



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Luke 7:36-50

“The Woman That Was a Sinner, or the Proof and Power of Forgiveness”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading for today is found in Luke chapter 7, verse 36 through verse 50. Last Sunday morning we studied “The Woman Taken in Adultery.” This Sunday morning we study the experience of another woman; this one usually called “The Woman That Was a Sinner.” Luke chapter 7, verse 36 through verse 50.

Jesus has just said, “The Son of Man has come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children.” And now we’re going to see an illustration of that principle and we shall see that our Lord is justified in his wisdom in the relationship that he has with the woman that was a sinner and the Pharisee will be seen to be not justified in his attitude toward our Lord and toward her.

So here is the illustration as Luke the evangelist sees it, and here are his words, verse 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. 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

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box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, (literally, the Greek word simply means to wet, and to wet his feet with tears,) and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment, (not oil, but an ointment.) 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. (Now, I have changed the translation slightly from ‘for’ to ‘that’. I am not sure that is the way we should render the Greek word but it is a word which may be rendered either ‘for’ or ‘that’ and I’m rather inclined to, ‘That she is a sinner.’ It could be ‘for’ or ‘because’.) And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both, (I think we could render that, ‘He freely forgave them both.’ It is the Greek word *charisata* [ph3:39] which comes from the word *charis*, which in turn is used in the New Testament for grace, for thanks. And so, ‘He forgave them both by grace,’ would not be too far from the sense.) Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. 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. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. 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. (I’d like for you to in particular notice that last statement, ‘But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.’ Well, that gives us the clue to the meaning of the first part of the sentence. He is not speaking of the ground of forgiveness but the evidence of forgiveness.) And he said unto

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her, Thy sins are forgiven, (the Greek word is in the perfect tense, referring to an action in past time with continuing results, ‘He said unto her, Thy sins have been forgiven.’)
And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.”

May God bless this reading of his word.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the holy Scriptures. We thank Thee for this one which so challenges our thoughts concerning love to Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the insight that it reveals into the source of Christian love for him, into the source of Christian activity, Christian motivation. We thank Thee for the great forgiveness which we have received and, oh God, we do pray that our knowledge of that forgiveness of how much we have been forgiven may impel us to love him as completely as we are able.

Father, we are grateful to Thee. We want to express to Thee our love and devotion and gratitude because we know how much ye suffered. How much it has cost Thee to provide forgiveness for us. And we thank Thee that in Thine infinite wisdom Thou has loved us from the beginning. We marvel at the perfection of the ways of God, we marvel at how Thou hast set Thy love upon us. And Thou hast the power to carry out Thy purposes and Thou hast done it.

We thank Thee for him who cried, “It is finished!” For we know that we were included. And so Lord, we want to praise Thee, we want to worship Thee. And we pray that our understanding of the saving work of Jesus Christ for us, personally, who are redeemed, shall increase and grow and deepen and develop. We thank Thee for each one present. We pray, oh God, for the spiritual condition of each. For those who do not yet know the saving grace of Jesus Christ, Oh God, by the Holy Spirit bring them to the place where they know what he has done for sinners. We pray, oh God, for those who

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are distressed, disturbed, who have no peace. We pray for some who wish guidance who do not seem to have it. We pray that Thou wilt satisfy the needs of the hearts of the saints. For some who are bereaved we particularly Lord bring them to Thee. Some that we know of. Wilt Thou comfort and console and give wisdom and guidance. May this meeting honor and glorify Jesus Christ. For his names' sake. Amen.

[Message] Topic for today is “The Woman That was a Sinner, or the Proof and Power of Forgiveness.” The lights had begun to glow in Simon’s mansion. Servants were bustling to and fro, waiting for and expecting the guests, for Simon was entertaining guests tonight at a banquet.

