

Forgiveness of a Great Sinner

April 6, 2014 · PM · <https://letgodbettrue.com/sermons/2014/forgiveness-of-a-great-sinner/>

“Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.”

Luke 7:47

Introduction:

1. Allow me to introduce you to a woman that truly understood forgiveness and loved Jesus acceptably.
2. Let me introduce you to a careless and self-righteous person wrapped up in himself and his little life.
3. We have the Lord's Supper today, and we want to partake properly, appreciating forgiveness of sins.
4. In this place there are those very much like the woman and those very much like Simon the Pharisee.
5. You claim to be a Christian; you will meet Him soon. Do you love Him worthy of your forgiveness?
6. The context mocks Jesus as a friend of sinners, but we shall avoid the distraction (Luke 7:29-35).
7. Wisdom is justified of her children, the gospel of Christ divides the hypocrites from the righteous.
8. There is no Bible evidence to prove that this is Mary Magdalene, though many desire it to be so.
9. For those who fear God and love His word, they should not need emotional encouragement to enjoy.
10. No matter how wretched you are in past sins, present sinfulness, or unworthiness, hear the gospel.

36 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.

1. Simon did not love Jesus Christ as the Son of God; he doubted he was even a prophet.
 1. Consider that he did not even show Jesus Christ the very basic common courtesies.
 2. At best, he invited Jesus home for other reasons e.g. prestige, curiosity, family, etc.
 3. At worst, he invited Jesus with the intent to ensnare or take advantage of Him.
 4. How many attend church like Simon hosted Jesus, a formality for duty or image?
2. Jesus accepted the invitation of the unbeliever to eat a meal in the man's house.
 1. Paul taught this as allowable conduct by Christians under liberty (I Cor 10:27).
 2. The context indicates Jesus may have been answering slander (Luke 7:34; 15:2).
 3. Evangelism or silencing adversaries are two different reasons for Jesus' choice.
 4. Whatever the case, Jesus knew perfectly well He would meet the woman there!
3. Wisdom is justified of her children, and the conduct by Simon and a woman prove it.

37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat

at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

1. A. This woman was a public sinner, thus a strong reason to believe an infamous harlot.
 1. She was likely a publicly-known harlot, for Simon the Pharisee knew of her (7:39).
 2. She may have been a Gentile, due to the use of "sinner" about her (see Gal 2:15).
 3. She is called a sinner in the present tense only for her reputation to those citizens.
2. This woman already had some sense of forgiveness, for she came because of it (7:47).
 1. The reason she came is because she was born again and thankful for forgiveness.
 2. The five phases of salvation help here, with this woman in process of conversion.
 3. The primary lesson is that great forgiveness of great sinners results in great love.
 4. She was likely a repentant harlot that had been baptized (7:29-35; Matt 21:31-32).
 5. Being converted by John or Jesus, she came to pay her Lord her great obligations.
 6. Jesus referred to her as a sinner due to the slander, and forgiveness would be told.
3. She was bold, creative, humble, and passionate about finding Jesus for her mission.
 1. She used her knowledge of where He was and how she could best approach him.
 2. She prepared for her act of affection and worship by bringing sweet ointment.
 3. Alabaster. A term applied to fine translucent varieties of carbonate or sulphate of lime, especially to the pure white variety of the latter for vases, ornaments, busts.
 4. A woman of this kind, if a harlot, could have had such a classy box and ointment, but what she had used in the past for her lovers was now for the Lover of her soul.
 5. This was no cheap or casual gift for impersonal or perfunctory worship of Jesus.
 6. Those that attend church as a duty without preparation or passion, you are Simon.

38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

1. She came very humbly, approaching from behind, and she did not look at Jesus' face.
 1. She could treat Jesus' feet from behind, since they reclined when eating (Esth 7:8).
 2. She did not look Him in the face, for she was behind as a maidservant (I Sa 25:41).
 3. She wept due to the nearness of her Lord and Savior and Lover of her sinful soul.
 4. While it is true tears can be faked, it is also true real emotion often produces them.
 5. Though forgiven, in the presence of her Savior she had fresh pangs of conscience.
 6. It is good to remember our sins to honor our Saviour and to inflame our passions, as Paul often referred to his past sins for the benefit of others and the glory of God.
 7. She took the lowest office and used it in the most humble matter to exalt and thank.
 8. There is absolutely no aspect or lesson it is by tears you secure God's forgiveness.
2. Consider her great change in ambition and conduct, though she used tools of her trade.
 1. She had boldly approached men's faces as an impudent whore (Prov 7:13; Jer 3:3).

