

Lesson 247

A Sinful Woman Anoints Jesus' Feet

Story Elements



- **Text:** Luke 7:36-50
- **Setting:** circa AD 28 in Galilee
- **Characters:** God, Jesus, the disciples, Simon the Pharisee, and a sinful woman
- **Plot:** A sinful woman expresses her gratefulness for being forgiven while a self-righteous Pharisee scowls at her display of affection and doubts Christ's deity.
- **Key word(s):** " _____ " (vv 47, 48, 49) – Forgiveness is the focus of the passage. We see the woman, aware of forgiveness given, overcome with love and gratitude, and the Pharisee, unaware of forgiveness need, hardened in heart and unbelief.
- **Climax:** **Luke 7:39** *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.* This verse sets the stage for the illustration Jesus will share, and it shows us what Jesus saw in the Pharisee's heart.

Invitation

1. (v 36) A Pharisee named Simon (cf. v 40) invited Jesus to his house for dinner; some would question Simon's motivation since the Pharisees were mostly antagonistic towards Jesus. Probably, it was merely "in accordance with the manners of the time if the leading Pharisee invited the distinguished 'Teacher' to his table. As such he undoubtedly treated Him."¹

APPLICATION➔ Matthew Henry notes that Jesus "our Lord Jesus accepted his invitation, *went into his house, and sat down to meat*, that they might see he took the same liberty with Pharisees that he did with publicans, in hopes of *doing them* _____."²

2. (v 37) A woman with a reputation as a sinner came to the dinner (uninvited) because she heard that Jesus *sat at meat in the Pharisee's house*.
 - (a) How she gained access to the house is a detail left unmentioned – perhaps she knew the servants.
 - (b) She brought with her an alabaster³ box (or vial) which was a common means of carrying _____.

Adoration

3. (v 38) To properly picture the scene, we must first understand that in that time and culture, dining was done while _____, with heads toward a table in the center and feet towards the outside. With this in view we can understand how she *stood at his feet behind him weeping*.
4. Notice the expressions of her love to Christ: she **wept**; she **washed his feet** with her tears; she **wiped her tears** with her hair; she **kissed** his feet; she **anointed** his feet with her perfume.

APPLICATION➔ "All true penitents have a dear love to the Lord Jesus."⁴ This woman's affection puts many a Christian to shame – we, who have so much more knowledge of Christ's life, death, and resurrection than she did, have so little love compared to what she did.

¹ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971) Book III, 564.

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 1847.

³ Alabaster is a soft white rock. The Greek word *alabastron*, referred to bottles carved out of the same and used for medicines or perfumes.

⁴ Henry.

5. (v 39) Simon recoiled at the woman's unrestrained affection and, in the pride of his heart, passed judgment on them both—the woman because she fell short of his standard of righteousness, and Jesus because He fell short of his expectation of a _____.

Illustration

6. (vv 40-42) “And yet Prophet he was also, and in far fuller sense than Simon could have imagined.”⁵ Jesus knew Simon’s thought, but instead of rebuking his host, Jesus offered an illustration:
- (a) Two men owed a certain creditor – the one owed _____ pence⁶ and the other owed 50.
 - (b) The creditor frankly⁷ (graciously) forgave them both.
 - (c) Jesus applies the illustration by ending with a question: *Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?*
 - (d) (v 43) Simon answered correctly: *I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most.*

Application

7. (v 44-46) Jesus then drove his point home by comparing Simon’s cold reception to the woman’s warm affection.

Charles Spurgeon: “Did not this woman unbind the luxuriant tresses of her head to make a towel? Did she not, instead of pitcher and basin, use the fountains of her eyes, no, the fountains of her heart, with which to bathe His feet? And then for ointment she broke the alabaster box and kissed, and kissed, and kissed, and kissed again, those dear, dear feet of Him who had brought salvation to her!”⁸

8. (vv 48-50) Jesus publicly declared what the woman privately felt: *thy sins are forgiven*. She did not earn forgiveness through affection, but it was the _____ she knew that gave rise to the affection she displayed.

Spurgeon: “The food of love is a sense of sin, and a grateful sense of forgiveness. If you and I felt more deeply the guilt of our past lives, we would love Jesus Christ better. If we have but a clearer sense that our sins deserve the deepest hell, that Christ suffered what we ought to have suffered in order to redeem us from our iniquities, we should not be such cold-hearted creatures as we are.”⁹

9. (v 49) Simon and his fellow guests balked at the Savior’s words. Sadly, they did not understand that Jesus was not just a teacher or a prophet, he is the Teacher of teachers and the Prophet of prophets. He alone is the One that _____ *sins also*.

Answer Key: key word(s) “forgiven” • 1. → good • 2. b) perfume • 3. Reclining • 5. prophet • 6. b) 500 • 8. forgiveness • 9. forgiveth

⁵ Edersheim, 567.

⁶ A *pence* (Gr: denarius) was about a day’s wage for the common laborer. Five hundred pence would be nearly two years’ worth of wages.

⁷ Today, the word *frankly* means *honestly* or even *bluntly*, but an older understanding of the word is “Free; without conditions or compensation; as a *frank* gift.” (Webster’s 1828 Dictionary)

⁸ Charles Spurgeon, “Our Place – At Jesus’ Feet”, Sermon #2066, <https://www.spurgeongems.org/sermon/chs2066.pdf>

⁹ Charles Spurgeon, “The Woman Who Was a Sinner”, Sermon # 801, <https://www.spurgeongems.org/sermon/chs801.pdf>