

## Two Debtors

Lk. 7:36-50

### Introduction:

1. Have any of you ever owed anyone any money? To ask that question of this crowd is almost silly, like asking, “Is anyone in here still breathing?”
2. But most of us have always had the ability to pay back what was owed. Can you imagine owing money and not having the ability to pay it back? Maybe a few of you have been in that circumstance and can remember the embarrassment, the helpless feeling that you had, the vulnerability you felt, the uncertainty of not knowing what to do.
3. I want to share with you a story about a woman who found herself in this very circumstance and about a man who was in the circumstance and didn’t know it.
4. Reading of Lk. 7:36-39.

### Discussion:

#### I. The situation.

- A. Luke reports this event in a context dealing with people having difficulty understanding who Jesus was.
  1. John the Baptist sent a deputation (Lk. 7:18ff).
  2. Jesus used this as an opportunity to address the Pharisees rejecting John’s baptism (29ff) while the tax gatherers had accepted it.
  3. From there he talked about how he had been rejected (33-35).
- B. The account of this woman and the Pharisee becomes an illustration of just the kind of attitudes that Jesus has been contrasting.
- C. The Pharisees were known for their “religiousness.”
  1. They were especially concerned to know how to practice the law in real life circumstances and gave special consideration to working out details about how the law should be practiced in daily life.
  2. The term “Pharisee” denotes a separated person. Some debate exists over exactly what they had separated themselves from, but Scripture indicates that they certainly intended to keep themselves separated from sinners, even from touching them as this text implies.
  3. This particular Pharisee seems to have made a determination that if Jesus truly was a prophet he would know that the woman touching him was a sinner. His conclusion was that Jesus should not allow sinners to touch him.
- D. What happened next was a strange incident.
  1. Not that the Pharisee would invite Jesus to his house, but that this woman would intrude into the circumstance.
  2. The text describes her as a sinner; NASB margin says she was “an immoral woman.” Some have taken this to mean that she was a prostitute. The word in the Greek is “hamatolos” and simply means one who misses the mark. She is known in the community as a sinner.
  3. This woman comes into the Pharisee’s house with an alabaster vial of perfume

and begins to anoint Jesus with it. Very costly (Matt. 26:7, 12; Mk. 14:3-4; Jn. 11:2-5).

4. From what I have read such vials of perfume may have been passed down from generation to generation as family heirlooms. Its price the disciples said was high. They thought what happened here was wasteful and it should have sold and the money given to the poor.
5. Apparently everyone in the house is incensed by what is occurring except Jesus.
6. Why is this woman doing this?
  - a. She is overwhelmed with sorrow for her sin.
  - b. While perhaps having some wealth in the perfume, she realizes spiritual bankruptcy (Cf. Matt. 5:3-4).
  - c. She is crying over her sin.
  - d. "How do you know this?"
  - e. Read the rest of the account (Lk. 8:40-48).
  - f. Her sorrow for her sin stands in radical contrast to the Pharisee's perception of himself.

II. Before you are too hard on the Pharisee, recognize that the Lord would extend forgiveness to him and not only the woman.

- A. The moneylender forgave both the one who owed 500 denarii and the one who owed 50.
- B. The Lord forgives both those who recognize more sin and those who recognize less.
- C. Some of us are probably more like the Pharisee in our perception of ourselves, than we are the woman.
- D. It is the graciousness of the Lord that frees this woman.
  1. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
  2. "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted."
  3. The message of the parable of the laborers (Matt. 20:1-15).
- E. A woman who is a sinner can be forgiven. A self-righteous Pharisee can be forgiven. But it is all on the grace of God.

III. Faith rather than self-righteousness results in forgiveness.

- A. This woman doesn't have a leg to stand on and she knows it.
- B. Simon, the Pharisee, on the other hand thinks he does.
- C. She is weeping, anointing Jesus, and loving much. Simon is oblivious, dull, to what is happening. Dull to the expression of kindness to Jesus.
- D. Faith here in this text is dependence for forgiveness.
- E. The woman cries out, "God be merciful to me the sinner."
- F. Are you willing to humble yourself like this woman?

IV. Are you willing to forgive others? The Pharisee was not. He would condemn the woman.

- A. In our dealings with sinners do we demand that they grovel before we will forgive them?
- B. Do we demand that sinners "beg our forgiveness."? Or are we willing to look for any sign of acknowledgement of wrong and validate it.

1. Yes, people need to give up their pride.
  2. But are we demanding they give up their pride to us?
  3. Or are we demanding that they give up their pride to sin?
- C. It is O.K. to be like this woman.
- D. It is not O.K. to be like this Pharisee.
- E. Can you accept this woman, and love her as Jesus did?
- F. Can you forgive me if I am this woman? How can I confess my sins to you if I perceive you to be like this Pharisee to me?

Conclusion:

1. Do you see yourself in these two people?
2. Do you see yourself as a sinner?
3. Do you see yourself as a Pharisee when it comes to the sins of others?
4. Jesus is ready to forgive. Can you be like him?