

The unfolding of your words gives light.

To Seek and to Save

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

³⁶Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined *at the table*^a. ³⁷And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining *at the table* in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume^b, ³⁸and standing behind *Him* at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume^c. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself^d, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner^e." ⁴⁰And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher." ⁴¹"A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty^f. ⁴²When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more^g?" ⁴³Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged

^a 7:36 **one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.** Here Luke inserts an example of Jesus feasting instead of fasting. Jesus had many negative dealings with religious leaders like the Pharisees, but He did not shun them. He associated with them like He did other sinners.

^b 7:37 **there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume.** Matthew, Mark and Luke each record this event. Some have identified the woman as Mary Magdalene, who is mentioned at the start of chapter eight. There is no biblical evidence of this. The alabaster vial of perfume would have been the kind of treasure a prostitute might carry, although the text does not say specifically that this was her profession.

^c 7:38 **standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.** She was behind Jesus because He was reclining and likely leaning on His left arm facing the low table. This would have been the most likely place for a servant to enter and wash the feet of a reclining guest.

^d 7:39 **he said to himself.** You only get information like this accurately in the Bible.

^e 7:39 **If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner.** The judgmental person forms conclusions based on limited information and therefore misses a lot of important details. Simon assumed Jesus did not know the background of the sinful woman and he also assumed that Jesus would refuse to associate with people like that. His main premises were not truthful so his conclusions were incorrect.

Matthew and Mark also add that Simon criticized her actions as wasteful.

^f 7:41 **A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.** Jesus used this illustration based on what He knew about what Simon was thinking. A denarius was the daily wage of a farm worker. For the sake of illustration we might say \$50,000 and \$5,000.

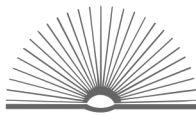
^g 7:42 **When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?** This is not talking about some sterile unemotional love. Love is definitely a commitment but it produces a variety of emotions. The level of love is directly proportionate to the depth of the rescue.

The Gospel of Luke
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

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correctly^a.”⁴⁴Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered 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^b.”⁴⁵You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet^c.”⁴⁶You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume^d.”⁴⁷For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little^e.”⁴⁸Then He said to her, “Your sins have been forgiven.”⁴⁹Those who were reclining *at the table* with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this *man* who even forgives sins?”⁵⁰ And He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace^f.”⁹

^a 7:43 **You have judged correctly.** This is the way of conversation between a teacher and a student. The teacher says, “Listen to this.” The student says, “I’m listening.” The teacher delivers the message and asks a question. The student responds.

^b 7:44 **Do you see this woman? I entered 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.** Now the woman becomes the lesson. Was she embarrassed? Which student would you rather be at this point? Standing in the presence of Jesus it is better to be exposed and forgiven than exposed and proud.

^c 7:45 **You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet.** This was socially unacceptable and only one of the two was willing to pay that price.

^d 7:46 **You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume.** The Lord Jesus is so precious to those who realize the greatness of their rescue that they willingly give Him their best. Matthew and Mark both record Jesus saying that the woman was looking forward to Jesus’ death. This fits the context of forgiveness.

^e 7:47 **her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.** At a glance it appears that Jesus is developing a new salvation theology based on how much one loves. But this is about the greatest commandment.

Genuine worship does not come from those who think they had a part in their salvation. This is why it is so important to point sinners to the greatness of God and then call to repentance all who fail to measure up. The second half of this phrase shows that the her love was a response to the forgiveness. Simon did not have that love.

^f 7:50 **Your faith has saved you; go in peace.** We are not told what kind of sinner she was but she knew she was the kind who needed salvation. Simon did not get this word.

⁹ 7:36-50 This text fleshes out the statement in verse 35 that Jesus is a friend of sinners.

Jesus made the comparison, so we will as well. The hard question to ask here is: “Which character in this story do you most resemble?”

Simon

1. He gave when there was personal benefit.
2. He thought highly of himself.
3. He thought accusingly of Jesus.
4. He kept Jesus at a safe distance.
5. He gave sparingly to Jesus.
6. He was unforgiven.

The Sinful Woman

1. She gave as a response to mercy.
2. She thought lowly of herself.
3. She thought lovingly of Jesus.
4. She drew awkwardly near to Jesus.
5. She gave freely to Jesus.
6. She was forgiven.

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