

But This Woman

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Lesson Text

Luke 7:36-50 (Amplified Bible)

³⁶One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to dine with him, and He went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table.

³⁷And behold, a woman of the town who was an especially wicked sinner, when she learned that He was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment (perfume).

³⁸And standing behind Him at His feet weeping, she began to wet His feet with [her] tears; and she wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed His feet [affectionately] and anointed them with the ointment (perfume).

³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw it, he said to himself, If this Man were a prophet, He would surely know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching Him--for she is a notorious sinner (a social outcast, devoted to sin).

⁴⁰And Jesus, replying, said to him, Simon, I have something to say to you. And he answered, Teacher, say it.

⁴¹A certain lender of money [at interest] had two debtors: one owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

⁴²When they had no means of paying, he freely forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?

⁴³Simon answered, The one, I take it, for whom he forgave and cancelled more. And Jesus said to him, You have decided correctly.

⁴⁴Then turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, Do you see this woman? When I came into your house, you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

⁴⁵You gave Me no kiss, but she from the moment I came in has not ceased¹[intermittently] to kiss My feet tenderly and caressingly.

⁴⁶You did not anoint My head with¹[cheap, ordinary] oil, but she has anointed My feet with¹[costly, rare] perfume.

⁴⁷Therefore I tell you, her sins, many [as they are], are forgiven her--because she has loved much. But he who is forgiven little loves little.

⁴⁸And He said to her, Your sins are forgiven!

⁴⁹Then those who were at table with Him began to say among themselves, Who is this Who even forgives sins?

⁵⁰But Jesus said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go (enter) into peace in freedom from all the distresses that are experienced as the result of sin].

Luke 7:36-50 is a powerful account of repentance and compassion—repentance on the part of the woman and compassion on the part of the Master. It is certainly relevant to us all in one way or another. Let us now consider the elements of the account as best we can. The three main characters are Jesus, the Pharisee, Simon, and the sinful woman. Secondary characters would be all others present—if such were so.

Let us consider the invitation and the host. The bible says, ***And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat (Luke 7:36)***. It is needful at this point to say something regarding the Pharisees that the force of Luke's full account of this particular situation may strike with power.

F.N. Peloubet, in his *The Everyday Bible Dictionary* (pages 596, 597) had this to say about the sect known as the Pharisees (*please forgive the long needful quote*),

Regarding the Law of Moses, the Pharisees upon the pretence of maintaining it intact, multiplied minute precepts and distinctions to such an extent that the whole life of the Israelite was hemmed in and burdened on every side by instructions so numerous and trifling that law was almost if not wholly lost sight of.

It was the leading aim of the Redeemer to teach men that true piety consisted not in forms, but in substance, not in outward observations, but in an inward spirit. The whole system of Pharisaic piety led to exactly the opposite conclusions. Jesus taught humility; but the Pharisees sought mainly to attract the attention and to excite the admiration of men. Matthew 6:2, 5, 16; 23:5, 6; Luke 14:7. Indeed the spirit of their religion (the Pharisees) was summed up, not in confession of sin and in humility, but in a proud self-righteousness at variance with any true conception of man's relation to either God or his fellow creatures.

As we further consider Simon, we will notice his inattentiveness to some social details which were at the time a custom. He provided no water for the feet of Jesus, no kiss for him, nor oil

for his head. These things represented the very basic elements necessary to show hospitality to one's guest(s). While being unmindful of these things, he was however mindful of the woman's spiritual condition. He said of Jesus, "***If this man were a prophet, he would surely know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him—for she is a notorious sinner.***" Simon labeled the woman's condition but was ignorant of his own. Inviting Jesus to supper proved to be more than just a social activity that would hopefully bring praise to the host. As it turned out it brought condemnation to the host in the presence of possibly many. Simon was made to see things in a different light. A time for dinner became a time for discovery!

I have learned to think differently about people because of this account. I am more prone to examine myself before I exact judgment on others. I find too many Pharisaic tendencies in me to be so hasty to judge others!

I spoke earlier of repentance and compassion as being why this account was so powerful and now comes the time to address the matter. The woman is described in the Amplified Version as ***a wicked sinner***. Apparently she had a reputation around town. Simon knew of her. What acts did she have to commit to be known ***as a wicked sinner***? In such a condition, some would ***be so ashamed*** as to not want to come around anyone. Others would not be ashamed to ***glory in their shame*** around others. Beware of the negative power of sin and what it will do to you once you are in its grips! The woman in this story was fully aware of her condition. She lived with its horrors day and night. She knew the weight it imposed on her conscience. Some of us have stood where this woman is standing in the story prior to her coming to the Master. Some of us have a story to tell about wicked episodes in our lives which ran so deep and covered such a lengthy period of time that only the grace of God and the blood of Christ could reach and heal it! We have been brothers and sisters to this woman, insofar as her sinful life is concerned. But let us move on. In Luke 7:11, we find Jesus coming into a city named Nain. As Jesus was coming close to the gate of the city, he ran into a funeral procession—the body of the only son of a widow was being carried. The Lord had mercy on the widow and raised her dead son. Luke 7:16 says, And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet has risen up among us; and That God hath visited his people. The next verse says, And the rumor of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about. At some point, she had heard about Jesus, and what she had heard was enough to MOVE HER into a plan of action.

I could be very wrong in making my next point, but it seems to me that she saw more deeply than the Pharisee. Though he had invited the Master to his house for dinner, he did not really know the Master to the point of showing him the same love that this sinner woman did. She saw her salvation in Christ; the Pharisee was wed to the Law. I earlier spoke of this woman's familiarity with her spiritual condition but there is something else I need to say. Not only was she aware of it but she was fully aware of what she needed to do to correct it. She took the necessary action to correct her situation. Never mind the place being the house of a Pharisee—

never mind the crowd! Never mind that she knelt behind the Master to wash his feet with her tears! What am I saying here? When repentance is sincere—never mind what you have to do to execute it! If the urging is deep enough—if the desire to be clear of the matter is sincere enough, you will do what you have to do in order for the result to be as you would have it!

We come now to Jesus. In the Amplified Version, Luke 7:40, says, And Jesus replying said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Teacher, say it.” What is interesting about this verse is that Jesus comes to the defense of the sinful woman in a manner not known by the Pharisee. In the previous verse (39) Simon is speaking within himself about Jesus and the woman. He said, “If this Man were a prophet, He would surely know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a notorious sinner—a social outcast, devoted to sin.” The Lord presents a situation for Simon to consider. The reason for this is to lay a foundation of inescapable logic from which Simon cannot extract himself. Consider it.

A certain lender of money at interest had two debtors; one owed him 500 denarii, and the other 50. When they had no means of paying, he freely forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more? Simon answered, “The one, I take it for whom he forgave and canceled more.” And Jesus said to him, “You have decided correctly.”

Simon has committed himself with his answer to Jesus’ question. The Lord continues. He now faces the woman while speaking to Simon. He now asks Simon a second question. “Simon, do you see this woman?” The Lord was not asking Simon if he could physically see her but if he could see the person as Jesus saw her. The Lord presses on. “When I came into your house, you gave Me no water for MY feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss, but she from the moment I came in has not ceased (intermittently) to kiss My feet tenderly and caressingly. You did not anoint My head with [cheap, ordinary] oil, but she has anointed My feet with [costly, rare] perfume. Therefore I tell you, her sins, many [as they are] are forgiven her, because she has loved much; but who has been forgiven little, loves little.”

The lesson is abundantly clear—“Judge not that you be not judged.” I hope this lesson will help you as much as it has helped me.