

# The Debt of Love that is Owed

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, the last line of that song is really what our attention is going to be on this morning, the debt of love from a thankful heart to the Lord our God.

And so I want to turn your attention, if I can, to Luke 7, chapter 7. And as we do, this is one of the messages, or at least in part, that made up the series that we did about seven years ago, the evangelistic series where we invited people to church on a Sunday evening, or at least that was the intention, to invite people to church to hear, I think it was seven messages, seven to ten messages going through not just the Gospel of Luke, but Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

And of course, this one we're coming back to this morning. I mean, if you can remember it seven years ago, then great, but it's not the same message because this morning I want us to look at it with a new question, and an important question, in order for us to consider what it means to love God more.

Now, I'm assuming this morning that you love God. I'm going to take the further assumption that you want to love God more, that you actually want to love God more. And therefore, we need to ask a brand new set of questions as we come to this passage.

So Luke 7, beginning at verse 36 through to 50. We'll read. Now hear God's word. One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table.

[ 1 : 43 ] Now, behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that she was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment.

And standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

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.

And Jesus answering said to him, Simon, I have something to say to you. And he answered, say it, teacher. A certain moneylender had two debtors, one owed 500 denarii and the other 50.

When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now, which of them will love him more? Simon answered, the one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.

[ 2 : 52 ] And he said to him, you have judged rightly. Then turning towards 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.

You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.

Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much, but he who is forgiven little, loves little. And he said to her, your sins are forgiven.

Then those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, who is this who even forgives sins? And he said to the woman, your faith has saved you.

Go in peace. Let's pray. Father God, we would ask that we would see this passage again afresh, that we recognize, Father God, that we cannot say everything that needs to be said from every passage equally in one setting, but it would take several to really understand the depth of your word.

[ 4 : 11 ] We cannot exhaust it in any way. And so we would ask this morning that as we ask a new set of questions to this passage, that we would see how it answers it, and that we, in turn, would seek to know how to love you more.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Well, if you have your Bibles, please just turn back to that passage. Amen. Now, because this is a familiar passage, it would be easy to say familiar things, but I'm not going to do that this morning.

I'm going to give you a heads up of what I said last time over seven years ago. And the focus last time was, of course, on the relationship between Simon, Jesus, and the woman, and the treatment Jesus received at the hands of both, and how Jesus would have went to the cross smelling wonderful.

You probably never thought of how Jesus actually approached the cross, but when you think about how this expensive ointment has been permeating the skin of Jesus, that eventually when it came on the way to the cross, he would have, that the aroma that would have come from his skin would have been truly wonderful.

And so you got this mix between the beauty of Jesus, and then, of course, the horror of his death. And, of course, this woman loved Christ because of her sins being forgiven.

[ 5 : 56 ] This morning, however, or rather, the woman loved Jesus more because she had a greater amount of sins, it would appear. This morning, I want to ask a slightly different question.

And the question is an easy one to understand, but not necessarily one that you're going to get immediately. And it's this, that I would understand, and so would you, that the death of Christ did not achieve anything more for that woman than it did for me.

In other words, when Jesus Christ died on the cross, he did not have to do anything more for this woman, or for Simon, or for you, or for me than what he did for her.

And yet, we have a story where she loves him more than Simon. And she may even love him more than us.

And the question is why? Why, given the fact that Christ's death accomplished exactly the same thing for her as it did for me, or exactly the same thing for me as it did for her, do I not love Jesus as much as she loves Jesus?

[ 7 : 09 ] Now, it's hard to know exactly how much she's loving Jesus at this point, and whether or not my love could be compared to her as yours. But it's an important question, and one which the parable answers, not necessarily the setter.

Now, it is possible for us to think, as we come to this passage, that it is very hard for some of us to truly appreciate what sin is, partly due to the fact of when sin gets redefined as a mistake, and then a mistake is something you say sorry for, not necessarily something you repent of.

And so when you have this redefining of sin, where it's only a small sin, and therefore, if it's a small sin, it's a mistake. And if it's a mistake, I can say sorry.

And the trouble with that thinking is, is your next thought is something like this. It doesn't require the death of Christ. In other words, we fall into the same trap that Simon fell into, or is in, and that he has a life where he thinks that while this woman has so much sin, she needs to be forgiven.

In other words, there is so much sin that Christ has got plenty to deal with in her, that Simon doesn't have enough to deal with.

[ 8 : 37 ] That I don't have enough sin in me to need forgiveness. And that, of course, is where the parable points out that that's the error. Regardless of the size of the debt, everyone has enough to need forgiveness.

