

Facts About Forgiveness

Luke 7:36-50

Pastor John Miller

I want you to follow with me beginning in verse 36.

Luke says that “One of the Pharisees desired Him,” that is Jesus, “that He would eat with him.” Jesus was always getting invited to dinner. And I take note that Jesus never turned down a dinner invitation; it's Biblical. So Jesus is invited again for dinner, and He went into the Pharisee's house and He sat down to the meal. “And behold,” verse 37, “a woman in the city, which was a sinner...” By that statement, it means that she was a prostitute or harlot. “And when she knew that Jesus sat at the dinner in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood at His feet behind Him. She was weeping, and she began to wash His feet with her tears and did wipe them with the hairs of her head and to kiss His feet and anointed them with ointment. Now when the Pharisee, which had bidden Him, saw it, he spake within himself.” In other words, he didn't verbalize this audibly; he was just thinking in his own heart and mind. And he's saying, “This man” referring to Jesus “if he were a prophet, would have no doubt known what manner of woman this is that touches Him, for she is a sinner.”

Simon the Pharisee, and his name is Simon; we see that in verse 40. He kind of like, “Man, if this guy was really a prophet, he would know what kind of woman that is touching Him, and He wouldn't allow that to go on. I mean, He's getting cooties, He's being contaminated here.” Now why did Simon the Pharisee invite Jesus over for dinner? The answer, we don't know. You go, “Why did you ask the question, if you don't know the answer?” Because what we do know is why Jesus accepted the invitation. You know why Jesus accepted the invitation? Because the Bible says this, that “He has come to seek and to save that which is lost.” Simon the Pharisee was lost, and Jesus felt that He should go to his house, and that He should share with him and He should seek to reach him and bring him into the Kingdom of God. But when He gets to Simon's house, this whole episode goes down.

Now, at that time, whenever someone would—of prominence—would have a meal and invite other rabbis—this is a little footnote of the custom of the times—it's kind of interesting—the people in the city or the town were allowed to gather around this—the perimeter of the table—sometimes either inside or outside—and they would listen to the conversation that would take place at dinner.

So, if in your home you invited a prominent rabbi over, he would go, “Oh, rabbi Hallel, I was eating at Simon's house, let's go listen” and they would eavesdrop in on the conversation that would take place at dinnertime. So I'm guessing that others were gathered around the perimeter.

Now, when you showed up at someone's house, there were some customs that you would do. Number one, you would wash their feet. Number two, you would kiss them or give them a greeting—like we see in the Middle East today—sometimes they'll kiss on both cheeks or, in

Europe today, where there's the kiss and men kiss men. It's kind of like in our western culture, it's the handshake; for them, it's a kiss. They're very expressive. And then they would also anoint their head with oil. It was a cheap, inexpensive olive oil, but it was a refreshing oil that they would pour on their head. Now, that was the custom. It was kind of like if someone comes over to your house, you say, "Can I take your coat?" And you hang it up. "Would you like something to drink?" And you invite them to sit down. If someone comes over to your house, you don't just go, "Hi. Well, what do you want? What are you doing?" "Hi. Would you like something to drink? Would you like to sit down?" And you invite them into the living room. It's just kind of customary. So they had the customs.

And so Jesus was invited over to Simon's house for this meal. And in the middle of this meal—verse 37—"Look" or "Behold a woman in the city...." Again, that phrase indicates she was a woman of the streets. We would call it a "street walker." She was a prostitute. And she shows up, and Simon is a Pharisee.

Now, a Pharisee was a sect of the Jews, the most strict, religious sect, of the Jewish people. As a matter of fact, the word "Pharisee" literally means "separated one." And they were a group of Jews that separated themselves from the world to do nothing other than to keep every jot and tittle of the Mosaic Law. Their whole life was all about being religious, so they were like super religious. They were considered the most spiritual individuals anywhere around. And they were marked off by their fancy robes and the way they dressed. And when they went to the city, many of the Pharisees would pull up, tighten their robes around them, lest their robes brush up against a woman and they become contaminated. You know, they even have what is called "the bruised and bleeding Pharisees." And this is not a joke, bruised and bleeding Pharisees—they were so spiritual that when they went out in the public streets, they didn't want to even look at a woman, so they closed their eyes as they walked through the streets. And they smacked into walls. Really. And they bashed into the walls and they'd feel their way around. They were all bruised and bleeding because they were so holy. And they'd get together in their little holy club and they'd glory in their bumps. You know, "Look at that bump. I'm so spiritual." So you couldn't get more devoted or more spiritual.

