He went.

Scholars such as Kenneth Bailey, in his work *The Cross and the Prodigal*, have drawn attention to a first-century Jewish custom that may explain precisely why the father ran with such urgency. The custom is called *kezazah* — from the Hebrew *qāṣaṣ*, meaning 'to cut off.' According to this tradition, if a Jewish son squandered his inheritance among Gentiles and dared to return home, the community would meet him at the village entrance and perform a public shaming ceremony: they would fill a large clay pot with burnt beans, smash it at his feet, and declare aloud — 'You are now cut off from your people.' The rejection was communal, public, and intended to be permanent. He could not simply walk back in. The village would see to that.

If Bailey's reading of the cultural context is correct, then the father was not merely running toward his son. He was running *ahead* of the village. He was placing himself — his dignity, his reputation, his body — between his son and the condemnation that was coming. By reaching the boy first, embracing him publicly, clothing him, and calling for the feast, the father ensured that the first thing the village witnessed was not a *kezazah* but a restoration. The pot was never smashed. The only thing broken that day was the barrier of shame.

This is a picture of what mercy actually costs. It is not merely the decision to feel warmly toward someone who has failed. It is the willingness to step into the space between a person and their condemnation — to absorb the social and relational cost of their failure so that they do not have to bear it alone. The father did not simply open the door when his son arrived. He ran out into the road and made sure the door was the only thing his son walked through. The village got a feast. The son got a father.

But there is one more layer to the offence the son had committed — one that the original hearers of this parable would have felt instantly, even before the squandering began. In first-century Jewish culture, for a son to ask his father for his share of the inheritance while the father was still alive was not merely impatient or disrespectful. It was considered a profound and public insult — tantamount to saying, in effect: *I wish you were dead.* The inheritance belonged to the father. To demand it early was to treat a living man as though he were already a corpse. The son did not simply leave home. He declared, in the language of his culture, that his father's life was an inconvenience to him.

And then he squandered it. Every coin. In a foreign country, among Gentiles. And then he came back.

The father did not treat him as he deserved. He treated him immeasurably better than anyone — including the son himself — had any right to expect. The son had rehearsed a speech asking to be made a servant. He never got to deliver it. Before the words were out of his mouth, there was a robe on his back, a ring on his finger, sandals on his feet, and a feast being prepared in his honour. This is not merely emotional generosity. This is a theological statement about the nature of God.

> *He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities… As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.*
>
> **— Psalm 103:10, 13–14 NKJV**

The father in the parable does not run because he has weighed the son's conduct and concluded it was forgivable. He runs because he *knows* his son — knows the frailty, the foolishness, the hunger that drove him, the shame that is bringing him home. He knows the frame. He remembers the dust. And the knowing does not produce disgust. It produces *splagchnizomai* — that gut-deep, undignified, convention-breaking compassion that was already sprinting down the road before the son had finished rehearsing his apology.

God does not treat us as we deserve. He has never treated us as we deserve. He knows what we are made of — the impulses, the frailties, the moments when we have, in effect, wished Him out of the way so we could have what we wanted on our own terms. He knows all of it. And He runs anyway. The church that reflects this God does not wait for people to become deserving before it extends grace. It runs first. It absorbs the cost. It breaks no pots. It prepares a feast.

This is the model of mercy this piece calls believers to embody: not the careful, reputationally cautious response, but the kind that sees first, is moved in the gut, and then runs — in that order, every time. Much of our failure to show mercy is, at root, a failure to truly see the person in front of us. *Splagchnizomai* begins with seeing. The *kezazah* never happens when someone gets there first.

> *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*
>
> **— John 13:35 NKJV**

The world will know us by our love — not by our doctrinal precision, not by our institutional size, not by our moral superiority. Love. And that love, when it encounters a fallen brother or sister, reaches out. It does not perform a careful risk assessment. It does not calculate the reputational cost of being seen with someone who has stumbled. It reaches out, as Christ reached out to the woman in the dust, and says: 'I do not condemn you. Now — go. And go differently.'

This is the call to the church in every generation: return to the faith and love that Christ modelled and the apostles taught. A love that reaches outward, that seeks

restoration, that refuses to weaponise another person's weakness. Because in the end, we all stand by grace. Every single one of us.

Practical Ways to Temper Judgment with Mercy, Forgiveness, and Compassion

The gap between believing in mercy and actually extending it in the concrete, awkward, costly moments of real life is one of the widest gaps in the Christian experience. Knowing that we should be merciful is one thing. Choosing mercy when we are angry, or when we feel betrayed, or when we have been genuinely wronged, is something that must be practised, cultivated, and returned to repeatedly. Here are eight practical ways to build that discipline into daily believing life.

