

WHO LOVES THE MOST?

Luke 7:36-8:3

Popular presentations of theology refer to the TOTAL DEPRAVITY of man.

I always have a problem with that expression—NOT because I don't believe that all men and women are sinners—but because I don't believe we are all as bad as we *could* be.

Some people live lives that are more sinful than others.

Biblical doctrine does NOT say that man is as bad as He *could* be.

It DOES teach that we are as *BAD OFF* as we could be.

Our state is hopeless and helpless.

We will never be good enough to earn our way to God.

We will never be able to save ourselves.

Luke 7 brings this issue to our attention.

It presents a contrast between

a sinful woman, who knows how bad off she is.

and a clean-cut, successful, religious leader who thinks he's doing all right.

How do these two deal with Jesus?

How bad off do we have to be before we will turn to Jesus?

The basic principle this account teaches us is that:

PEOPLE WHO'VE BEEN GREATLY FORGIVEN, BECOME GREATLY GRATEFUL.

Luke has been demonstrating that the outcasts of Jewish society recognize Who Jesus is, and how much they need Him.

The "in-group" doesn't think they need Him.

They'd "rather do it themselves, Thank you!"

His Acceptance by the outcasts of society 7:1-8:3

2nd class citizens accept Jesus and receive the benefits of His ministry which their leaders reject.

The pagans, publicans and sinners, the sick, the afflicted

– THEY know they need Him—They have nothing to loose.

A REPENTANT WOMAN COMES TO JESUS 7:36-38

Recognition of personal helplessness and indebtedness distinguish the action and forgiveness of the sinful woman from the Pharisees.

Barclay: The scene is the courtyard of the house of Simon the Pharisee. The houses of well-to-do people were built around an open courtyard. Often there would be a garden and a fountain and in warm weather meals were eaten. When a rabbi was at a meal in such a house, all kinds of people would come to listen to his pearls of wisdom.

The guests didn't sit, but reclined at table. They lay on low couches, resting on the left elbow, leaving the right arm free, with the feet stretched out behind, and during the meal their sandals were taken off.

Why would he have invited Jesus? He may have been a collector of celebrities; and with a half-patronizing contempt he invited this startling young Galilean to have a meal with him.

That would explain the combination of a certain respect with the omission of the usual courtesies. Simon may have been trying to patronize Jesus.

Morris: "A meal such as the one Jesus was attending was not private. People could come in and watch what went on. At the same time a prostitute would not have been very welcome in Simon's house, so it took courage to come."

Jewish rabbis wouldn't think of speaking to women in public at all, nor would they eat with them in public, much less a woman of *this* type!

It was a shock to see Jesus accept her as He did.

Her sins are not specified, but she could be a woman of the streets.

Her reputation was certainly not good.

The woman admitted she was a sinner and gave evidence of repentance.

A CRITICAL PHARISEE ATTACKS JESUS FOR RECEIVING HER 7:39

Jesus wasn't demonstrating evidence of discernment by allowing such a person to come near Him and anoint His feet.

He should have shunned her!

The Pharisee recognized *her* sinfulness, but failed to recognize *his own* sin.

Jesus responded to his accusation that He didn't know what kind of woman she was by confronting him on what he was thinking.

He knew what was on the man's mind.

This was no case of ignorance! **He did know!**

Jesus gives evidence that He knows: "Who and what sort of person *Simon* is".

Maybe He knows about the woman also!

What is Simon's main concern?

What is Jesus' main concern?

Ben Patterson points out: Simon couldn't see the woman. He saw a category, a kind of woman, *a whore*—he didn't see her as a person with needs. Jesus saw her as an individual. He saw her need. He saw what she was crying out for and met her need.

How about us? Do we just place people in boxes and write them off?

Or, do we try to see their real need and do something to help them in their need?

If God just placed us in a "sinners" box. We're finished. That settles it.

But He saw our need and gave His Son to die for us, that He might meet our need.

Do we share God's attitude? Or the Pharisee's?

To the Pharisee the issue is the *amount* of sin—he is better than she is.

To our Lord the issue isn't the *amount* of sin, but rather, the *awareness of sin*.

She knows she is a sinner.

He refuses to recognize and confess his sin.

Therefore, he receives no forgiveness.

How bad do we have to be, in order to be sinners?

The Pharisee wanted to show how much better HE was than she.

"The difference between her sin and his sin is that her sin shows!"

Jesus was concerned about canceling the debt and meeting her need.

THE FORGIVING LORD RESPONDS 7:40-47

PARABLE OF TWO DEBTORS 7:40-43

Both are bankrupt.

Neither can pay their debt.

One owes 10 times as much as the other

One owes 500 days of his salary

The other only owes 50 days

On their meager pay scale neither could ever get ahead to pay it back!

Their forgiveness doesn't come until it's clear that they can't repay the debt.

They're both hopeless and helpless.

Then, they come to him for forgiveness of the debt!

Their only hope is the mercy of the creditor.

This is the picture of every sinner.

Some are guilty of more open, overt sins.

Others live fine, upright, religious lives.

Both are just as lost.

When a person is bankrupt, it doesn't matter how large the debt is.

They're in over their heads.

They don't have the resources to repay the debt.

No matter how religious, moral, or cultured we may be,
we can't pay the debt we owe to God.

God offers to forgive all, for the Son of God Himself assumed the debt.

