

Tears Of Repentance

As we read scripture truths like the ones we'll read in a moment here in Luke chapter 7, several questions should come to our minds. Questions such as, "As we consider all the many people that we encounter, what are our thoughts about them? Do we sometimes feel a judgmental spirit rising up within us as we become aware of the unsavory lifestyles of some of those people?"

What would be our thoughts if one or more of them visited in this church? Would we want them to be here? What would be our thoughts and what should be our response if while they were here, one of them began to weep and to show other expressions of a broken and contrite heart.

Turn with me to Luke chapter 7 and let's read about a similar circumstance that took place within the ministry of the Lord Jesus, and let's learn what His response was to the people within that circumstance.

And folks also, as we read these words, may we always remember that such encounters as these are never random, and neither do they catch the Lord Jesus by surprise. God is sovereign, the "first cause" over all that takes place. And if we will look carefully, if we will have eyes to see and ears to hear, we will clearly see God's Hand within all that takes place within this special encounter.

Read along with me beginning with verse 36 of Luke chapter 7.

36 One of the Pharisees asked him (the Lord Jesus) to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. 37 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, 38 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. 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." 40 And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."

41 "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon

answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." 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. 45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." 48 And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" 50 And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:36-50)

These are very mysterious words, words that you and I must take great care in the understanding that God intends for us to take from them. While this is an actual event that took place within the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus, I am also comfortable in the understanding that the Holy Spirit drew this woman into this moment of worship of the Lord Jesus to not only give glory to Him, but to also bring about the responses that we see taking place within the hearts and minds of those people gathered there that day.

And even more, to bring about the responses that can take place in your and my heart and mind as we read these words. And responses do take place! We can't read words like this without having a reaction to them.

And unfortunately for some of us, our responses can be much like those seen in these Scribes and Pharisees gathered there that day. Why is that so? It's because throughout our growing and learning years, we have been taught about such women as we read about here and about their sinful behaviors. This woman who was washing Jesus's feet had led a sinful lifestyle, a life that the "Good Christian Principles" taught in our bible legitimately declare to be wrong.

But here, within the words of this passage, God is revealing to us that something more is taking place within this woman, something that extends on beyond her life circumstances, and on beyond the moral laws and traditions that those Scribes and Pharisees had adopted, and also on beyond the set of "Good Christian Principles" that you and I have adopted.

Here, we see evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit taking place, the special “work” that Jesus would later speak about in John chapter 16 where He said,
⁸ And when he (the Holy Spirit) comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment. (John 16:8)

Here, we see that the Holy Spirit had already begun His work in this woman’s heart.

And also, here we see God the Father at work. Listen to these familiar words that we have quoted so often of late from John chapter 6, where the Lord Jesus said

⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. (John 6:44)

This very sinful woman had been convicted of her sins and had been drawn to the Lord Jesus with “tears of repentance”. And not only was this woman showing her repentance, she was unashamedly “worshipping” the Lord Jesus, glorifying Him as He should rightfully be glorified.

And on beyond her worship, she was showing forth the kind of love that God calls us to have for Him, that we should “love Him with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind and all of our strength.” Praise be to God!

And that was the meaning and the intent of the question that Jesus asked of Simon, the Pharisee. Verse 39,

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.” 40 And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.”

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Folks, we must remember as we read these words that even in His human condition, Jesus was still truly God, and He knew every thought and every motive of everyone present there that day. Jesus knew the judgmental hearts

of the Scribes and the Pharisees. And He knew the repentant heart of the woman. And He knew the deep heart-felt love that the woman had for Him.

And knowing the thoughts of the Scribes and the Pharisees, Jesus knew that their love for Him and their receiving of Him and His truth only extended as far as their laws and their traditions permitted their minds to go.

And so, the woman was forgiven much. But the Scribes and the Pharisees were forgiven little.

And also, knowing the thoughts of the Scribes and the Pharisees, Jesus knew that they were questioning in their minds about His having the authority to forgive sin, that only God could forgive sin. And without stopping to dispute with them about their unbelief, He simply went ahead and exercised His authority as God and forgave the woman her sins.

And also, folks, for you and me, these words and this woman's behavior as she worshipped the Lord Jesus, clearly reveal to us that it is the desire of our Lord that our relationship with Him and our knowledge of Him go far and beyond the measure of just our following of some "Good Christian Principles" that we have been taught. He intends that every part of our relationship with Him be of the greatest intensity and of the deepest of love . . . that we should love Him with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind and all of our strength, nothing less and nothing in-between.

We see that command clearly expressed to us all throughout these scriptures. One occasion that quickly comes to mind is the conversation that Jesus had with the Apostle Peter, there on the beach, just before Jesus was taken up into heaven. There, Jesus asked Peter repeatedly, "Peter, do you love me?" "How much do you love me?" "Do you love me more than you love these other men?"

The unspoken meaning within Jesus' words was, "Peter, you must love Me more than you love these other men, even more than your closest of friends. You must love Me with an intensity that is far greater than any love you have ever experienced before. You must love me with a Spirit-filled love that permeates and saturates every part of your being, your heart, your soul, your mind and your strength."

A question . . . Why is such an intense love for Christ so important, so necessary, so required of us? It's because God truly is a jealous God!" Not jealous in the sense that you and I understand jealousy to be, but jealous in the sense that a "lover" desires the love between him and His "beloved" to be absolutely intimate, unshared, undivided, exclusive in every way to just the two of them. God is most wise and He knows that the very moment love begins to be shared outside of a relationship, even in the slightest of ways, the unity between the two lovers will suffer loss.

In salvation, there is a "mysterious union" formed between the Lord Jesus and those of us who are being saved, the union of Jesus, our lover, and us His beloved bride, a union that binds us forever and eternally together, a oneness that even the slightest of variance in our love for Him can bring great damage to the relationship.