The common people were no doubt outside, for in the East there was no privacy as we know it. And many were standing outside of Simon’s house, hoping to catch a glimpse of some of the important people who may be coming, for Simon the Pharisee was apparently a well known man. There may have come in Joseph the Rabbi from the neighboring city. There may have come in Diveis [phonetic], the rich man whom nobody really liked. And even Saul the Pharisee who was advancing in Judaism beyond any of his contemporaries. As the guests arrived the servants met them in the atrium and they would be motioned over to a little stool upon which they sat and the servants would take off their sandals and wash their feet, wipe them with a towel. And as they made their way toward the banqueting hall they would be met by another servant who would anoint their head with oil. And then at the entrance to the room there stood Simon the Pharisee and he would greet them with a kiss on their cheeks and usher them to the place by the side of the table that had been set for them.

The table would be set very low from the ground, possibly twelve, eighteen inches. There would be cushions and pillows and other pieces of tapestry lying about for people did not sit at the table as we do, they leaned on their side. And the table was probably set up against one of the walls with just enough room for the servants who

served to get between the table and the wall and it would be probably in the shape of an L or perhaps even a U, and Simon would not sit in the center of the table but at one end so he could look out over all who were present.

Then the strange prophet of Nazareth, now living in Capernaum, and when he walked into the atrium apparently Simon the Pharisee gave an inaudible signal to one of his servants that his feet were not to be washed. To the other servant who had been anointing the heads with oil, he gave a little signal, a look of disapproval perhaps when he moved toward Jesus. And when he reached the banqueting room our Lord was not greeted by Simon with a kiss, but merely rudely, somewhat discourteously showed to his place at the table.

I've often wondered why Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus of Nazareth. I first wondered whether he had really invited him or just simply said, “I wish you would come over to the banquet that I'm giving for some of my friends.” For the text in verse 36 says, “One of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him,” and that is not the normal word for invitation. But in verse 39 Luke does say, “Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it,” and that is the common word for an invitation. So he had invited Jesus but apparently without a great deal of desire to get to know him personally. Perhaps he wished to ask him some theological question, perhaps he wished to trap him as often the Pharisees sought to trap him. Or perhaps as so many, he wished to have some relationship to a man who was becoming a very famous man in the land. It is quite common with people who have position and particularly with politicians it is quite common for them to have some relationship to people who gain notoriety, for frequently it may mean some support, some votes for them. I have often wondered about presidents who invite evangelists and who company with evangelists when so far as I can tell there are no truly evangelical words that come out of their mouths. But this is only a personal wonderment of mine, and I don't want to pass any judgment on them because I do not have the power to do so except that it does appear to me at times that when presidents

and kings desire to have fellowship with the ambassadors of Jesus Christ it frequently is simply a desire to say, “I have known them.” Perhaps to be associated with them when the balloting time comes around, maybe a few votes, maybe one by that.

But Jesus did come and he was ushered to his place and as they were sitting around the table Luke does not tell us that they were saying anything. A woman came out of the crowd, I think she must have been a beautiful woman, but one upon whom could be seen the marks of her occupation, a prostitute. She came without any invitation, she came out of the crowd, which was common, and it was possible in those days since the crowd was often very close to the activities in a home. She walked right into the atrium, she walked through the atrium, she walked right into the banqueting room, she walked over to where Jesus was reclining and she stood behind him. And beneath her veil if you had been able to see, you would have seen tears coursing down her face.

She bent over Jesus and as she bent over him she began to wet his feet with her tears and seeing that she took down her hair which was not a very nice thing to do for women in those days. That was her glory, Paul says. It was very uncommon for a woman to do what she did, but she did it shamelessly. And she also had in her hands an alabaster box of perfume; no doubt it was very expensive perfume. And so she took the perfume and she anointed our Lord's feet with the perfume and she began to kiss his feet. It was an obvious expression of devotion to our Lord that arose out of an experience that she had had with him.

The guests, no doubt, were nonplused by what happened. I would imagine that the people on the outside that they were a little surprised and they wondered what was going to be the reaction and there was apparently also a deathly silence, for no one seemed to be saying anything. But the angels in heaven must have rejoiced at what they saw and I'm sure they wondered at what power a man could have that would enable him to transform a harlot into a worshiper of this holy man in the way that he had done.