Everyone has enough to need the same forgiveness offered by God through Christ. And this is the important point. But the temptation is, of course, is that most people, when they redefine sin as a mistake, a mistake into a sorry rather than repentance, they don't see that the actions that they are doing, which are wrong, actually requires the death of Christ to make them right, or rather to abolish them, in order for you to receive forgiveness.

And so this is an important question, one which, when we get to the answer, will hopefully increase your love for Christ. So the first problem is, don't redefine sin as a mistake, of which you would then say sorry for, because then you won't see it as something that requires the death of Christ.

When, in fact, it does require the death of Christ, because it's not a mistake, it's a sin. And secondly, as we consider what the death of Christ actually accomplishes, we should recognize that the same death would be needed to cover one sin or ten million, regardless of shape and size of the sins committed.

And so the question is fairly straightforward. How is it possible, given the fact that Christ didn't have to do any more in the atonement for that woman than he has for me, my love isn't greater for Christ, and your love isn't greater than it should be.

[10:27] Right? Because the temptation here is to think, well, this woman loves Christ more because she had more to be forgiven of, which is kind of true.

But there is something here which allows us to understand it on another level. And that is, both had debts, and both debts were cancelled. And this is what we will come to this morning.

Jesus tells a parable about two people who had debts, both of which debts are of different size.

Simon has a need to be forgiven, which he doesn't see. He sees that this woman is a sinful woman because her sins are socially apparent.

She's known as a sinful woman. And if Jesus knew, this is what he says, if Jesus knew what type of woman this was, he wouldn't go near her either. And yet, we know from the rest of the Bible that when Christ died on the cross, he covers both sins, the little ones and the big ones.

He doesn't have to do anything more for this woman than he would have to do for Simon or for you or for me. And I keep pressing this point because I want you to understand that.

[11:40] That Jesus did not have to do anything more on the cross for the most sinful person, socially speaking, than he did for the least sinful person, socially speaking, as sin is understood socially and mentally and psychologically, emotionally, and whatever else you want to add to that.

And as I said at the Bible study on Wednesday, one of the things that the gospel enables a person to do is that it removes the fear of confessing. Now, you may think, well, I have a person, a person who has sins and knows that God exists would also know that God knows all of my sin.

That's true. But the trouble with sin is is that you don't want to face your true self. The one thing that sin does to a person is that a person can no longer look at themselves.

And what the gospel does is it removes the fear of having to face who you truly are. The gospel takes that away in the forgiveness of Christ.

In other words, I can see only in Christ how truly bad I am and at the same time not feel bad because I am forgiven in Christ.

[13:02] And it may even be said that I can't even see how bad and sinful I am because God doesn't allow me to see just the depth of my sin. Because the moment I become aware of my sin, I become aware of the fact that I am forgiven of it at the same time in Christ.

And that's the beauty of the gospel. That's the beauty of the cross. The moment I become truly aware that I have sinned against a holy God, I am at the same time truly aware of the fact that that holy God has saved me and forgiven me of those sins.

And so it's absolutely basic and fundamental and proper that you proclaim the whole gospel because it is the only way to remove the fear of facing yourself.

And therefore facing, confessing what you truly are before God, that I am a sinner. And in Christ, I am forgiven.

And the person next to me is also forgiven, even though he or she may have done less sinful things that I have, practically speaking, and the person on the other side of me may have done more.

[14:15] but at the foot of the cross, everything is now equal. Christ's death means that on the other side of forgiveness, the other side of the cross, we are all forgiven in exactly the same way.

All of our debts, though varying in size, have all been forgiven in exactly the same way. But there is a point here which Jesus wants us to understand.

And it's this, that we will love God more based on two observations. The first is how clearly I see myself and my need for Christ.

And the second is, of course, how clearly I see the perfections of God. Because if I don't see myself clearly and I don't see the perfections of God clearly, then I have no means of evaluating what has happened or how much it has cost.

If I don't see who Jesus is, that he is God, God the Son, then how am I truly to appreciate the value of his death?

[15:25] If I don't see him as God, then I'm likely to consider his death like anybody else who dies. And yet his death is so far greater and means so much more in a totally different way than your death or my death or anybody else's death.

In other words, I've got to understand who Christ is to be able to truly appreciate his death. Or else I'll think his death is just like your death. And then I've got to be able to see myself as I truly am to be able to understand what actually it is that I have been given.