By the way, Paul the Apostle, before his conversion, was a Pharisee. He was very religious. And thank God he was saved by God's grace. Sadly, Simon doesn't have that experience.

So when they would come in to eat—and I've shared this with you before, but it's kind of cool—they wouldn't sit at a high table on a chair with their legs up under the table and eat off the table. The table was only a couple feet off the ground. And it was shaped like a horseshoe. And they would lay around the outside of the table on a bed. So the table was horseshoe shaped, and there was a bed around the outside of the table. And the opening on the inside the servant could come in, and he could serve the people around the table. And then they would lay on this dinner bed. And on this dinner bed, they would lay on their left side. And then they would reach over with their right hand, take the food off the table, they would roll backwards and they would drop it in their mouth.

I like this. Because whenever I've had a big meal, it's time to, like, "Lead me to my bed. Lead me to my bed," you know. I remember one time many, many, many years ago in my bachelor days, when I was quite young, I had a friend get married, and we had a bachelor party, and they made spaghetti that night. And it was good spaghetti. And I OD'd on spaghetti. I couldn't stop eating. And, you know, how when you eat a lot of spaghetti, it swells in your stomach? It was, like, "Whoa, oh man," I was in so much pain, I literally could not go home. And I'll never forget this. I'm like, "Dude, I've gotta crash here tonight." "You gotta crash here tonight?" "Ya, I ate too much spaghetti. Can I sleep on your couch?" And I literally slept on this dude's couch, because I, just like, aah, aah, and then I repented of my sin and asked God to forgive me. And you go, "Why are you sharing that with me?" I just thought I'd share that with you. Just to bless you.

And so Jesus is laying on the bed, and as the result of this dinner bed, His feet would be extended off the end of the bed. And when this sinful woman came in, she rushes up to the feet of Jesus. She falls on her knees, and she breaks out sobbing in tears. The word "wept" there indicates that she sobbed convulsively. So much so that she was washing His soiled feet—that we did not see Simon provide as a custom, should have—she's washing His soiled feet with her tears. The depths of her soul were broken up, and in repentance and sorrow and love and forgiveness, she is weeping over the feet of Jesus. And then she did something that in that custom and in that time no decent woman would ever do; she takes down her hair. And she takes her hair, and she begins to wipe the feet of Jesus. So she washed them with her tears, and then she takes down her hair, and she begins to wipe them with her hair. I don't know about you, but this is one of the most beautiful pictures in all the Gospels.

And then she has this—my King James Bible says—"alabaster box." It's really a jar. Alabaster's a kind of stone. So it's a stone jar, and she has perfume. She probably used it in her trade, in street walking to entice those men. And it was perfume, very, very costly. And she broke the head off this alabaster jar, and then she poured it all over the feet of Jesus. She was lavishing her love. She wasn't ashamed in public to let Jesus know, "I love You. and I praise You for what You have done for me." And she wept and she washed and she anointed the feet of Jesus with her perfume.

Now, Jesus used this opportunity to teach a parable. It's in verse 40 to 43. Let's look at it. "Jesus answering said unto him, 'Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee.'" Now remember Simon had thought in his mind—he hadn't verbally expressed it—that this was a sinful woman, and that if Jesus were really a prophet, He wouldn't allow her to touch Him. So He says, "Simon," verse 40, "I've got something to say to you." And He said, "Master, say on." "There was a certain creditor which owed two debts—or had "two debtors," excuse me—"The one owed 500 pence and the other owed 50." Now, a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. It doesn't mean the story actually happened, but one thing about a parable, it's always real to life. It's not make-believe; it's taken from real life. But it's a hypothetical story that is used to convey a spiritual meaning.

So there were two debtors, and the one owed 500 pence. The word "pence" is "denarii," which

is a day's wage, so 500 days wage. And the other owed 50. And when they had nothing to pay—I want you to notice that in verse 42—the man who was owed the money freely forgave them both. Jesus said to Simon, “Tell Me therefore which of them will love him the most.” Now Simon answered and said—and I think Simon said this with a little bit of difficulty, because he knew that the story was aimed at his attitude—he said, “I suppose that he to whom forgave the most.” “And He said unto him, ‘Thou hast rightly judged.’”