Often, from our human perspective, we won't even realize that anything is taking place, but that is not so with the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus immediately feels even the slightest loss in the intensity of our love, and it is ever so painful to Him.

. . . But how can that be so? How can He do that? He can do that because He truly does live within our hearts. His Spirit resides deeply within every fiber of our being and He senses everything that we sense. He feels everything that we feel.

He knows the very moment our heart begins to go astray from Him. And He knows all the possibilities and problems that a wandering heart can bring to the relationship. And so, His Spirit is continually calling out to our spirit, "Beloved, love me, love me as I love you"!

Knowing all of this then, as you and I are given this very intimate look into the life and the love of this dear woman who is showering her adoration upon the person of the Lord Jesus, we must ask ourselves the question, "How much do I myself love Jesus?" "What is the intensity of the love that resides within my heart for Him, right at this moment?" "Is my heart "one" with His heart or is my heart being shared? Do I love Him, but also love others and love other things with a similar or even greater intensity?"

Many would ask, "But is it not right that I love others, especially my wife, my husband, my children?" And the answer is, yes, of course! You and I are to love

them, and love them even far more than we do. But the love that we have for them must only be the kind that flows out from the love that we have for the Lord Jesus.

That's because, love that does not flow out from our love for the Lord Jesus is only a mediocre imitation and will never last. That is being proven out daily before our eyes as we see love relationships between husbands and wives, family members, neighbors and others being torn apart for the slightest of reasons.

The strength of human love is simply not capable of truly binding people together. That is why Jesus ask Peter the question, "Do you love me more than these, your friends?"

And that is why we need the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the love that is present within the Holy Spirit that enables our spirit to love the Lord Jesus in the way and with the intensity that Jesus desires of us.

The words of 1 John 4 have far more profound truth within them than we first realize. In those words, we are told that "God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him".

In these words, God is saying to us that He Himself is actually the love that we will feel and express. And that if we ever hope to have real and true love for Him and for each other, then we must desire for Him to abide every moment within us, and we must desire to abide every moment within Him.

Simply put, God really is love. Without Him, real love does not exist. Yes, we can feel emotions that we call love, but without God, those emotions are only an "image" of love and not the "real thing".

Here in the mysterious behavior of this woman, we find a deep and passionate expression of that real love . . . a Spirit-filled love, love that is steeped in humility and knows no bounds.

Without concern for how she might look to other people, this dear woman humbled herself and worshipped and adored the Lord Jesus with all she had within her, with all of her heart, with all of her soul and with all of her strength.

In her adoration of the Lord Jesus, she had no sense of shame for her behavior, because there truly is no shame in Godly love.

This was real love folks, love that you and I might never experience unless we are willing to take the same path that this dear woman chose, a path that began with deep and abiding "repentance". We know that to be so because Jesus immediately spoke about her sin. He said,

⁴⁷Therefore I say to you, her sins, *which are many*, are forgiven. (Luke 7:47)

Again, we must remember that Jesus was able to perceive the hearts, the minds, the very thoughts of everyone He met. His words about this woman were not just presumptions or hearsay. He knew her intimate thoughts and He knew that she truly was a sinner, many times over. But we can easily see from the woman's behavior, and from the words the Lord Jesus spoke about her, the woman was truly repentant for her sins.

And that is the way it must always be with you and me. We must know and "own" our sin as our own, never an excuse, never blaming it on others or the world or our financial condition or any other cause. And we must especially not seek to minimize our sinful behavior by saying such defensive words as, "Oh I know I have made mistakes". Folks, sin is not just a "mistake" we've made. Our sin is a personal breach of God's holiness, and its guilt must be owned by us and dealt with through repentance.

This dear woman was doing exactly that. She was contrite and penitent in her behavior. And the Lord Jesus, knowing her heart, said

⁴⁷Therefore I say to you, her sins, *which are many*, are forgiven. (Luke 7:47)

Penitent behavior is not something that we modern-day Christians often like to show. We instead like to throw up quick little prayers like, "Lord forgive us for our many sins", but then we leave our penitence at that.

But in this woman, we see something far different. In her we see the perfect combination, a humble, broken and contrite heart, deep repentance and loving adoration. The sorrow for her sins and the intimate love that she had for the Lord Jesus was proven out by her actions and behavior.

And I must tell you that her behavior should bring great conviction and grief to not only our own hearts, but also to the hearts of most all modern day Christians.

How often, in our worship services, do we see humble, abiding, intimate love for the person of the Lord Jesus being so unashamedly expressed? Seldom!

We instead manage to remain proper throughout our worship services, daring only to do those things that are “decently and in order”.

In all honesty, during most of our worship services, we in the mainline denominations might look very much like the Pharisee spoken about here in these words.

A question for each and for all of us . . . are we truly satisfied with the manner and the intensity with which we love and worship the Lord Jesus, or should we be more like this woman. Should we in this church dare go beyond the norm and without concern for what others might think of us, freely lift our hands in praise, worshipping and adoring the Lord Jesus?

Are we willing to love Him that much? If we are, then may I suggest that we begin as this dear woman did, first by recognizing the depths and the wretchedness of our own sins and then repenting of them? Her sins were many, so are ours.

Jesus' words give us the understanding that it was because she recognized how much she was forgiven that she was able to so freely and humbly feel no shame in her adoration of her Lord and Savior.

If you and I will only permit our hearts to see and to know and to own the guilt of our own sinfulness, and if we will fall on our knees and beg the Lord Jesus to forgive us and cleanse us from that sinfulness, then perhaps we also will do as this dear woman did and unashamedly begin to worship and adore the Lord Jesus.

As we close, listen carefully to these words given in 1 John 1.

‡If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

May we pray.

