

## Unit II: The Measure of Faith

# “How Much Do You Love Me?”

DEVOTIONAL READING: Romans 8:1-16  
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 7:36-50  
PRINT PASSAGE: Luke 7:36-39, 44-50

### KEY VERSE

He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace. (Luke 7:50, KJV)

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Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” (Luke 7:50, NIV)

### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Analyze how the sinful woman rose above her shame to give honor to Jesus.
- Recognize Jesus’ acceptance of and unconditional love for you as you are.
- Celebrate the complete acceptance and forgiveness available through God’s unconditional love.

### \*Key Terms

**Alabaster box (verse 37)**—Greek: *alabastron* (al-ab’-as-tron): a phial or bottle of perfumed ointment, usually of alabaster (which is a compact, fine-textured usually white and translucent gypsum); “alabaster jar” (NIV).

**Peace (verse 50)**—Greek: *eiréné* (i-ray’-nay): one; quietness; rest; peace of mind.

**Sinful (verse 37)**—Greek: *hamartólos* (ham-ar-to-los’): properly, loss from falling short of what God approves; sinning; depraved; detestable; “a sinner” (KJV).

**Tears (verse 38)**—Greek: *dakruon* (dak’-roo): evidence of sorrow; teardrops.

\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

### Introduction

In his book *Respectable Sins—Confronting the Sins We Tolerate*, Jerry Bridges says, “The sin of judgmentalism is one of the most subtle of our ‘respectable’ sins because it is often practiced under the guise of being zealous for what is right.” Bridges also explains that this



## The Biblical Context

Dedicated to his stated purpose of giving an accurate account of Jesus' life and ministry as the perfect human and Son of God, Luke devoted the bulk of his book to Jesus' actions and teachings (see Luke 4:14–21:38). The context for this lesson is Jesus' ministry in Galilee (see Luke 4:14–9:62). His authoritative teaching attracted, angered, and amazed the crowds that followed Him (see Luke 4:14, 28, 31). Although Luke focuses on Jesus' teaching, his primary aim is Jesus' humanity as the compassionate Son of Man ministering to the physical and spiritual needs of marginalized people: the poor, women, children, Gentiles, and sinners. For example, in chapter 4, Jesus freed a demoniac, healed Peter's mother-in-law, and delivered many others from sickness. Jesus healed paralysis in chapter 5, and a man's withered hand in chapter 6. Chapter 7 reveals Jesus' compassion toward a Roman centurion whose honored servant He healed in response to the centurion's unique expression of faith. Jesus also took pity on a grieving widow and raised her son from the dead. Jesus' compassion for humanity was not limited to healing and miracles. It also extended acceptance and forgiveness to those caught in sin but repentant enough to turn toward Him with gratitude for His grace. Luke's account of a sinful woman in this chapter who anoints Jesus' feet is a vivid example of His compassion toward sinners.

sin often goes unacknowledged because of the multiple opinions that Christians have about everything from theology to lifestyle and politics and the assumption that “our” opinions are correct by equating them with truth. Judgmentalism is not limited to Christians, however. It permeates our society and is alive and well among all people and cultures. Regrettably, judgmentalism is one of the great sins of the church. The spiritual danger of judgmentalism is that it compels some Christians to elevate their convictions to the level of biblical truth. To be clear, however, the Bible teaches that Christians are to carefully condemn and separate themselves from conduct that is clearly condemned and inconsistent with God's Word. Yet, even then, one may become guilty of judgmentalism by judging with a self-righteous, unforgiving attitude. During His earthly ministry, Jesus confronted this kind of judgmentalism among the Jewish religious hierarchy, the Pharisees, and scribes. Their judgments against Him for associating with “publicans and sinners” were harsh and judgmental to Him and those with whom He mingled. They were quick to judge the obvious sins of others while refusing to acknowledge their own (see Matthew

7:1-5). An example of this attitude is found in Luke's account of a sinful woman who risked judgmental humiliation to express her deep love and devotion for Christ in the home of Simon, a Pharisee.

## ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

### Guess Who Came to Dinner (*Luke 7:36-38*)

#### KJV

**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.**

**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,  
**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.

## **NIV**

**36** When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.

**37** A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume.

**38** As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

During Jesus' ministry, He often accepted hospitality from publicans, sinners, and Pharisees. Luke concludes chapter 7 with an account of a dinner at the home of a Pharisee named Simon (**verse 36**). The Pharisees often extended social invitations with the ulterior motive of finding fault in/with Jesus and gathering evidence to use in their growing plot against His ministry. Simon's motive for inviting Jesus to his home is not stated, but his words and actions later suggest that he was rather inhospitable. Uninvited guests commonly stopped in to listen when important people were guests in someone's home. On this occasion, a woman whose sin was known to others but unspecified in the text arrived at Simon's home with an alabaster jar of costly perfume (**verse 37**). Weeping, the woman positioned herself behind Jesus, and as her tears wet His feet, she wiped them with her hair, kissing and pouring perfume on them as an expression of utmost respect, submission, and affection for Him (**verse 38**). It is likely that the woman heard Jesus speak on previous occasions and, believing in Him, repented of her sins. When she heard He was dining at Simon's house, the woman carried out her gesture of gratitude for Jesus' love and forgiveness toward her. Risking humiliation, she disregarded cultural protocol to demonstrate how much she loved Jesus. The woman's transgression was apparently known to others, as Simon indicated that no "respectable" Pharisee would have invited her to his home. In that day, Jewish women did not unbind their hair in public. However, the woman was so overcome with gratitude for Jesus that she had no regard for public opinion of her bold, extravagant demonstration of love. This woman's sacrifice challenges believers to consider this question: "How much do you love Jesus?" Do you love Him enough to risk rejection, humiliation, and ridicule—enough to express it at any time, anywhere, and to anyone?

## **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

Which groups in society are often shunned or criticized by the church because of their lifestyle or culture?

## A Study in Contrasts (*Luke 7:39, 44-50*)

### KJV

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.

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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.

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

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

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.

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

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

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

### NIV

39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

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44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

45 "You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet.

46 "You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.

47 "Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

48 Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

49 The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

50 Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Jesus' host, Simon, observed the scene with judgmental disapproval (**verse 39**). As a Pharisee who denied Jesus' claim to be a prophet, Simon took Jesus' response to the woman's acts of gratitude as evidence of His lack of prophetic discernment. A true prophet, Simon reasoned, would know the sort of woman that was touching Him and would have refused her to avoid

becoming ceremonially unclean. According to the Pharisees' interpretation of the Law, a sinner's touch defiled a person, leaving the individual unclean. Ironically, Jesus proved that He was a prophet by omnisciently discerning Simon's thoughts. He then taught the principle that a person who is forgiven of much loves more than one who is forgiven of little, using a parable that applied to the woman (see verses 40-43). The issue in Jesus' parable was not the measure of one's debt but the condition of the heart. Jesus then directed Simon's attention to the woman and contrasted her warm, generous reception of Him with Simon's inhospitable attitude. Simon displayed pride, hypocrisy, harshness, judgmentalism, self-righteousness, coldness, and a lack of generosity and compassion as a host. He did not recognize Jesus as worthy of the usual courtesies extended to guests: greeting a male with a kiss on the cheek, anointing a guest's head with a small portion of oil, and making provisions for foot washing—but the woman did (**verses 44-46**). In expressing her love for Jesus, the woman did everything Simon should have done for a guest in his home. Jesus informed Simon that the woman's many sins were forgiven because of her great love toward Him (**verse 47**). While the woman acknowledged that she was a sinner, Simon mistakenly saw himself as pure and righteous—inherently better than the woman. Jesus told the woman that her sins were forgiven, not because of her demonstration of love toward Him but because of the faith that motivated her to respond to Him with such love (**verse 48**). Simon's other dinner guests silently questioned Jesus' authority to forgive sins and took His words to mean that He was God (**verse 49**). Jesus did not respond to their thoughts as He had Simon's. Instead, He assured the woman that because of her faith she was saved and free to go in peace (**verse 50**). The woman's salvation gave her peace with God (justification) and the inner peace of God. Good works cannot earn salvation, but the God who sees and weighs every motive of the heart honors each act of righteousness that is done in love for Him.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In this context, what does it mean to genuinely honor Jesus?

## A Closing Thought

Two lessons emerge from Luke's account of a sinful woman who rose above her shame to demonstrate love for Jesus. The first lesson is that actions should be motivated by faith. The woman's faith resulted in love expressed through action and attitude. In faith and humility, the woman had repented and shown tremendous gratitude to Jesus via a public, extravagant display of devotion. Like the woman, those who have accepted Christ should prove their faith through good works that glorify Him. Second, Christians should humbly remember the grace that God extended for their past sins and mistakes and respond graciously to others who have stumbled or fallen as they once did.