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It's not surprising that Luke alone has given us this incident, for there are two outstanding emphases in Luke's gospel. They are, first of all, his emphasis upon women. If you're interested in the relationship of women to the saving work of Jesus Christ, it is Luke's gospel that you should study. And the second thing that is interesting about Luke is his sympathy with Pauline emphases. He was a great companion of Paul as we know from the remainder of the New Testament and his gospel reflects that, for the pureness of the grace of God shines forth with exceeding light in the Gospel of Luke. And we all know that Paul loves the doctrine of the freeness of salvation and the wonder and power of forgiveness. It is he who says that we are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

And it is Paul who tells us the wonder and power of divine forgiveness. I think he learned it from the prophets. Isaiah the prophet says, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions. Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it, break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein.” Isaiah had learned that the forgiveness of God is so wonderful that it is worth calling up on the whole of creation to sing to it. And so the heavens, the mountains, the trees, the forests, are all called upon to sing to the praise of the God who has blotted out as a thick cloud the transgressions of Israel.

The wonder of salvation, it is wonderful because of the difference it makes in a man. You can have the greatest experiences of human life and they cannot change a man like forgiveness of sins. Lazarus, a man that was dead, is restored to life. He goes back to his old way of living, he sits at the table, he eats, he rejoices in the Savior, of course. But apparently he had already known him. He lives his life out and he dies. We do not see any great effect upon him that the restoration itself had. But the power of the forgiveness of sins is so great that it can completely transform a person.

Jowett once said, “For ethical revivals we must first of all have evangelical revivals.” And he testified to the power of divine forgiveness. We live in the day when

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preachers often stand behind the pulpit and tell us, as Christians, that the thing we should be interested in is social action. We should be interested in the social gospel. We should be interested in the sick and the weary and the troubled and the poor and the distressed of the earth. I do not think that anyone would disagree with that and I do not think that any genuine Christian cannot fail to be interested in such people. But if we are being told that this is the fundamental responsibility of a Christian, we are being told that which is fundamentally anti-scriptural.

Jowett was right, for ethical revivals we must first have evangelical revivals, for it is the power of the love of Jesus Christ as experienced in the forgiveness of sins that changes human lives and changes human living. There has hardly been any great social movement in the Western world that is not ultimately related to the Christian religion, to Christian truth. And I challenge you sometime, if you do not believe that to study the history of the effects of the Christian movement. There is a vast amount of talk about Jesus Christ. There is a vast amount of writing about Jesus Christ. There is even a vast amount of debating about Jesus Christ. They debate his place in history, they debate his importance. And for nineteen hundred years this has been going on and I do not think I see any subsidence at all in the debate and discussion about him. But I want to say that you can learn more about Jesus Christ and the power of his person and the power of his work in this woman's tears than you can in ninety percent of the debate and talk about him.

Now let's review the situation. The characters are threefold. There is the prostitute plying her unchaste trade, but somehow or other she has come into contact with Jesus and now she enters the Pharisees house as a delivered woman. And her tears, mind you, are not tears of sadness, they are tears of joy. For mourners, as everyone knows, the worst is over when the first tears come and I think that when this woman begins to weep at the feet of Jesus, it is not because she is in the midst of a struggle over him. She has passed the climax and now she has collapsed in devotion, expressed by the

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tears of joy. She had been brought under conviction. I do not know where she knew him but she had come to know him. This was obviously not her first contact with Jesus. She had come to conviction for her sin and she had also learned that he was the one through whom her sins may be forgiven.

She was like a debtor faced with a debt that he could not possibly pay, who now has received unexpectedly a sum of money that pays all the debts and makes him free again. And there often comes the collapse of tears after that. She was like an Isaiah who had seen her sin but had also seen the Lord. She was like a Peter who had seen his sin but who also had seen the Lord, had come to know what Jesus Christ could do.