2. She had decorated and used her eyes to seduce, but now for tears (Pr 6:25; Is 3:16).
 3. She had blotted tears away in the past to hide them; now she used them on His feet.
 4. She had painted her face to be sensually perfect, but now it was streaked with tears.
 5. She had meticulously plaited her hair for attraction, but now she used it as a towel.
 6. She had kissed men for financial gain, but now for great humility, love, adoration.
 7. She kissed his feet, unworthy to kiss his mouth, cheek, or hand as nearer an equal.
 8. She had anointed herself to please men's noses, but now she anointed Him instead.
 9. Her appearance once her greatest asset; she knew Jesus only cared about her heart.
 10. She gave what she was best at, what had been her downfall, now in perfect purity.
3. These are things Jesus took notice of when detailing them back to coldhearted Simon.
 4. While Simon did no honor to the Messiah and Christ of God; she exalted Him greatly!
 5. Truly saved and repentant sinners have a dear and great love to Jesus Christ like this.
 6. Wise saints will use whatever means of word, prayer, or Spirit to kindle their passions.

39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

1. Simon's thoughts were within, but all are naked and opened to the Lord (He 4:12-14).
 1. He should have marveled at this woman's humility and passion, asking the story.
 2. Some like Simon are hard and self-righteous when great sinners exalt forgiveness.
2. If she had touched Simon, he would have quoted Isaiah 65:5, "I am holier than thou."
 1. If she had touched his children, he would say, "My children are better than you."
 2. How many Christians today have some such haughty and self-righteous thoughts?
3. The self-righteous presume and expect others to be as arrogant, haughty, censorious.
 1. While she owned Jesus as Lord before all present, Simon denied Him in his heart.
 2. Pharisees thought they were better than others and made so by God (Lu 18:10-11).
4. There are two kinds of sinners with two destinies: the repentant and the self-righteous.
 1. You must ask yourself if you are more like Simon or more like a thankful woman.
 2. Every church has both; you must find your place and then move on the continuum.

40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

1. Jesus, knowing Simon's thoughts perfectly, answered them with a parable or lesson.
 1. The fool doubted Jesus' authority and power, though He raised the dead (7:11-18)!
 2. The Lord proved indeed He was a prophet by reading the man's mind instantly!
 3. Be it known by all present that Jesus knows every thought and intent of your heart.

2. Though a guest, He was the Christ; though a guest, He would not allow such thoughts.
3. Simon's "Master" was irrelevant, just as Lord, Lord from those that do not obey Him.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

1. In this lesson, the creditor is God; the greater debtor the woman; the lesser one Simon.
2. Whether this is technically a parable or not, the lesson is imperfect in details for sin.
 1. Our idea that one sinner is worse than another is very skewed (Ro 5:19; Jas 2:10).
 2. The difference here is in the sinner's mind; Simon was at least as guilty as she.
 3. God cannot frankly forgive any man without an atonement (Exodus 34:7; Nah 1:3).
3. Some sinners are more scandalous than others, but God measures all quite equally.
4. Some sinners are more scandalous than others, but many sin so against lesser light.
5. Some sinners are more scandalous than others, but self-righteousness trumps scandal.

42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

1. When these two debtors could not pay, the creditor in mercy freely forgave them both.
 1. The greater or lesser debt did not matter, for both debtors were clearly insolvent.
 2. If the penalty for debt be prison or death or eternal death, both were equally liable.
 3. Frankly. Freely; unrestrictedly, without restraint or constraint. In liberal or abundant measure, bountifully, lavishly. In a liberal spirit, generously; unconditionally, unreservedly.
 4. The creditor did not treat either by the rules, for it would have been prison for both.
2. It does not matter if a sinner owes God a little or lot; he cannot pay, so he is fully lost.
 1. Repentance from God, like with the woman, taught her that she had nothing to pay.
 2. No matter how holy Simon had been or thought he had been, he also could not pay.
 3. While there may be levels of sin, in the final analysis any sin is sufficient for death.
3. Jesus forced Simon to the conclusion that was right, great sinners forgiven love much.
 1. Since Simon assumed the woman a greater sinner, Jesus forced him to wisdom.
 2. If one cannot repay, he is reduced to love, which is the best and most he can give.
 3. The question is not difficult, but condemning, great forgiveness elicits great love.
4. Sin is a debt. Do you know it? You offend against the law; you neglect what you owe.
 1. Whether your sins are more or less than another, you cannot pay for even one sin!
 2. Without distracting with five phases, the repentant are freely forgiven practically.
 3. Pharisees neither appreciated sinners' repentance nor the Lord's interest in them.

