

## Forgiven, For She Loved

A Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus for dinner. As they reclined at the table, a woman, who had lived a sinful life, came into the house, knelt behind Jesus, weeping and kissing his feet. She dried them with her hair and anointed them with perfume. The Pharisee was shocked and whispered his doubt in Jesus. But Jesus told him: "I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much."

Jesus forgave this woman because she loved much. What did Jesus mean by using these thought-provoking words? Did the woman gain Jesus' favour because she gave her love to him? Or was her love the result and evidence of her receiving Jesus' forgiveness?

If the former is true, some readers of this letter may be tempted to embrace Roman Catholicism, for the magisterium teaches that you can merit all the graces needed to attain eternal life. However, if the latter is correct, Catholic readers should seriously consider whether they have been misled in a matter of vital importance, namely, the way of salvation.

Read the Bible passage ([Luke 7:36-50](#)) carefully and then consider the following observations.

### 1. She had nothing to pay her debt

Jesus told a story to Simon to explain why the woman was showing so much love and gratitude. It was about a certain moneylender who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii (a denarius was about a day's wage), and the other fifty. Even though they had nothing with which to repay him, he freely forgave them both. He then asked, "Now which of them will love him most?"

Simon rightly answered that the one forgiven most will love more. But we notice that neither one of them had the means to settle their debt. "They had nothing with which to repay."

Thus, the sinful woman could not have merited Jesus' favour by her expression of love. Our legal debt to God cannot be paid with acts of love. Like all of us, she had nothing to pay the debt of her sins.

### 2. She was forgiven freely

Jesus stressed the debtors' bankruptcy; he also underlined the generosity and goodness of their creditor. He could have demanded their punishment; but instead he freely cancelled all their debt. "He freely forgave them both." They did not work to pay off their debt; both were forgiven gratis!

Jesus forgave the woman *freely* without any payment by her; she could contribute nothing, not even the love she lavished so liberally upon him.

### 3. The woman's love followed after forgiveness

We cannot mistake the meaning of Jesus' words if we read them in context. He said, "Therefore I tell you, her sins have been forgiven – for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

Forgiveness comes first and it results in gratitude and love in the forgiven person. He who is forgiven little will, in response, love little; whoever is forgiven more, will be more grateful. That's why the woman loved Jesus so much!

Her sins were “forgiven - for she loved much” simply means that her great love proves that she had been forgiven many sins. Her exorbitant love was the natural response to the grace of Jesus.

#### **4. She was saved by faith**

Simon was offended at the sight of the woman at Jesus' feet. The Pharisee could only see a prostitute, but Jesus saw the tears of repentance and the clean heart of a converted, believing woman. So Jesus comforted the woman and reassured her that she was forgiven.

We have Jesus' explicit statement that the woman "was saved by faith". He did not tell her, “Your love has merited my grace.” Rather, he interpreted her love as the concrete evidence of her trust in him. He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.” She was saved by grace, through faith, and not because of her works.

*Well then, what is your conclusion?*

If you admit that you owe a debt to God which you cannot pay, do you trust in the Lord Jesus alone for complete forgiveness? If you claim that you are saved, is your heart overflowing with love for your Saviour? Can the Lord say about you: “You are forgiven because you love me so much”? If he can't say that, your profession of faith is empty, and neither will he say, “Your faith has saved you.”

And if you say that you believe in Jesus and yet attempt to work in order to merit his grace, you have missed the gospel message. You need to realize that you have nothing to repay your legal debt to God; you still need to experience the magnificence of his amazing grace. Jesus' full and complete forgiveness is free, received by faith, and not in exchange for the tokens of your good works.

Your love for Jesus should be the result and not the cause of his saving grace.