And then there was the Pharisee. We talked about the Pharisees last Sunday morning. The ritualists, the traditionalists, the intellectualists, but this Pharisee, this ritualist, this intellectualist, this traditionalist cannot understand this woman who stands behind Jesus of Nazareth. He does not understand her extravagance, he just does not understand her and what has happened to her. He's the kind of traditionalist who is a conservative but who has no real grasp of the heart of the matter.

Some years ago my wife was speaking with a friend of hers about a preacher, a Presbyterian minister in Oak Cliff. This was many years ago, I do not think this man is in Dallas any longer. They were discussing spiritual things and the woman who was speaking with my wife kept extolling the merits of her minister and finally my wife said, “Well, is he a conservative?” And she meant, of course, does he preach the Bible, does he believe in the doctrines of the word of God? And the woman who had no understanding, obviously, of what she was talking about replied, “Oh yes, he's very conservative. He never preaches without having on the robe that his father used to wear.” [Laughter]

Now that is what we think of when we think of a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, someone who merely wears a robe, then we are thinking in terms of some of the Pharisees. Remember, I said last time not all of the Pharisees were like this. Some of them were earnest, sincere men. But most of the Pharisees of Jesus' day were

traditionalists, intellectualists, ritualists, they could not understand this woman. I think that is one reason why there is silence around the table. No one seems to say anything, no one knows what to do, they are totally out of it so far as she is concerned. They do not understand what it is that will make a person move out of the crowd in the midst of a room where they had not been invited. In the midst of people that she did not know. There's something that impels this woman to do this extravagant, outlandish deed which was an expression of her relationship to one person in that room. And no one understood except the angels, except our Lord, and except any Christian who has experienced the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ.

And then there is Jesus. He had said just a short while before this, according to Luke chapter 5, verse 32, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” This surely is a beautiful illustration of it. I said she had probably known our Lord, perhaps she had had a interview with him. Perhaps she had heard him preach. Perhaps she had received one of those looks from him that Professor Godet speaks about when he said, “Through one of those looks of Jesus which for broken hearts were like a ray from heaven.” At any rate, she knew him. And she knew that he had some remedy for broke hearts.

Now when she performs her deed there is only one response and it is unspoken. We read in verse 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.” Now it is obvious that he does not believe that he is a prophet and that is reflected in the Greek text where we have a type of condition which we call, that is those who know the jargon of the Greek language, they call it contrary to fact conditions. The author assumes for the sake of his expression that the statement he is making is contrary to fact. “If he were a prophet, but he is not, he would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.” And so he couches his assumption in words which say he is

not. If he were he would have known. It's obvious he thinks our Lord is lacking either in knowledge. He does not know this woman or he is lacking in holiness. He knows this woman and he allows her to do this to him and thus he reveals his own ignorance.

Well it is at this point that our Lord speaks and I guess you have probably noticed that by now what I am saying is that what we have here is something of a pantomime. A pantomime, as you know, is a play in which there are only actions and no words. Someone calls it a dumb scene. And this is a dumb scene. Now it's not a scene of dummies but it is a dumb scene. The only speaker in this entire incident is our Lord with the exception of two rather formal remarks that Simon makes in answer to questions that are put to him. He asks Simon, "Simon I have something to say to you," and Simon says, "Master, say on," and he gives his little parable and he asks for a response in the application. But the rest of it seems to be all thought out within but you can be sure that though there was not any speaking there was a great deal of communication going on. A great deal of thought. It is Simon who speaks within himself and when the incident is over we read in verse 49, "They that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins?" And so no one speaks but a great deal is going on.

I'm sure that you and I have been in gatherings where someone has done something and you just don't feel that you can utter a word. You would like to know the proper thing to say. And everybody is thinking there are tremendous things that are going on but not a word is being said. That is what we have here. And so our Lord said, "Simon I think I would like to say something to you." He breaks the silence. Now perhaps he thought it's just that I should seek to reach Simon further and if his heart is open at all I'll tell him a little story that may draw out from him an expression of confidence.