So Jesus knew what was going on in Simon's mind. Did you know that Jesus knows your every thought? Every thought that goes through your mind. And believe me, we have some crazy thoughts go through our mind. Like, “Where did that come from?” you know. Jesus knows what you're thinking. Jesus knows what you're thinking right now. Knew what you were thinking before you came to church. And He actually knows what you're going to think before you even think it. That's pretty amazing. God knows everything. There is nothing that is hidden from God. The Bible teaches that God is omniscient. “Omniscient” means “om” meaning “all” “niscient” “knowledge.” God is all knowledge, meaning there is nothing outside of God's knowledge. God never learns anything new. God never goes, “Wow! Ooh! Amazing!” He's never marveling at something He doesn't know, because He already knows everything in advance. So if you think you're here tonight and you fooled all the people around you, you can't fool God. The Bible says, “All things are naked and open before the eyes of Him of Whom we have to do.” God knows your pride, which is sin. God knows your hatred and your unforgiveness and your bitterness and your lust and your greed and your jealousy. God sees your heart. God knows your heart. But Jesus loves you just the same, and He wants to cleanse your heart and forgive your heart.

So He says, “Simon, I want to tell you a little story.” He said, “There was a man who had two debtors. One owed 500 days wage, and the other owed 50.” And they didn't have anything to pay the debt; they were both completely bankrupt. And he frankly or freely forgave them both. “Simon, which of the two is going to love the most?” Now Simon knew that the one that had been forgiven most, the 500 denarii, would love the most.

You know, “500! Wow! Thank you!” 500 bucks just cleaned off your slate. Can you imagine if you had some massive debt of thousands of dollars and someone just told you, “Hey. I'm going to pay your debt; it's all going to be done. You're free.” Like, “Wow! Praise the Lord!” “I'm going to clean the slate for you.” The more debt, the more grateful. The less debt, the lesser the appreciation. Now that's not to say that we should go out and sin so we love much. There's some people, “Well, I don't have a testimony about going out and sinnin' and being wild. I wasn't saved in prison and didn't kill people. I didn't shoot heroin in my eyeballs. I'm really not a good Christian because I didn't sin and get saved.” You know, the fact that you got saved is a testimony. And you might have grown up in church, but when you got saved, you're still saved like a wicked, vile sinner. Because tonight we're going to learn some facts about forgiveness. We all stand in need of forgiveness.

Now Jesus drives home His point—verses 44 to 50—and I want you to follow with me in our story. So He turned to the woman and He explains the parable. And he says, “This woman”—

see this woman? Jesus said unto him, "Do you see this woman? I entered into your house, and you gave me no water for My feet. But she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman, since the time I have come, hath not ceased to kiss my feet." In the Greek that means she's kissing them repeatedly. "My head" verse 46 "was oiled. You did not anoint, for this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment." So you didn't even give me the olive oil, the kind of cheap oil to anoint my head, but she's taken this very costly perfume, and she has anointed my feet. "Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins," verse 47 "which are many, are forgiven." Jesus acknowledged the fact that she had many sins, but He says they are forgiven, "for she loves much." But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little. "And He said unto her, turning to the woman, 'Your sins are forgiven.' And they that sat at the dinner with Him began to say with themselves, 'Who is this man that forgives sins also?'" And He said unto the woman, 'Thy faith hath saved you. Go in peace.'" And literally in the Greek it is, "Go into peace."

So Jesus turns to Simon. He says when I showed up at your house, you didn't wash my feet. She's washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. You didn't give me a kiss; she's kissed my feet repeatedly since the time that I've come. You didn't anoint my head with oil, but this woman has anointed me with this costly perfume on my feet. And then He said, "To whom much is forgiven"—this is a principle in the Bible—"loves much." To whom much is forgiven, they love much. And He turns to the woman—oh, these are probably the most beautiful words she's ever heard in her life—"Your sins are forgiven."

You know, the joy of a debt being paid and the joy of a debt being freed! What great joy comes into the heart of the individual who has been forgiven by God. You know, one of the Greek words used for forgiveness literally means "to carry away." And you know that's what God does for us with our sins. He carries them away. That's why John said about Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God Who carries away" our sins. The Bible says, "As far as the East is from the West, so far hath God removed our transgressions from us." God has forgiven us of our sin. You may not know or understand tonight, but your greatest blessing and the greatest gift that God has ever given to you is the gift of forgiving all your sins and giving you eternal life. Amen. Not a job. It's not your car, it's not your house, it's not your good looks. It's forgiveness. The greatest gift that God could ever give you is forgiveness of your sin.

