

PARABLES OF JESUS

THE TWO DEBTORS - LUKE 7:36-50

- A. Jesus was invited to a meal at a Pharisees house (36), *One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.*
1. Introductory Notes
 - a. In chapter 7
 - 1) Jesus healed a centurion's servant.
 - 2) Jesus raised a widow's son from the dead.
 - 3) John the Baptist sought to confirm that Jesus is the Messiah.
 - b) There is a similar episode recorded in Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9, but it is a separate occasion.
 2. Jesus accepted an invitation to dinner from a Pharisee although most religious leaders had rejected Him.
 3. Thomas Constable, *He dealt with people as individuals. Simon appears to have been a critic rather than a disciple of His. Nevertheless Jesus accepted his invitation.*
- B. An uninvited guests honors Jesus (37-39)
1. A woman known as a sinner entered the house to anoint Jesus' feet (37-38), *And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.*
 - a. It is not known why the woman was described as a sinner.
 - 1) Probably, she was part of society that the Pharisees considered as those who did not keep the law.
 - 2) Of course, the Pharisees could not keep God's law but they made show of their man-made laws.
 - b. It was not unusual for uninvited guests to appear at a dinner when a rabbi was present.
 - 1) Social custom allowed needy people to come eat leftovers.
 - 2) This woman exhibited her purpose for attending was to honor Jesus.
 - a) Had she met Jesus before and received blessing from Him?
 - b) Had she seen what He could do and had placed her faith in Him?
 - 1] Jesus had just healed a man of physical illness.
 - 2] He had just raised a man from the dead.
 - 3] Maybe, these events gave her hope that Jesus could meet her needs.
 2. The host thought that Jesus could not be a prophet because a prophet would know that the woman was a sinner (39), *Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner."*
 - a. The Pharisee concluded that Jesus could not be a prophet because He allowed this sinful woman to touch Him.
 - 1) The touch of a sinner would bring ceremonial defilement.
 - 2) According to Pharisaic tradition, even the touch of a woman was considered to cause ceremonial defilement.
 - b. Note Matthew 15:10-11, *And he called the people to him and said to them, "Hear and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person."*
- C. Jesus responded to the Pharisee's thought with a parable (40-43)
1. Jesus told the Pharisee He had something to say to him (40), *And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."*
 - a. Simon would be surprised when Jesus told the Pharisee a parable that dealt with his thoughts.
 - b. The Pharisee responded by politely calling Jesus, *teacher*, less than a prophet.
 - c. He had just thought that Jesus could not tell sinners from the righteous, but he will find out that Jesus knew what was in his heart.

2. Jesus told him of two debtors whose debts were cancelled and how they should respond (41), *A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?*
 - a. A denarius was worth one day's wage for a farm worker.
 - b. One was forgiven more than a year's worth of debt and the other more than a month.
 - c. Jesus asked which of the two debtors should love the moneylender more.
 - d. Thomas Constable, *Jesus regard love as the expression of gratitude.*

3. The Pharisee said it must be the one who had the larger debt and Jesus agreed (43), *Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly."*
 - a. Simon reluctantly gave Jesus the answer he thought Jesus wanted to hear.
 - b. He might have thought Jesus was trying to trap him with the question.

- D. Jesus applied His teaching to the sinful woman (44-50)
 1. Jesus compared the actions of the sinful woman to those of the Pharisee (44-46)
 - a. The host didn't give Jesus water to wash His feet but the woman wet His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair (44), *Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.*
 - 1) Jesus made the sinful woman the focus of the parable and contrasted her behavior to Simon's behavior.
 - 2) She was the heroine and he was the villain.
 - 3) The things normally done for a guest by the host were not done by Simon but done to the extreme by the sinful woman.
 - a) Water to clean one's feet became tears wiped dry by the sinful woman's hair.
 - b) J. Dwight Pentecost, *Normally a guest would have prepared for such a banquet by bathing at the public bath, anointing the body with oil, and putting on clean clothing. In traveling from the bath to the banquet hall, the guest's feet would have become soiled; so it would have been necessary to sponge the feet before reclining at the banquet table. Courtesy demanded that a basin of water be provided by the host. But Simon the Pharisee had made no such provision for Christ.*
 - b. The host didn't give Jesus a simple greeting but the woman continually kissed His feet (45), *You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet.*
 - 1) A normal greeting was a kiss on the cheek which Simon didn't offer.
 - 2) The woman continually kissed Jesus' feet.
 - c. The host didn't anoint Jesus' head with oil but the woman anointed His feet (46), *You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.*
 - 1) A host would normally anoint the head of a guest with olive oil, inexpensive and plentiful.
 - 2) The sinful woman anointed Jesus' feet with an expensive ointment.
 - 3) John Martin, *It was a normal sign of respect to pour oil or perfume on someone's head. Perhaps the woman felt unworthy to anoint Jesus' head, so she anointed His feet. Such an act would have amounted to a large financial outlay for the woman who apparently was not wealthy.*
 - d. Thomas Constable, *The woman, however, had gone far beyond courtesy and had made unusual sacrifices for Jesus out of love.*
 2. Jesus' application of the parable (47-49)
 - a. The woman loved much because she had been forgiven of her many sins but he who is forgiven little, loves little (47), *Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.*
 - 1) The woman's great love for Jesus demonstrated the great forgiveness she had received.
 - a) Tom Constable, *Jesus did not mean that she had earned great forgiveness with her great love. Her love was the result of, not the reason for, her forgiveness.*
 - b) The response of the debtors was to what was done for them not what they did for the moneylender.

- 2) The contrast is with Simon who did not know Who Jesus truly is.
 - a) He not only didn't consider Jesus a prophet but felt there was nothing Jesus could do for him.
 - b) John Martin, *Simon saw himself as pure and righteous and therefore did not need to treat Jesus in a special manner.*
 - c) Probably, Simon didn't invite Jesus for a meal to learn of Who He was but to prove Who He was not.
 - d) J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Pharisee had not invited Christ into his home to honor Him but rather to observe Him. Perhaps Simon even hoped to find some accusation he could lodge against Christ.*

- b. Jesus told the woman that her sins were forgiven (48), ***And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."***
 - 1) The force of Jesus' statement is that her sins were forgiven and will remain forgiven.
 - 2) Her sins were forgiven before she entered the house because she had already placed her faith in Him.
 - 3) Tom Constable, *Her acts of love sprang from her sense of gratitude for having received forgiveness.*

- c. Those at the meal wondered Who Jesus was because He said her sins were forgiven (49), ***Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?"***
 - 1) Again, the authority of Jesus is in question.
 - 2) His authority to forgive sins is based on Who He is, God the Son.
 - 3) Who He is was authenticated by His authoritative teaching and His authority over sickness and death.

3. Jesus' instruction to the woman (50), ***And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."***
 - a. She has been saved by faith in Jesus not by her love for Jesus.
 - b. She is to go in peace because her peace was now based on God's forgiveness not the lack of peace based on the condemnation of self-righteous people.

CONCLUSION

- A. Jesus did not come to justify Himself by meeting others' expectations of Him; He came to justify sinners.
- B. We are all debtors to God but our debt is paid only if we acknowledge our need and accept Jesus' payment.
- C. Gratitude should be the evidence of a paid debt.