Simon said to him, "Teacher, say on." And our Lord tells them a simple little story. It's very simple, there was a certain creditor which had two debtors. One owed five hundred pence, the other owed fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, I love that,

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when they had nothing to pay, for you see, this is an illustration of the way in which men are forgiven. We have nothing to pay. Nothing to pay. That is why men have difficulty with the doctrine of election. They think really that they do have something with which they may satisfy God. And if he has selected some and passed by others they feel surely he has done it because of something within me. They cannot really believe that he has chosen me in free grace and I am bankrupt, totally.

“So when they had nothing to pay”, Jesus said, “He freely forgave them both.” Now Simon, tell me, which of them will love him the most? That’s his story. I want you to notice in this story he moves from the cause to the effect. He says they were bankrupt. They owed money. Jesus forgave them. Now, what will be the effect of it? Who will love him the most as a result of the forgiveness? Now the reason I want you to notice that is because when we move into the personal application, our Lord will turn and he will move from the effect to the cause. He will say, “You see, these tremendous effects that we see in this woman is because she has been forgiven and she has realized it.”

Now the Pharisee thought that it was enough for him to admit Jesus to his house, he thought he had done a good turn to our Lord that he would allow him to come into his table. He was one of those what some have called If Men who like to go around saying, “If God will do so and so, I will believe on him.” God is my debtor. Not I, God’s debtor. And so he wants God to dance to his tune. If I pray, God must forgive me. If I am religious, God must do something for me. If I put money in the collection plate, God must bless. We have a lot of them among Christians too. And so they like to say, “God must bless me because I have prayed.” Well there is a sense in which that’s true, but if you are thinking as a Pharisee, it’s wrong. If you’re thinking, on the other hand, God has invited me to pray and encouraged me to pray and I have responded to what he has said, that’s different.

Now the prostitute, her deeds are obvious. Jesus points them out. He said, “Simon, when I came in you have not washed my feet but she has not only washed my

feet but she has washed them with her tears, not with a servant's water. Not only did you not wash my feet and dry them with a towel, but she has washed them with her tears and she has dried them with her hair, her glory. Simon, you didn't give me any kiss of friendship but she has showered my feet with kisses that betoken her devotion and admiration of me. Simon, you didn't anoint me with oil, but she has not only done something that is the equal of anointing with oil which meant nothing more than courtesy in those days, but she has broken a precious box of perfume and she has anointed my feet with perfume.

Now I think if you had looked at those two people in that day and if you as a 1st Century citizen had made an evaluation of them and you had known that this woman was a harlot and had done this in this rather discourteous, bullish kind of way and here is the Pharisee in his lovely clothes, his white garment with his blue tassels and his very pious appearance such as many of you have on your faces right now, you would have no doubt have passed judgment upon the woman. You would have said, “Well I don't understand exactly what's happened here but I surely think that Simon the Pharisee must know what he's talking about, he's a religious leader of our day. Well that woman was not a church woman; she was not full of churchianity, not full of Judaism. As a matter of fact, she probably did not know a great deal of theology at this stage. I think she immediately came to understand it and when the Christians began to teach the dogmas of the truth of God she listened and she grew as any Christian ought. But I would imagine if there had been some discussion of the attributes of God it would have been Simon who would have given more intelligible answers. And if they had discussed the atonement it would have been Simon who would have been able to discuss the differences between universal redemption and particular redemption. If they had discussed some of the technical aspects of the word of God it would have been Simon who knew those things are not the woman but the woman had something that Simon apparently had nothing of. She had had an experience of the love of God in Christ and she had received forgiveness and she

was transformed. She was a different person. She had new life and that new life expressed itself in devotion and love for him.

One of the bitterest accusations ever made against Christians was made by Nietzsche, responsible for the verbalization of some aspects of contemporary theology. "God is dead." It was Nietzsche who said, "You Christians are going to have to look a great deal more redeemed to me before I believe in your redeemer."

Now our Lord has a few things to say. In verse 47 he says - before that he had turned to the woman and he had said to Simon -- that's very, very vivid, you know -- he turns to the woman and looks at the woman but he's speaking to Simon and it's obvious what he wants Simon to do. He wants Simon to take a good look at this woman as he expresses these words. And he continues in verse 47 to make the application. He says, "First of all, Simon, I say unto you, her sins which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much." He has affirmed the forgiveness of her sins and he has stated that her love proves this.