Now, Jesus used her interruption to teach some important facts about forgiveness. I want you to write these points down if you want to take notes.

Facts about forgiveness. We learn from this whole story that we all need forgiveness. The Pharisee and the woman illustrate that there are different kinds of sinners, and the fact that everyone needs God's forgiveness.

Simon the Pharisee was a sinner just like the street-walking harlot or prostitute was a sinner. And that was because, number one, there are what we call sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit. There are action sins and there are attitude sins. Simon was not guilty of action sins or immorality, but he was still a sinner. Simon didn't commit adultery or he didn't commit

fornication or sexual immorality. Simon didn't get drunk and Simon didn't steal and Simon didn't lie, but Simon was a sinner just like this woman. And there's such a tendency for us to be judgmental and look down on people. "Well, they're a big sinner. They're a wicked sinner." And we think that we're so righteous. We don't realize that we all need forgiveness. Jesus said in Matthew 5, "You heard, and it hath been said, 'Thou shalt not murder.'"—it's one of the Ten Commandments—"Thou shalt not murder. But I say unto you"—listen carefully—"that if you have hatred and anger in your heart towards someone, that you've already committed murder."

Say "Well, I'm feelin' pretty good; I've never murdered anybody." You watch the news and go, "Oh, man. All these people murderin' people. That's so wicked." But in your heart you've murdered many times over. How can you drive the freeways of southern California and not murder someone? It's like the little boy who said, "Mommy, why is it when Daddy drives, all the idiots come out? They're never on the road when Mommy drives." Or you hate somebody, you don't forgive somebody. Jesus said, "You've heard it said, 'Thou shall not commit adultery.'" We're all familiar with that Commandment. "But I say unto you, that if you look lustfully after someone else, you've committed adultery already in your heart."

Now perhaps some of you here tonight, "Aw, I knew I shouldn't have come to church tonight." Because God is concerned not only with our actions but with our attitude. There are attitude sins as well as action sins. Jesus condemned in Matthew 23 the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. He said you may clean the outside of the cup, but inside is full of extortion and murder and lust and greed. You're like white washed sepulchers. I mentioned the Pharisees a moment ago, that they pull their robes up tight when they walk through the streets so they won't touch a woman. Well, another thing they didn't want to do to defile themselves was step on a grave. So if they walked through a cemetery, someone's buried there, if they stepped on it, they would be ceremoniously unclean. And so they took these gravestones, and they whitewashed them brilliant white so they could see them and they could walk around them. "Oh, there's a dead dude there. Oh, there's a dead dude there." And they would walk around making sure they didn't touch those things. But the cemetery—the graves looked beautiful. And Jesus said, "You're like those graves. You appear beautiful on the outside, you're all washed white, but inside you're full of dead men's bones." I love that. He's peeling back the surface and saying, "In your heart, you're full of dead men's bones." So Jesus exposed their hypocrisy and their covetousness.

Now, don't get the idea that Jesus approved of the woman's sins of the flesh. She was a guilty sinner also. There is such a thing as sexual immorality. You know, if you watch TV today, you watch movies today and you listen to your culture today, people would never believe that there is such a thing as sexual immorality; right? Anything goes, anytime, whatever you want to do. But sex outside the covenant relationship of marriage is sinful behavior.

I can make this real simple. Sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman in a marriage covenant relationship is sinful. It doesn't matter if it is homosexual or if it's heterosexual. It doesn't matter if it's premarital, if it's extramarital, whether it's fornication or adultery, sex before you're married, sex outside of marriage, sex with someone you're not

married to—maybe you're cohabiting—is sinful behavior. I don't know anyone's situation here tonight; okay? So if you're sitting there thinking, "He's preaching to me. Why is he preaching to me?" I've no idea who you are or what your situation is. But God does. And if God is convicting you tonight, listen to His voice. It's not good for you. God loves you, and He has a great plan for your life. And those—that kind of behavior brings emotional scars. It also brings physical scars.