In a small country village lived a doctor noted for his love and kindness for the people. After his death they found in his records many accounts with the notation: "Forgiven, too poor to pay." The widow objected and sued the people for payment. When it was assured that the signature was legitimate, the judge replied: "There is not a court in the land who can order collection of the accounts where the doctor has written "Forgiven."

Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe;

Sin had left a crimson stain,

He washed it white as snow. – Mrs. H. Hall

"It is both impossible and insulting to try to pay for God's great GIFT of salvation with our own poor works."

The person who is forgiven the larger debt would normally sense deeper gratitude and love for the one who granted forgiveness.

Gratitude depends on realizing how much has been forgiven!

Similarly, the woman had been forgiven a great debt, therefore she loved Jesus very much.

She knew that she was a sinner and needed forgiveness.

She was grateful because she was forgiven.

On the other hand, the Pharisee saw himself as pure and righteous.

He didn't need anything from Jesus, so he had no special gratitude, nor affection.

He did not treat Him in a special way.

He didn't extend to Him common courtesies that were due a guest of honor.

Apparently he didn't think Jesus could do anything for him.

Wise people say: "the more I learn, the more I learn how much I have to learn."

So it is with holiness:

The holier we become the more sensitive we become to how much more there is to accomplish before we become truly holy.

As we become holy, we realize how great our need for God's holiness is!

Paul calls himself: "the chief of sinners"

Francis of Assisi said: "There is nowhere a more wretched and a more miserable sinner than I."

Barclay: "The greatest of sins is to be conscious of no sin."

COMPARISON OF THE TWO ATTITUDES 7:44-47

The Pharisee

Didn't wash His feet

Didn't welcome guest with a kiss

Didn't anoint His head with perfume

Didn't recognize his sin; only hers

Didn't feel great respect nor gratitude

The Sinful Woman

Washed His feet with her own tears

Kissed His feet

Poured fragrant oil on His feet.

Recognizes her sin; not worried about his.

Overwhelmed by reverence and gratitude

Don't misunderstand the passage!

It *doesn't* say she was saved because of her tears and her gift.

Jesus says it is her ***faith*** that saved her!

Her works would never make it for her.

It *doesn't* say that she was saved because she loved much.

Rather, her ***love*** is *evidence* that she *is* saved.

She loves much because she has been forgiven much.

Edersheim: "If there were much benefit, there would be much love; if little benefit, little love.

And conversely, in such case much love would argue much benefit; little love, small benefit.

There were different acceptable ways to receive guests.

A mere polite greeting was acceptable when there was no particular importance to the guest's coming.

A special welcome for special guests might include the washing of the feet, the kiss of welcome, and anointing of the head with oil.

None of these expressions met the Pharisee's reception of our Lord;

the sinful woman, on the other hand, went beyond their most exaggerated expressions.

She must have really felt a debt of gratitude.

The Pharisee, on the other hand, felt little debt of gratitude to our Lord.

C.S. Lewis: "A man who admits no guilt can accept no forgiveness."

The woman had a great debt to the Lord because He had forgiven her greatly.

Spurgeon: Tells the story of a certain occasion when he was preaching out in a country place.

He said to the people there that he should be the greatest debtor to divine grace that ever entered the gates of glory and therefore:

*"Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While heaven's resounding mansions ring,
With shouts of sovereign grace."*

As he came down the stairs following his message, an old lady approached him and said: "You made one great blunder in your sermon ... You said that you would sing the loudest when you get to heaven; but you shall not, for I owe more to divine grace than you possibly can do. I was once a great sinner, and I have had much forgiven and therefore shall praise God more than you." I did not yield the point, but I held my tongue. I could let her be first, and yet take the same place myself. As I went down the aisle many friends declared that they would not give way to me in that point, and that they ought to praise God more than I, for they owed Him more. It was a happy controversy. It reminded me of Ralph Erskine's Contention among the Birds of Paradise, where he represents the saints in glory, each saying that he shall lie the lowest, and shall praise the most sweetly the infinite love of God."

NOT THE PHARISEE! He would never admit to the extent of his debt.

Therefore, he felt no gratitude!

With which do *YOU* identify?

Jesus doesn't gloss over the woman's sin. He knows that she has *many* sins. **7:47-48**

Yet the many are forgiven. Therefore, the love response is great also.

In addressing the woman with the affirmation of forgiveness,

Jesus wasn't granting forgiveness at that moment.

It was a proclamation of what had *already* occurred on the basis of her faith.

Her faith has already brought salvation to her.

THE CRITICS KEEP OBJECTING 7:49

They go back to their game of quibbling about whether He could do what He said
The Lord's saving message again provokes opposition.

They consider His affirmation a claim to be God since only God forgives sin.

They can't accept His claim.

On the other hand, she just turns to Him and trusts Him

THE SINFUL WOMAN RECEIVES THE BLESSING 7:50

AFFLICTED WOMEN RECEIVE BLESSING AND SUPPORT HIS MINISTRY 8:1-3

Formerly Demon-possessed women

The women who had been delivered from the oppression of illness and evil spirits joined His followers and served Him.

They are an example of those who joined His followers and served them by sharing from their possessions

These three women, and many others, were helping to support Jesus and his disciples from their own wealth.

Like the previous woman, these had been forgiven much, so they had a great debt of gratitude to Jesus, and they responded from hearts filled with love.

They were responding positively to Jesus' message of the kingdom, in contrast to those leaders who were not.

What does this passage tell us about the kind of people that were hanging out with Jesus?

What lessons does this passage teach us concerning ourselves?

It is wise to remember from whence we have come!

We will only see others as God sees them, when we remember how God has seen us!