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said

unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

1. Simon's answer may not be irreverent; prudence assumes other things being equal.
2. Simon at this point likely does not know where Jesus is headed toward rebuking him.
 1. To this point Jesus addressed Simon while looking at him, not at the woman, for He directly confronted Simon about his inward thoughts condemning the woman.
 2. The question was not hard, only condemning, great forgiveness elicits great love.
 3. Pharisees were haughty in self-righteousness, despised sinners, despised a Saviour.
 4. Pharisees thought they were better than others and made so by God (Lu 18:10-11).
3. Mary Magdalene, she of seven devils, became one of Christ's most faithful followers.
4. Persecuting Saul became preaching Paul; he labored more abundantly than they all.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

1. Now Jesus turned to the woman to honor her and identified His wise rebuke of Simon.
 1. Thus far there is only the short parable of two debtors forgiven by their creditor.
 2. It becomes immediately apparent the woman is the greater debtor by greater love.
 3. It becomes immediately apparent that Simon must not consider himself a sinner.
 4. Jesus rebuked Simon's opinion, for he was likely a greater sinner than the woman.
 5. Jesus opinion of the Pharisees' righteousness was very low (Matt 5:20; 23:13-33).
2. Simon had not shown the Lord even common courtesy, especially for such a worthy guest, though the Son of God had favored him with his presence in his own home.
3. The woman was showering the utmost in personal affection and adoration on Him.
 1. This was real footwashing: dirty, unwashed feet, no exchange, by tears and hair.
 2. Her passion revealed her to be forgiven of many sins and to clearly acknowledge it.
4. Some despise the pains and expense, zeal and thanksgiving, of great sinners forgiven; they want a cheap religion, or have no consciousness of sin, or are merely reprobates.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

1. Clear from Romans 16:16 and many other places, kisses for greetings were common.
2. The woman had not stopped kissing Jesus' feet in her extended passionate affection.
3. So much more than just a mere formality of greeting, she personally adored the Lord.
4. Simon did not even offer a formality; the woman was personal and passionate about it.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with

ointment.

1. In that very dry climate, it was an accepted custom to anoint friends or guests with oil.
2. Rather than spend her money to anoint His head, she was happy to waste it at His feet.
3. She went way beyond the call of duty with tears for water and anointment on His feet.
4. There was no comparison – the woman loved much, and Simon showed none at all.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

1. The Saviour drew a conclusion obvious to Simon and all – the woman was forgiven.
 1. Her great love, almost excessive love, indicated the many sins she was forgiven.
 2. The conclusion by wherefore appeals to Simon's answer and the woman's conduct.
 3. Not only had God and Jesus previously forgiven her, but she was conscious of it!
 4. If the wherefore here is rightly understood, it helps with grasping the for following.
2. We trust the language and logic – she was already forgiven by God and in her mind.
 1. The event and lesson are mainly that those already forgiven show much love for it.
 2. The event and lesson are also a rebuke of the Pharisees for their self-righteousness.
 3. Her extreme behavior was indicative of the great forgiveness she already received.
 4. The loved much, by context, is not the cause but rather the effect of forgiveness.
 5. Simon thought her a sinner unworthy of the Lord's attention, but she was forgiven.
 6. Do not let for bother you. Simon thought her still a sinner; Jesus confirmed her prior forgiveness, which caused her much love that Simon was witnessing.
 7. Do not let for bother you. Her much love was proof she had been forgiven much.
 8. Do not let for bother you. The emphasis is on the evidence of much or little love.
 9. Do not let for bother you. Jesus is in the past tense arguing back from much love to the prior forgiveness of many sins based on the short parable and Simon's answer.
3. The little forgiveness is only in a sinner's mind; Simon was at least as guilty as her.
 1. Jesus reasoned from Simon's answer to the short lesson about those forgiven little.
 2. There is no reason to think Simon better than the woman ... only in his thoughts.
 3. There is no good reason to think Simon had been forgiven at all by the Lord Jesus.
 4. Jesus opinion of the Pharisees' righteousness was very low (Matt 5:20; 23:13-33).
 5. Simon had not even loved a little yet ... no kind courtesy ... thinking evil thoughts.
 6. Rather than resent great sinners forgiven, you must examine yourself in all angles.
 7. Why are you not the most passionate lover of Christ and thankful sinner in church?
 8. If you were truly anything like the woman, it would show, for it cannot be so hid.
 9. Your temperament is only an excuse that you are more like Simon than the woman.

48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

1. Reject sound bites of heresy; remember that this woman was already forgiven (7:47).
 1. She was born again, for she believed, thus already forgiven (Ro 8:14-17; Gal 4:6).
 2. She was already forgiven, thus zealous affection and adoration; she did not need it.
 3. The Lord's lesson was that her actions indicated she already knew her forgiveness.
 4. There is a practical forgiveness for comfort, assurance, and fellowship by our faith.
2. Therefore, Jesus declared His power as God, condemning Simon and comforting her.
 1. The Jews showed their evil mind in the next verse, which Jesus already fully knew.
 2. His forgiveness of her was further declaration of it for the comfort of her soul.
3. We crave the comfort God is able to witness to our spirits that we are totally forgiven.
4. The more we feel and express the error of our sins and appreciate His forgiveness, the more God by His Spirit assures us of full forgiveness (Ro 5:1-5; 8:14-17; Ep 3:14-19).