I just heard on the news this week that in Miami or in the Florida area that aids has escalated amongst young men, in homosexual men. It's just skyrocketing. Because of Millennials who are engaging in this kind of sexual behavior. They weren't around here when the aids epidemic exploded, and they're not aware of that. And now it's rampant again. Sexually transmitted diseases. God cares about you, and He wants to protect you. Both physically it can be deadly, and spiritually it's detrimental for you.

And so this woman's behavior is not to be excused. Some people want to legalize prostitution, they think that pornography's harmless adult pleasure. It's all outside the will of God. "Well, I don't commit sexual immorality. I just watch it on a video, I watch it on the computer or I look at it in magazines." If you look lustfully, Jesus said you've already committed adultery in your heart. Jesus said, "If your right eye offends you, you need to pluck it out." Not literally, but you need to do whatever you need to do to stop that temptation from coming. If your right hand offends you, you need to cut it off. Get serious about sin and cut it out of your life.

So the Pharisee was a sinner, though he was religious. And the sinful woman, obviously, was a sinner. Sins of commission and sins of omission are sins. What do I mean by that? There are sins that are breaking God's Commandments. We sin by doing something God tells us not to do. Now listen very, very carefully. Did you know you sin by not doing what God tells you to do? Omitting and committing; sins of omission and commission. Not to do good when God has commanded you to and not to do it is just as much a sin as doing bad. Someone put it like this, "The person who does not do what God requires is just as guilty as the person who does what God forbids." So you might be sitting around thinking, "Aw, I'm pretty comfortable right now. I haven't, you know, done this, I haven't done that, and I haven't done this." What have you done? "Well, nothin'" That's it, you sinner. God gives you a commandment—"Love your neighbor." "I don't do that." "Help others." "I don't do that." So by not doing what God's commanded, we commit a sin of omission.

There are open sins, and there are hidden sins. Everyone at the feast knew the woman sinned, but only Jesus knew the sins of the Pharisee. For Jesus can read out hearts. To sin means to miss the mark. Simon thought he had hit the mark because he was religious. Sometimes people think that if I go to church, if I get baptized, if I'm confirmed, if I read a Bible every once in a while, I say I believe in God, or I join a religious group, that I'm saved. Not so. The Bible uses in the New Testament the imagery of a pig that has been washed and not really changed its nature. When it has opportunity, it goes back into the pigpen and wallows in the mire. So you can take a pig out of the pigpen; right? And you can wash it, and you can put a bow on it, and you can put a tuxedo on it, you can sprinkle perfume on it—what have you got? A good-

looking, clean, good-smelling pig. And the minute that pig is let out of the house, where is it going to go? The pigpen. You haven't changed its nature.

So a Christian is a person with a new nature. You're no longer a pig, you don't want to wallow in the mud. You're a sheep, and you want to follow Jesus Christ. We find here that God changed our hearts and forgives us from the inside out.

The Pharisee was religious, but he was also lost. This is what the Bible says. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." The Bible says there's "no one righteous; no, not one." Now get that phrase—"no one righteous; no, not one." Now some people's sins are open and public and heinous, and other people's sins are private and covered. The proud God hates. If you're proud, God sees that sin, and He knows you're far off. But we all have sinned; we're all—to use a popular expression—we're all in the same boat. Some have big, obvious sins; some have hidden sins. But God knows our hearts, and we're all sinners. The important thing to realized is that we are all sinners, and we are guilty before God.

Notice in verse 41 there were two debtors. Now one owed 500 denarii, the other 50. But guess what? They were both sinners; they were both debtors. They both owed a debt; one 500, one 50. But they're still a debtor. So some people say, "Well, I may be a sinner, but I'm not a big one. I'm just a little sinner. I don't sin that much. I'm pretty good. I don't kick my dog, I don't yell at my wife. I'm a good person at heart. I'm not a big sinner." But you are a sinner; right? And the idea here is that you may not be as bad as someone else. We're always trying to compare ourselves with someone else. "Wow! That guy's really bad!" It makes us feel pretty good. "They're going to hell, but I think I'm going to heaven, because I'm a lot better than they are."

You know what the standard is that you need to check yourself on? Jesus Christ. You think you're good? Compare yourself with Jesus Christ. He never sinned, lived a perfect life, died on the Cross, rose from the dead. You think you're good? Jesus is perfect. And there's so many people who think, "Well, I'm not that bad." God doesn't judge on kind of a scale. His scale is Jesus Christ.