Now when you look first at verse 47 you might not get that sense out of it. My Roman Catholic friends have not. Last night I took down from my library a life of Jesus Christ by an outstanding Roman Catholic. He wanted to argue that this text, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much," proves that men are forgiven by love and not by simple faith. Now the Roman Catholic doctrine is that the faith that saves is *fides caritatem formata*, the faith that is formed by love. And that while genuine faith may be initiated by God, it is not saving faith until it is coupled with love. So that faith becomes, really, works. And the text does say, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much."

Now that is obviously not our Lord's meaning. For just a moment think of the parable that he has told in illustration. He said, "Two men owed money to a creditor, and he frankly forgave them both. Now which of them, not did love, but will love the most?" So it is obvious love is looked at by our Lord as the result of forgiveness, not that which

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obtains it. Furthermore, he would say at the end of verse 47, "Not to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little," but, "He who loves little will receive little forgiveness," just the opposite. Further, he could not say in verse 50, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

The word forgiven is in the perfect tense. It refers to something that is past, her sins are forgiven. They have been forgiven and what you see is the evidence of it. In other words, the "for" of verse 47 is not the "for" that reasons, it is the "for" that proves. And let me give you a couple of illustrations from English. If we should know a man who was put in prison for some crime and we should know that his trial were coming up at a certain day and then after that day we should see this man walking on the streets we might say, "Because he's free that man has been acquitted." Now we would not mean that he has been acquitted because he is free, we would mean he's free because he has been acquitted. But we would be looking at the results and reasoning back to what had happened. We might even say, as we get up one morning, not this morning particularly, "The sun has risen, for it's light." Or we could say, turning it around, "It's light," and if someone said, "How do you know that?" you say, "Well the sun has risen." In other words, we can say this in two ways. Now that is what we have here.

Some few months ago, back in May to be exact, I read something in *Reader's Digest* which immediately pointed me to this incident here. In fact I clipped it out and put it in my notes on this incident. In the May *Reader's Digest* there was a little notation at the bottom of one of the pages to fill up space which said, "Air blessed: the following letter was sent to an airline sales department. Sir, may I suggest that your pilots not turn on that little light that says 'Fasten Seatbelt' because every time they do the ride gets bumpy." [Laughter] Now we all know, of course, that turning on the seatbelt light does not make the ride get bumpy but that is evidence that that bumpiness may appear.

And so when Jesus said, "The woman, whose sins are many, are forgiven because she loved much," he's not saying she's forgiven because she loved, but her love is the

evidence that she has been forgiven. That is the only way you can explain her action. I think this is one of the greatest scenes of the Bible. I have always felt that it is one of the keys to Christian living, also. In fact, I do not think that anybody who preaches the gospel can learn any greater lesson than the lesson of this particular story. I think, for example, that if we learn the lesson of this we will learn the lesson of how to preach the gospel. What to do when we preach the gospel and what to expect when the gospel is preached.

David Brainerd, one of the greatest preachers America has ever known, has a journal in which he describes some of his ministry to the North American Indians. And it has an introduction and editing by Jonathan Edwards, the great New England Theologian and philosopher. And in the midst of that book he speaks on the doctrine that he preached among the Indians of this continent and this is what he says, “I never got away from Jesus and him crucified, and I found that when my people were gripped by this great evangelical doctrine of Christ and him crucified, I had no need to give them instructions about morality. I found that one followed the other as the sure and inevitable fruit of the other.” And it is true. If we should preach the cross of Jesus Christ and him crucified, and if men respond to that and see what it really means to be lost and what Christ has suffered for our sins, and how we may have a full and free forgiveness, you don't have to tell people what to do for they know what they should do. They should give themselves to him. And there is an inner compulsion that comes from love that is stronger than any exhortation that any apostle could ever give.