49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

1. We cannot prove the identity of those around Simon and Jesus, but likely Pharisees.
 1. Birds of a feather flock together; these fools thought they could hide their disdain.
 2. Or they were false believers like other Jews, marveling at many miracles (Jn 8:30).
 3. In any case, they rejected the Lord though they needed Him more than the woman.
2. Unbelievers like these Jews, rejecting Jesus as the Son of God, try to steal His Deity.
3. Why is there an also? For He had already done great works that they knew (7:1-23).
4. As Jesus asked at other times, which is harder? Heal miraculously or forgive sins?

50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

1. We understand salvation here to be comparable and consistent to forgiveness (7:48).
 1. She was already born again, for she believed and came (John 1:11-13; 5:24; 6:44).
 2. She was already forgiven, thus zealous affection and adoration; she did not need it.
 3. The Lord's lesson was that her actions indicated she already knew her forgiveness.
 4. There is a practical salvation for comfort, assurance, and fellowship by our faith.
2. We understand this salvation to be very different than justification or regeneration.
3. Her faith had led her to great comfort and resolve, but it is now rewarded even further.
 1. Simon did not believe, but the woman did believe; she was the one with faith there.
 2. Those present did not believe ("who is this"); she was the one with faith at supper.
4. When God forgives, we go in peace, for we believe by faith in His promised pardon.
 1. Like the Ethiopian eunuch, there is joy and peace in believing (Ac 8:40; Ro 15:13).
 2. Repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ is the gospel (Acts 20:21).

3. There is a practical salvation dependent on repentance, faith, and baptism (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 11:14; 15:11; I Cor 15:2; I Tim 4:16; Jas 5:19-20; I Pet 3:21).
4. There is great peace when we learn we become reconciled to God (II Cor 5:18-21).

Conclusion:

1. We cannot come to such a passage of scripture and merely recognize and analyze the bare facts of it.
2. Jesus loves losers, and by them He fulfills His intended purpose and gets the glory by their salvation.
3. Learn that Jesus Christ was sent as a Saviour for sinners; any other role is far less, especially for you.
4. Do not think you have fewer sins than others. The thought is a sin likely worse than their worst sins.
5. Examine yourself by the Bible; it is hypocrisy alone that leads men to be careless or despise others.
6. You should love the conduct of the woman and hate that of Simon, yet which are you by the lesson?
7. What are you hiding in your heart that you think no one sees? Jesus knows you better than you do.
8. If you partake of communion without all-out humility, affection, and devotion, you are truly Simon.
9. You cannot kiss and wash His dirty feet, but you can remember Him lovingly in the way He chose.
10. You can please Him with your praise, your thanksgiving, and your obedience in every command.
11. How do you love Jesus Christ? You will keep His commandments (John 14:23-24; II Cor 5:13-15).
12. You that despise confessions and testimonies of great sinners testifying in the church are likely lost.
13. You that never mention your faults, failures, and sinfulness before the church are likely lost as well.
14. Though forgiven, in the presence of Jesus the Lord, you should have fresh pangs of conscience.
15. It is good to remember our sins to honor our Saviour for forgiving us and to inflame our passions.
16. Compare Ezek 16:63 of the Lord's approval and direction for shame again even after forgiveness.
17. Consider Paul's regular recounting of his past sins to comfort others and to exalt the grace of God.
18. We come to the Lord's Table knowing we are forgiven; we should come away even more assured.
19. If you have no real consciousness of sin, then you must stir it up one way or another to knowledge.
20. Once you are conscious of your sins, then you can become thankful for God's forgiveness of them.

For Further Study:

1. Sermon Outline: [Jesus Loves Losers](#).
2. Sermon Outline: [Jesus Came for Sinners](#).
3. Sermon Outline: [The Prodigal Son](#).
4. Sermon Outline: [The Forgiveness of Sins](#).
5. Sermon Outline: [10,000 Talents](#).
6. Sermon Outline: [Abundant Pardon](#).
7. Sermon Outline: [Self-Righteousness](#).
8. Sermon Outline: [We Would See Jesus](#).
9. Sermon Outline: [He Is Altogether Lovely](#).

10. Sermon Outline: **While He May Be Found.**
11. Sermon Outline: **Repentance.**
12. Sermon Outline: **If We Confess Our Sins.**