1 **Pause before you speak, post, or pass judgment**

The Pharisees in John 8 arrived at the temple ready to judge. They had already decided. Before you respond to news of another person's failure — in conversation, on social media, in a group chat, in a church meeting — create a deliberate pause. Ask yourself: What do I actually know? What am I not seeing? What is my motive in this moment? James 1:19 is a standing instruction: 'Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.' Speed in judgment is almost always the enemy of wisdom.

2 **Pray for the person before you judge the person**

It is nearly impossible to genuinely intercede for someone while simultaneously rehearsing their failures with satisfaction. Prayer changes the posture of the one praying as much as it changes the situation being prayed about. Before you form a firm judgment about another believer who has stumbled, take their name to God. Pray for their restoration. Pray for those they may have harmed. Pray for wisdom about your own role, if any, in what comes next. You will find that the same God who said 'go and sin no more' also said 'pray for one another that you may be healed' (James 5:16).

3 **Apply the same standard to yourself that you apply to others**

The mirror Jesus held up in John 8 was devastatingly simple: 'He who is without sin.' Before you deliver judgment on another person's failure, pause and honestly ask whether you have been guilty of the same thing in a different form, or a different degree, or in a less visible context. Romans 2:1 is searingly direct: 'In whatever you judge another you condemn yourself, for you who judge practise the same things.' This is not a call to relativism. It is a call to honest self-awareness, which is the soil in which genuine mercy grows.

4 **Distinguish between private correction and public exposure**

Matthew 18:15 gives the pattern: 'If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.' The first step is always private. Always. There are cases where escalation becomes necessary — Scripture allows for it. But the default is always the smallest, most private, most direct conversation possible. Before anything is shared with a wider group, in any form, ask this question honestly: Am I taking this further because it is genuinely necessary for the other person's good, or because I want more people to know? The answer will tell you everything.

5 **Refuse to repeat what is not yours to carry**

Proverbs 17:9 says that the one who 'repeats a matter separates friends.' There is a kind of spiritual harm that is done entirely through the medium of information — through the sharing of details that did not need to be shared, the repeating of a story that did not need to be told again, the passing on of a failure in the name of 'prayer' or 'concern.' Mercy, in practical terms, often means the discipline of not telling what you know. Carrying knowledge quietly before God, rather than circulating it among people, is one of the most undervalued acts of Christian love.

6 **Actively look for the person's restoration, not just their repentance**

Repentance is the beginning, not the destination. The goal of confronting sin is not to hear the words 'I was wrong.' The goal is a restored person, a healed relationship, a repaired life. This means that the work of mercy does not end when someone acknowledges their failure. It continues through the long, unglamorous process of rebuilding trust, recovering from consequences, and finding a renewed place in the community. Galatians 6:2 pairs beautifully with Galatians 6:1: first restore, then 'bear one another's burdens.' The burden-bearing that follows the restoration is part of the same act of love.

7 **Let your own failures keep you humble, not silent**

Paul's confession in Romans 7 was not a counsel of passivity. He did not say 'therefore I cannot help anyone else.' He said it as context, as the honest self-knowledge that qualifies the helper. Your own awareness of struggle should not silence you from speaking truth to a friend who is going wrong. But it should absolutely shape how you speak it. Galatians 6:1 is addressed to those who are 'spiritual' — and it defines that spirituality partly through the phrase 'considering yourself lest you also be tempted.' The correction given from that posture lands very differently from the correction given from on high.

8 **Choose mercy as a discipline, not just a feeling**

We often wait to feel merciful before we act mercifully. But mercy, like forgiveness, is frequently a choice made before the feeling arrives — and the feeling often follows the choice rather than preceding it. The woman in John 8 did not make herself worthy of Jesus' mercy before He extended it. He extended it first. That is always the order of grace. Choose to speak with restraint about someone's failure today. Choose to pray for them before you analyse them. Choose to believe the best rather than rehearse the worst. Do this as a daily discipline, in the same way you exercise any other spiritual muscle, and you will find that the capacity for mercy grows with use.

A Final Word

The scribes and the Pharisees left the courtyard that morning carrying their stones.
They did not throw them. But they also did not lay them down.

They simply took them home.

The woman left carrying something different.

She left carrying the words of the only One who could have condemned her.

Words she would spend the rest of her life unfolding.

'Neither do I condemn you.'

That is the gospel. That is the posture.

That is what we are called to carry toward one another.

We all stand before God by grace alone. Not one of us arrived at His feet by merit. Not one of us remains in His presence by performance. The ground at the foot of the cross is perfectly level, and no one standing there has a stone worth throwing.

Before we pick up stones — visible or invisible, spoken or posted, thrown or merely held — we should pause, reflect, and remember Him.

And then choose mercy.

> *Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.*
>
> **— James 2:12–13 NIV**