So there's open sins and there's hidden sins. The only difference is our sense of guilt. And may God give you tonight a sense of sinfulness before a holy God. One of the blessed gifts that God can give you is when you come to realize "I am poor, spiritually. I am wretched. I am naked and I am blind." One of the saddest things is when a person doesn't see or recognize or acknowledge their sin. It's like a person with cancer who won't acknowledge they have cancer, and they're sick and they're dying and they won't take their medication to help them. Leprosy in the Bible is likened unto sin, because it starts small and spreads on your body. You know what leprosy does? It kills all the nerves so that you don't feel anymore. So you'd smash your hand and you'd injure it and you'd get sick and you'd have to have it amputated. And it just eats away at your body because you lose your feeling. Pain is a blessing. When you have a pain, it tells you something is wrong. You have to check it out and get it fixed. Pain is an indication, there's something not right.

And when God convicts you of your sin, that's a blessing. It's an indication that something's not right, that you need to get right with God. But God has a solution to man's problem, sin.

And that's my second point about forgiveness. And that is that forgiveness is the gracious gift of God. Forgiveness is the greatest miracle that God ever performed. What is involved in the miracle? Number one, it's all by grace. God forgives us by His grace. I want you to look at verse 42 in our story. It says, "When they had nothing to pay"—we have nothing to offer God—"that the one who was owed the money freely"—my King James says, 'frankly'—"forgave them both." "Freely" means that he freely gave them forgiveness. He cancelled their debt. Forgiveness is a free gift of God; you can't earn it, you can't work for it, you can't deserve it, you can't pay for it. In verse 42, "nothing to pay." They were spiritually bankrupt.

This is what the Bible says in Ephesians 2:8: "By grace you have been saved, and that not of yourself. It is a gift of God lest anyone should boast." If you are saved, you are saved and forgiven freely by God's grace. He doesn't forgive you because you're a good person, He doesn't forgive you because your religious, you've been baptized, you go to church, you believe in God. You're forgiven by the grace of God. Any idea that we work for, earn or deserve salvation is contrary to grace. It's all grace, or it's all works. You can't put the two together. Grace and works cannot be meshed. It's like oil and water; it doesn't mix. It's either by grace we have been saved or by works we have been saved. And if you try to get to heaven by your own good works, it won't get you there. But if you come as a sinner before God and you say, "I don't deserve it, I'm guilty, I have nothing to pay, I'm spiritually bankrupt" but you receive God's gift by grace, your sins will all be forgiven. You'll be made a child of God, and you'll have the gift of eternal life. When you die, you get to go to heaven.

Now, this is what people don't like; they don't like the idea that God saves us by His grace. Because we are proud, and we want to earn it, and we want to deserve it, and we want to merit it. And I'm always laughing at adults sometimes at Christmas. When we open our presents, we get kind of jaded and old and we kind of feel bad. People spend money on us so we say, "Oh, you shouldn't have bought me that" or you get kind of shy. "Open your gifts." "Nah, I'll get to it in a minute." You gotta maintain your "cool," you know. You don't get all excited and tear into your gifts. You'd be like a little kid, so "Yah, so that's cool. Thanks for the gift." And then when you do open it, you want to take out your wallet and pay people for it. And when you find out they leave the price tag on, you know how much it costs, you say, "Man, you shouldn't have done that," and you feel kind of bad that they spent all that money, because there's something innate within us that we want to earn or merit or deserve. "You shouldn't have done that." But can't. They have no hang-ups at Christmas; right? They open up gifts that aren't theirs. They're running around saying, "Can I help you?" "Wait a minute; that isn't yours!" "It doesn't matter. I want to open it up." They rip it and open it up. They don't feel bad. As a matter of fact, they'll open up all the gifts and go, "Is that all? Isn't there anything more?"

And Jesus said, "Whoever comes to Me comes as a child." You must come to Jesus as a child—humble and dependent, trusting in Him. We sing, "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to His Cross I cling. Naked I come to Him for dress." "God, I'm wretched, naked and blind, and I pray

You'll make me rich." The Bible says Jesus, Who was rich in heaven, came down to earth and became poor, died on the Cross, so that through His poverty, we might be made rich. But you've got to humble yourself as a little child and come in faith, believing, and you've got to receive that gift of eternal life. God offers you free salvation, but you must accept it by faith.

