

An Outcast and a Parable: The Parable of Two Loves

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According to the Greek and Hebrew definitions, a parable is "a placing of one thing beside another, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, sentences with ethical wisdom and a comparison of one thing to another." [i]

Please read Luke 7:37-50.

Please read verse 37 again and name the three people listed in this verse.

From the same verse, please record every fact concerning the woman.

One fact that we learn about the woman is that she is a *sinner*, a fact to which I can relate. During the course of my lifetime, many people in my hometown would have accurately described me as a sinful woman. The Greek word used for *sinner* in this verse is *hamartolos*.

Hamartolos does not refer to a common everyday spontaneous type of sinner; this word refers to someone who specializes in sinning. Blue Letter Bible (BLB) defines *harmartolos* as one who is "devoted to sin...especially wicked...preeminently sinful...stained with certain definite vices or crimes." Many scholars believe that this woman was a prostitute.

Another fact that we learn about the sinful woman is that she did not accidentally encounter Jesus at the Pharisee's house. She specifically sought out information as to where the Master was going that evening and made plans to meet Him.

Why do you think the sinful woman chose to meet Jesus at the

Pharisee's house? Why not catch Him in private elsewhere?

When we are serious about repentance, it cannot wait until a convenient time. Repentance is messy, necessary and vital. The woman risked the scorn and ridicule of the Pharisees in order to talk with her Savior. When we have our eyes on Jesus, the opinions of others do not matter.

What does the woman do during the dinner?

Please list all the verbs (action words) from verse 38 in the space provided:

The woman *stood*, *wept*, *washed*, *wiped*, *kissed* and *anointed* the feet of Jesus. In order gain a greater understanding of this portion of Scripture, let us consider the meaning of these verbs in the original Greek:

- ***Stood:*** This word means among other things, “to make firm, to fix, to establish, to stand before judges.” The sinful woman did indeed stand before judges during the dinner party. One judge found her guilty and condemned her, the other Judge found her guilty and offered her grace. The sinful woman did not stand for long however; in the next part of this verse she is on her knees weeping at the feet of Jesus.
- ***Weeping:*** In the Greek *weeping* means, “to mourn, to weep as a sign of pain or grief.” What was causing the woman to weep? I believe she was mourning because of her sin. Before the sinful woman met Jesus she was blind to her lifestyle and choices. Suddenly, she met the Truth and saw the truth of her situation. Her grief is a sign of her repentance.
- ***Washed:*** This word is not used to describe *cleansing* or *cleaning* but *raining*. Just as rain brings life and refreshment to the earth,

the tears of the woman brought life and refreshment for her soul.

- **Wiped:** In the original Greek this word simply means, “to wipe off, to wipe away.” In general, women are very protective of their hair—self included. 1 Corinthians 11:15 states that a woman’s hair is her glory. The sinful woman, already weeping upon her knees at the feet of Jesus, humbles herself further by wiping His feet with her glory, her beautiful tresses. She has found something greater to glory in than her hair—her Savior.
- **Kissed:** Means “to kiss much.” No further comment is needed.
- **Anointed:** Definition, “to anoint.” I believe the anointing of Jesus by the sinful woman is a sign that she intends to follow Him with all her heart. The fragrant oil that she pours out on His feet is most likely the same oil she uses while working as a prostitute. The woman takes what used to be used for sin and now uses her treasure for her Savior. We can make the same sacrifice. That which used to be used for sin, our hands... our feet...our bodies... our minds...let us pour them out at the feet of Jesus to be used for His kingdom.

Why do all these actions take place at the feet of Jesus? Because, “how lovely on the mountain are the feet of those who bring Good News.” Jesus has Good News for the sinful woman and He has good news for us—our sin—our deep and ever-present sin can be completely washed away, not by tears but by the blood of Christ.

Please read verse 39 again.

According to verse 39, what test is running through the Pharisee's mind? Please highlight or underline your answer for later consideration.

How does Jesus explain His actions to the Pharisee?

Jesus, the Master story teller, uses a parable to explain his actions.

Please read verses 41 and 42 again and write a quick summary of the parable.

Now, please fill in the missing main characters of the parable and whom they represent in the chart below:

The Characters	Whom They Represent
The Creditor	
500 Denarii Debtor	

The Creditor represents Jesus, the 500 Denarii Debtor represents the sinful woman and the 50 Denarii Debtor represents the Pharisee. All mankind can also be represented by the debtors (I fall under the 500 Denarii Debtor type).

Please go back to the highlighted question from above. Does Jesus prove or disprove the Pharisee's test?

Jesus proves the Pharisee's theory. But Jesus is so much more than a prophet or a great teacher—He is God. It is amazing to me that the sinful woman recognizes in her heart who Jesus is, while the Pharisee doubts if Jesus is even a prophet.

Why do you think the sinful woman is able to recognize Jesus while the religious man is not?

Please contrast the sinful woman with the Pharisee:

Despite their many differences, the Pharisee and the sinful woman have one thing in common according to verses 41-42.