I say it's one of the greatest scenes of the Bible. It's like Joseph in the court of Pharaoh, forgiving and weeping over those cruel brothers who had sold him for a slave and broken his father's heart. It's like David repenting for his sin and hearing the prophet Nathan say, “The Lord hath put away thy sin.” It's like the prodigal who went into the far country and who was greeted by his father when he returned, dirty, unkempt, with a kiss. It's like Peter who cursed the Lord but who hears the Lord say shortly after Simon, “Lovest

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thou me beside the little fire on the side of the shore of the Sea of Galilee.” It’s like Paul, the bloody fanatic and persecutor, repenting of his sins and saying to Jesus, “Lord, what will Thou have me to do?” And it’s like the thief on the cross who, seeing something in Jesus that was different from any other man, finally said out of his sin and wickedness, “Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom,” and Jesus said, “Today, today (not then), today thou shall be with me.” Not in the kingdom, wonderful though that is, in paradise today. And here, the woman who weeps and hears our Lord’s words.

Now here I have gone over time again. I want to say one last thing though I have about another hour to preach [Laughter]. This parable affirms our Lord’s method of dealing with men, they are debtors, they are freely forgiven, and love is to be the result. The prostitute is given several things. She is given an affirmation of the pardon that has been hers through her response to him. She is told that she will persevere, “Thy faith hath saved thee; saving thee in the past is saving thee at the present,” for the tense, again, is perfect. We have no reason to suspect from Scripture that it is any otherwise in the future, though the text does not say that specifically here. And for this poor woman who now will go back to the same old hard world of temptation with her beauty perhaps her danger, is given assurance that she will have his peace in her heart as her strength and as her companion.

This has been called the story of “The Woman That Was a Sinner.” It should be the story of “The Woman That Was Greatly Blessed.” But there is one thing that I want to say last, and that’s the thing I would like to stress. It is that love for Jesus Christ reveals the forgiveness by Jesus Christ. And forgiveness by Jesus Christ is the moral dynamic that produces love for Christ. Now I have a thing about preachers, some of my friends do too. Some sitting in this audience. Preachers often tell us what we ought to do, often never tell us how. We all know that we ought to love Christ if we are Christians but some of us find it very difficult to muster up much love for him. Not the kind of love that transforms life like this woman that was a sinner’s love. But you know there is a great principle

expressed here, it's very simply this: the man who loves is the man who knows he has been forgiven, and the man who knows he has been forgiven is the man who has come to know the sufferings of Christ. You see, it is really the knowledge of the sufferings of Christ how much it cost that produces ultimately the knowledge of the forgiveness of our sins and it is the man who knows that he has been forgiven who is impelled by love.

Now my dear Christian friends, fortunately in the redeeming grace of God, in his efficacious grace which continues to work in the Christian, I know that it is the Holy Spirit who nurtures within me those dispositions to understand what Christ has done and to respond, for it is he who produces that in my heart. But from the human standpoint there is no way to know how much he has suffered and how much we have been forgiven except through the knowledge of Holy Scripture. It is only in the word of God that we shall come to know him and what he has done. We shall never have an experience like the woman who was a sinner if we do not have this knowledge of him through the Scriptures. And if we have no desire to go to his word, the Holy Spirit is not working in our hearts.

If you find coldness in your heart, as I often find coldness in my heart, I go home, I get down by my bed, and I say, “Oh God, forgive me for this coldness in my heart and create within me, by Thy Spirit, a warmth toward Thee and toward the word.” And I go to the Scriptures and it's not long before the Holy Spirit has worked within my heart, for he continually works. He has stirred my dispositions, he has given me light, and he has caused me to respond. And sometimes the tears begin to flow. That's what Jesus is talking about. The man who knows how much he has been forgiven loves. And he who loves, loves out of that sense. May God speak to all of our hearts. Shall we stand for the benediction.

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[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the woman that was a sinner, for the great act of testimony and witness. And, oh Father, how cold our hearts often become. By the Holy Spirit, enlighten and quicken and stir and enflame. Enable us Lord to know...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]