And that's my next point: forgiveness is received by faith. Notice that in verse 50, Jesus said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee. Go into peace." Now, the way He words that, you would almost conclude that she's actually saved by faith. Faith is the hand that reaches out and receives the gift. If someone gives you a gift at Christmastime and you keep your hands in your pocket and say, "Oh man, no thanks," you'll never open it and receive it. You've got to take your hands out, you've got to receive the gift, you've got to open it and receive it. So God is holding out to you a gift. It's eternal life. It's wrapped in a package. And you know what the package is? Jesus Christ. So if you want the gift, eternal life, you have to receive the package, Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, and no one comes to the Father but by Me." If you reject Jesus Christ, you reject God's gift of salvation. It's your only hope. But you have to have the humility and honesty and be willing to say, "I don't care what people think, what people say. I'm not going to be embarrassed by people's opinion. I'm going to receive God's gift of salvation."

She wasn't saved because of her tears, she wasn't saved because she anointed Jesus' feet with the perfume. She wasn't saved by her works; she had none. She was saved by grace through faith. And what is faith? Faith is trusting Jesus to save you. Faith isn't just believing in your head. It's just not saying, "Yah, yah, I believe Jesus died for me." It's trusting, it's committing.

I've used the illustration many times about an airplane. You go to the airport and you're going to get on an airplane. When you go out the ramp—most of the time we're inside a ramp, we don't go outside. When you get on that plane, what are you doing? You're putting faith in an airplane. With all the mishaps in the air today, you put a lot of faith in an airplane. You get in an airplane, you don't even know who's flying the sucker. I've been in planes flying at 30,000 feet, and the pilot walks by shaking hands. "Hi." "Hey! Who's driving this sucker?" You don't shake the wings and kick the wheels and say, "Rev it up for me. Be sure you check this out, it's gotta work good." You climb in a plane, and you take off and fly at 30,000 feet for hours. And this little ball of metal with jet engines on it flying through the air—you go, "Man, am I trusting in this plane."

Every time you get in a car, you exercise faith. When you turn the key, push the button to start the engine, you are exercising faith that that motor's going to start. When you put it in gear, you do that with faith that the car is going to back up, it's going to drive off. And when you come up to an intersection and the light is red, you in faith pick your foot up and put your foot on the brake. Seeing some of the cars you guys drive, it takes a lot of faith to drive that sucker. When you go over a bridge, you put faith in the bridge. When you go up an elevator, you put faith in the elevator. When you eat at a restaurant, you put faith that no one hocks a loogie in your food. Just thought I'd prepare you for dinner tonight. You don't go back in the kitchen and say,

“Any cockroaches hanging out in here? What do you do with my food?” You go, “Oh, there’s Pastor Miller. Let’s spit in his food.” I mean, you put faith in it. When you go to McDonald’s, you put all kinds of faith in the thing. We used to claim the promise that Jesus said that “If you eat any deadly thing, it shall not hurt you.”

So the idea is “Aw, you Christians, you always talk about faith.” Faith is not a blind leap into the dark. It’s faith on a historical event; that there was a man, Jesus, Who was God in the flesh, He really lived a sinless life, He really died upon the Cross, He really took my sins, He really was buried and He rose again from the dead.” The only one who ever conquered sin, death and the grave. I’d rather put my faith in someone who rose from the dead than someone like Buddha, whose bones are still in the grave. Or Confucius or Mohammed. Only Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. And to put your faith in Him is warranted. So it’s important.

So now based on a harmony of the Gospels, it was really at this point that Jesus said, “Come unto Me all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” I have a theory—I can’t back it up Biblically—but I think this woman heard the promise of Jesus—“Come unto Me all ye who...are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And guess what this street-walker, this harlot, this prostitute did? She believed what Jesus said. And she came to Him in humble faith. And she was forgiven of all her sins. And she left that dinner forgiven while Simon the Pharisee left unforgiven.

We also see in this story that forgiveness is certain. In verses 47 and 48, two times there Jesus said, “Your sins are forgiven.” You can know that your sins are forgiven.