Please read verses 41-42 again and list the commonality:

They both owe a debt that they cannot pay. 500 denarii is about 20 months wages while 50 denarii is about 2 months wages. Regardless of the final amount owed both debtors are equally unable to pay their balance.

How did the debtors of the parable (and all mankind) fall into debt?

Because all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. Even if we managed to make it through life having committed only "one small little sin" God's Word states if we have broken one law, we are accountable for all the law (James 2:10). No matter how small the debt of sin, we are unable to pay. Doctors, lawyers, thieves, murderers, missionaries, pastors, teachers, prostitutes, drug pushers...we all are unable to pay. The irony of the situation is that the sinful woman is in better spiritual shape than her pharisaical counterpart; she at least sees her great need and has turned to Christ. Legalism, however, clouds the vision and gives false hope; it lures us to compare ourselves to others. The Truth compels us to compare ourselves to Christ, to see our need and fall at our Savior's feet.

What is the Pharisee's problem (verse 47)?

The Pharisee loves little because he confesses little; there is no love in legalism, neither is there a need for a Savior.

Please read verse 42 again. In what manner did the moneylender forgive the debts owed to Him?

He forgave them freely. Not grudgingly or hesitantly but freely. Perhaps you are like the sinful woman (I know I have been); perhaps you have sinned greatly and wonder if the Lord wants a woman or a man like you. The answer is yes. No matter what your sin—drugs, immorality, abuse, lying, cheating, stealing—the degree to which you have used your life for evil, Christ can use it for good. Like the moneylender in the parable, Jesus also freely offers *us* His forgiveness. Hidden within the Greek word for *freely* are hints of *delight, pleasure* and *joy*. Jesus *delights* to offer His grace to us. It brings Him great *joy* when we accept His gift of forgiveness. Do not hang back in shame; let us do as the sinful woman. She took her sin to the feasting table of Christ. Jesus then invited her to "...taste and see that the Lord is good." He is the bread of life and the living water. The woman, whose life has been a famine of sin, is about to enter into a season of feasting.

Please read verses 48-49 again.

Jesus announces what the sinful woman has been longing to hear—"Your sins are forgiven." According to BLB *forgiven* means "to leave behind, to expire, to no longer keep as a companion, to no longer hinder, to give up a debt, to leave behind in order to go to another place."

Please fill in your name at the beginning of each of the following phrases:

_____, your sin has been left behind.

_____, your sin has expired—it no longer has a hold on you.

_____, your sin no longer hinders you; you are free to be whom God created you to be.

_____, your sin has been left behind so you can reach your Promised Land.

Please take a moment to thank your Heavenly Father for His lavish forgiveness. Now please read verse 48 again.

How did the Pharisees react when they heard Jesus' announcement in verse 48?

The Pharisees were shocked...forgiveness without an animal sacrifice...forgiveness without priestly mediation...but Jesus is the Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice and the Great High Priest. The Pharisees scrupulously kept every outward letter of the Law, but the Law without faith is powerless. For it is not the keeping of the Law that saves but faith in the One who gives the law.

What else does Jesus announce in verse 50?

He announces that the sinful woman is now saved. She is forgiven and saved. In the presence of the law biding legalistic Pharisees, Jesus announces that the sinful woman is forgiven and saved—not by works, not by the law, not by a clean record, not by family history—but by faith. Not by faith in her works, or by faith in her *faith* but by faith in her Savior.

Please take a moment to scan all of chapter 7 and list the main events of this chapter.

Jesus goes to the home of a Roman and a gentile, He conquers death, He cures sickness, He casts out demons and He ministers to the poor. These events take place at the very beginning of Jesus public ministry, when He is laying the foundation for the work of the Kingdom of God. Finally, this chapter closes with the greatest work of all—the forgiveness of sin. By these wondrous works and healings, Jesus challenges many of the traditions the Pharisees and reveals that salvation is not won by the Law but by faith.

Why didn't the sinful woman take her offering to the feet of the religious leaders, the Pharisees? Because she knew that the legalistic code of the Pharisees did not offer any hope, grace, love or second chances for sinners like her self. In the eyes of the Pharisees, she was beyond redemption. Thankfully, grace is more powerful than works. I am also encouraged that she didn't avoid Jesus due to the presence of the Pharisees. Surely the Pharisees looked upon her with judgment and condemnation, but somehow the sinful woman knew that in Christ she would find salvation. Her Savior was all that mattered.

Two people talked with Jesus that evening; one to trap him, the other to worship Him. Two people came to the table that night; one fell at His feet, the other sat as His equal. The woman brought her many sins and flaws and found redemption. The Pharisee brought his pride and self-righteous deeds and was left unfulfilled. Jesus had a message for them *both*—all are in equal need of a Savior and all are welcome at the table of the Lord.

God bless you.

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[i][i] Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *parabolē* (Strong's 3850)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2010. 16 Aug 2010. <<http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G3850&t=KJV>>