Well, here's the summary and I'll keep it short. Simon invites Jesus to his house. Simon is a Pharisee. But the guest, that Jesus is the guest, Simon is the host, has been interrupted by a sinful

woman.

And the woman begins to show this great deal of affection towards Jesus. But it's this interruption which leads Jesus to tell the parable and the parable which leads Simon, hopefully, to understand what he has missed.

It's not just about forgiveness of a sinful woman, but it's rather highlighting something in Simon which he does not see. Now, Simon didn't believe that Jesus should mix with such a woman or should allow such a woman to touch Jesus in the way that she is.

[ 16 : 56 ] Her tears falling on his feet, her drying his feet with her hair, anointing him with oil. How can such a sinful woman be allowed to touch Jesus?

If Jesus knew who she was, if Jesus was a prophet, then he wouldn't allow any of this to happen. And of course, Simon is making two mistakes. One, he doesn't know who Jesus is, or rather, he is denying who Jesus is if he were a prophet.

And Jesus is, of course, prophet, priest, and king, and savior. And the second thing is that even if he did understand who Jesus is, he fails to understand exactly who God the Son is in the flesh. And that is what the Son of God exposes himself to, what he reaches out, the context in which he reaches out in. Spending time with tax collectors and sinners, of which the Pharisees, by the way, could never understand why Jesus would spend his time with such people.

And then, Simon's response, in the end, along with the others, who is this that can even forgive sins, highlights that he has no idea who Jesus is.

[ 18 : 09 ] because the way the Gospels are set out is that those who hear the Gospel understand that there is only one person in the universe, in all of creation, and he himself is outside of creation, who can forgive sins, and that is God himself.

But of course, if you, like Simon, or like others, have redefined sin as mistakes, and mistakes is something you simply say sorry for, then you don't see your need for forgiveness, you don't see your need for atonement, you don't see your need for salvation.

Suddenly, the need that is there is no longer apparent because you have blinded yourself by redefining sin as something other than what it truly is. And this happens, of course, with people who are generally good people.

Because their basic default measurement is, I'm not as bad as them. So the way they measure their own life is by the worst standard of somebody else.

And so, in comparison, they're good. But that is a redefinition of good, which underneath is actually bad. But when you have redefined your own position against someone who is worse than you, socially speaking, you no longer see yourself as you truly are, but as you want to be seen.

[ 19 : 35 ] And this is Simon's problem. Simon is a modern-day good person. But his goodness is what he needs to repent of.

She may need to repent of her badness, he needs to repent of his goodness. They're both in the same position, and this is what Simon has to come to understand. But he doesn't.

Is this man a prophet? Who is this that can forgive sins? He doesn't get who Jesus is. Then when the woman gets to the point where she is actually crying at the feet of Jesus, you've got to say, I mean, anybody who saw that happening would ask the question, why?

Why would a woman cry at the feet of Jesus? Why would she dry his feet with her hair? Why would she spend, because it is a form of spending, putting this anointment on Jesus, that wealth on Jesus?

I mean, they're good questions, but Simon doesn't ask any of them. Simon, on the other hand, doesn't do any of that type of greeting to Jesus.

[ 20 : 53 ] He doesn't greet, Simon doesn't greet Jesus in any kind of way. And this is pointed out by Jesus. Jesus says that, you know, when I came in, you didn't do any of this for me, but this woman has washed my feet with her tears, dried my feet with her hair, anointed me with anointment.

So he says, Simon, Simon, I have something to say to you. And this is the important point. The parable that Simon tells includes the woman, but it's not directed at the woman.

It's directed at Simon. This is a lesson for Simon to learn. This is a woman that is forgiven, which Simon can't see. And this is the response of a sinful woman, which Simon can't see.

And this is also the response of Jesus to someone who is showing love for Christ because of what he has done for her, which Simon can't see.

And so the parable which Jesus begins to tell Simon or does tell Simon is to highlight something about Simon, not necessarily the woman alone.

[ 22 : 04 ] Though it does highlight why the woman loves Simon, loves Jesus so much, it also highlights equally why Simon does not.

Here's the parable. Jesus says that two men have debts. One has a larger debt than the other, but both are in debt and both cannot pay. It doesn't really matter how big the debt is at this point.

If you can't pay, you can't pay. And what that means is that both people are in the same position. Now, you might argue and say, well, one is in a greater debt than the other as though that is some form of hopeful thought.

But both men cannot pay. And because both men cannot pay, the only way for this debt to be removed is through debt forgiveness, for Jesus to forgive the debt.