And forgiveness is also costly, because in verse 42, since the Creditor forgave them, He took the loss. Did you ever think about that? If someone owes you money, and you say, “Forget it; you don’t have to pay me,” guess who takes the loss? You do. Did you ever stop to think that when God forgives us our sins, that God paid a heavy price to forgive you? Forgiveness is by God’s grace, but it’s not cheap. It cost God the life of His own Son. Jesus had to suffer, Jesus had to die for your sins to be forgiven. It may be free to us who believe, but it’s not cheap, because God had to send His Son to die upon the Cross so that you could be forgiven and that you could be free. So Jesus died on the Cross for our sins that we might be forgiven and that we might know forgiveness.

But forgiveness also ends in a new life. I want you to notice what Jesus says in verse 50. He said to the woman, “Go in peace.” Now again in the English translation, you wouldn’t really see this, but what He really said to this woman is, “Go out in peace. Go live now a life of peace.” You see, when we are saved by God’s grace, the Bible says, “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” So this woman experienced a new life. She had a new peace, she had a new power and she had a new perspective. She had a new love, verse 47, she had a new life and she had a new perspective on death. She knew that when she would die, she would go to heaven. So that woman went out from that supper with a changed life. She saw her sin, she put her trust in Jesus and she was forgiven by God’s grace.

Simon, on the other hand, was not changed. He was spiritually blind, he didn't see himself a sinner and he did not see Jesus as the Savior. He missed his opportunity.

And I don't want anyone here tonight to miss their opportunity. I don't believe anyone's here by accident. I believe God brought you here to hear this message on forgiveness. And you might be thinking that you've got your sins pretty well covered. But no one sees and no one really knows. All things are naked and open before the eyes of Him of Whom we have to do. You go, "Ah, that's too embarrassing. I can't receive Jesus tonight. What will my wife think, what will my husband think or what will my friends think?" You know, when I was a young man, for years I resisted coming to Jesus Christ because I was worried about what my friends would think. Think about how foolish that is. I'm worried about what my friends will think, so I'm going to go to hell? I'm going to miss out on the greatest blessing God could ever give me, the forgiveness of my sins, eternal life and the hope of heaven because I'm embarrassed? Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of Me" in this wicked and adulterous generation, "I'll be ashamed of you before My Father and the angels of heaven." But "If you confess Me before men, I will confess you before My Father" and before the angels of heaven. I thank God I finally came to the place that I said, "I don't care what others think, I don't care what others say, I don't care if my friends don't like me anymore. I've decided to follow Jesus Christ." And I'm so glad I made that decision. I'm so glad.

And when I opened my heart to Jesus Christ, I had a new peace. I found a new power. God delivered me from drugs, He delivered me from the party scene, and He delivered me from all the foul speech that came out of my mouth. And He delivered me by the power of God. My life was changed and transformed, because the Bible says it like this; it says, "If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things pass away, and all things become new." Amen.

So many of you here tonight know by experience what it means to be changed by the power of God. But if you're here tonight and you don't know forgiveness—if you're here tonight and you don't know what it means to have your sins forgiven, to become a child of God, to know that when you die, you're going to heaven—Jesus died on the Cross to pay the penalty of your sins. He paid the greatest price that He could ever pay for you. Are you going to reject that gift? Are you going to say no to His gift? The Bible says, "Now is the acceptance time." The Bible says, "Now is the day of salvation." So I'm going to give you an opportunity tonight to say, "Jesus, come into my heart. Jesus, I want you to forgive my sins. Jesus, I want You to be my Savior." And have the humility and honesty and courage to say, "I don't care what people think, I don't care what people say, I don't care what price I'm going to have to pay, I'm going to do what's right. And I'm going to get right with God tonight. I'm going to surrender my heart to Him and my life to Him. I'm going to turn from my sin and I'm going to trust Him as my Savior." I don't care if you're "a good sinner" or an open, wicked, vile and wretched sinner. We're all sinners. And Jesus came to save that which is lost. Maybe you're older, maybe you're younger; maybe you're middle age. It doesn't matter. Maybe you're rich, maybe you're poor, maybe you're educated, maybe you're Black, White, brown; whatever color your skin is doesn't matter. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." "There's no one righteous; no, not one." But God wants to give you that free gift of salvation if you, tonight, will humble yourself and say, "I

am a sinner. I am in need of a Savior. I want Jesus to come into my heart.” Then He will forgive you of your sins, and the peace and the joy and the love and the hope that you've never had before—you'll know what life is about, and you'll know where you're going when you die.