Now, of course, the sin, the debt, rather, is illustrating our sin against God. And we may draw a conclusion that the more sin committed, the more debt incurred.

[ 23 : 13 ] I think that is true financially. I think it is less true in terms of the cross, bearing in mind of what the cross actually accomplishes. And so, the point that Jesus is about to make is that Simon is in as much debt before God as this woman was.

This woman is now forgiven. Okay, but in the parable, the debt of Simon before a holy God is exactly the same in terms of it being a debt that cannot be paid as this woman is in debt before a holy God.

And so, it is entirely wrong to think that you don't have enough sin to need forgiveness or that the little you do have can somehow be paid by you and it doesn't require the death of Christ.

That's the mistake. That's the mistake. That's the sin, rather. That the little amount of sin you do have can somehow be paid by you when it can't.

And the little amount of sin that you do have doesn't require the death of Christ when it does. And this is why we go back to the question that I asked at the very beginning.

[ 24 : 34 ] Why is it that I don't love Jesus much as this woman or Simon as much as this woman or you or I when the death of Christ accomplished exactly the same for me as it did for her?

Why don't I love Christ more? So, the debts of both men are cancelled because neither could pay and then Jesus asked this question in verse 42.

And this is really the sort of turning point. Now, which of them will love him more? And Simon understands the question but he is slightly reluctant to give an answer and he says, verse 42, well, sorry, when they could not pay he cancelled the debt of both.

Now, which of them will love him more? Verse 43, Simon answered, the one I suppose for whom he cancelled the larger debt and he said to him, you have judged rightly.

And turning towards 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 wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet.

[ 25 : 49 ] You did not anoint my head with oil but she has anointed my feet with ointment.

Therefore, I tell you though her sins which are many are forgiven for she loved much but he who is forgiven little loves little.

And the question is that what Jesus is drawing attention to here is not that you have actually been forgiven little but rather in light of your standing before God and your social standing with other people you may think that you have been forgiven less than another person when in fact you are both had debts that could not be paid.

What Jesus is drawing attention to is how well the woman knew her own sin and how unwell Simon did.

In other words, Simon, go and search yourself a little harder and I'm sure you'll be able to see just how much sin you've actually committed. So the question here looks on the surface socially speaking that this woman has committed more sins than Simon and perhaps she has socially speaking but is she less sin is she more sinful or no she may have committed more sins practically speaking lived out in her actions but is her condition more sinful than Simon no they both share the same condition which is that they have sin which they cannot repay therefore both people have enough to need God's forgiveness well here's the question as we close it's a repetition of what I've already said as we pause and think about this we understand how this applies to perhaps the worst sinner on earth practically speaking we know that Christ's death on the cross can cover any sin for

any person at any time we also know that that is true for the person who sees themselves as a very good person socially speaking as compared to other people that they live with and the question is of course that if it takes the death of Christ the substitutionary death of

Christ to atone the sin of both people in exactly the same way and we really understand that then why is it the case that one person will love him more than the other when we have received exactly the same thing from the same person from his same substitutionary death on the cross the answer is it comes down to how well you see Christ which Simon didn't and how well you see yourself which Simon didn't how well you see Christ as the woman did and how well you see yourself as the woman did practically speaking actively speaking yes this woman may have committed more physical sins than Simon but her condition was exactly the same as Simon's everyone needs forgiveness and every sin needs forgiving let me restate that a slightly different way everyone needs forgiveness because every sin regardless of what it is or regardless of how many times you have actually committed it requires the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross regardless of how often it is being committed and so the next time you see a good person whether it be in the mirror or your next door neighbor remember that Christ still had to die for you in order for your sins to be forgiven and every time you look at your neighbor who may be a tremendous person socially speaking and doesn't seem to have done anything wrong in the world socially speaking that is with their social counterparts nonetheless still has a condition of debt before God which they cannot repay and so they too just like you just like me and just like this woman have enough to need forgiveness why because however however many sins or however little sins we have committed they still require the death of

[ 30 : 46 ] Christ so when you begin to see yourselves as you truly are and you begin to see the perfections of God as he truly is it's only then will your love for Christ actually grow it's only then will you love Christ more it's not because Christ has done more for her than he did for me she's done exactly the same the difference is in who we are as people and what we see how well we see ourselves and how well we see Christ so remember everyone needs forgiveness because every sin requires the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ amen well may the peace and love of God with the faith from God be with you all both now and ever more in the

Lord Jesus Christ amen amen peace you you you