



Luke 7

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Tape #8051
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn in our Bibles tonight to Luke gospel chapter seven as we continue through the Bible.

Jesus has just in chapter six spoken to the people many of the truths that He shared in the Sermon on the Mount. When we were going through, we noted that this is not the Sermon on the Mount, the subject is similar, the statements are similar. Jesus, I'm certain, said these same things on many occasions. On this particular occasion He was in the plains as we are told. But having finished these vital lessons concerning the kingdom of God and those that will have a part in the kingdom of God, we read that,

He ended all of his sayings in the audience of the people, and he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die (7:1,2).

There are several mentions of centurions in the scripture. They were Roman officers who were equal in rank to a master sergeant. They were over one hundred men. And they were select and chosen, special men and in the scriptures every mention of a centurion is in a positive light. They seem to be well-chosen and well-qualified. And always mentioned in a very positive light. This particular centurion is, of course, mentioned in a positive light.

You remember in the book of Acts, it was a centurion in Caesarea to where Peter came and shared the Gospel and the Holy Spirit first came upon the Gentile believers in the house of Cornelius who was a Roman centurion. So this particular centurion living in Capernaum, servant who was dear unto him, ready to die.

And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal the servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loves our nation, and he has built our synagogue (7:3-5).

So the centurion sent these men, they were elders of the Jews, and it is quite possible that one of the men who had come to Jesus, one of the elders could possibly be Jairus. For Jairus was the ruler of the synagogue in Capernaum. And so as they come to Jesus, they say, "This man is worthy: He loves our nation, and he has built our synagogue." So he is an unusual man, he no doubt has many spiritual characteristics. As, of course, the story unfolds we will discover them.

So Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof (7:6):

Now they said of him he was a worthy man. He is saying, "I'm not worthy that You should enter under my roof." He is using a different word in the Greek. He is saying, I'm not really capable of entertaining you. And it is interesting a Jew was not to enter into the house of the Gentiles. I'm certain that Jesus would have entered his house had he not sent these second messengers. But he probably realized that it would have created just further controversy between Jesus and the Jews and so he just says, I'm not worthy that You should come into my house.

Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come to you (7:7):

Here he uses the same word that they used when they said he is a worthy man. He says I didn't feel that I was worthy to come to you. So you have their opinion of him, you have his opinion of himself. They said he's a worthy man. He said I didn't feel that I was worthy to come unto you.

but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it (7:7,8).

In other words, he is saying, I know what authority is about. I also am under authority, recognizing that Jesus was under the authority of the Father. I know authority. I know what authority is about. I also am under authority but I have under me men.

Now here is a necessary prerequisite for anyone who is to exercise authority in a proper manner. There are some people who when given authority don't know how to use it, they became tyrants. They become autocrats. The man who can truly rule is the man who understands that he is ruled. That I am under a set of laws. I'm under a set of rules. And I have authority but I am under authority. I'm not the final authority. And this man understanding the chain of command. Being a military man he knows what authority is about. And recognizing the authority of Jesus, he said, I understand Your authority. The authority that Jesus had in spiritual things and also in physical things. Lord, I know that You have the authority to just speak the word and my servant will be healed. You don't have to come to my house. I know Your authority. I recognize Your authority. I also am under authority. I recognize what it's all about. "I can say to one, Go, and he goes; and I can say to another, Come, and he comes; and I know that all You have to do is just say it. Just speak the word and my servant will be healed."

When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and He turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick (7:9,10).

Jesus remarks in a very positive way concerning this man's comprehension concerning his faith. "I haven't found faith like this, not in Israel."

So it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and many people [disciples plus a multitude of people]. Now when he came near to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and many people of the city were with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not (7:11-13).

Here we have a very graphic picture. There are two crowds, two multitudes. One is coming to the gate of the city. They're a happy crowd. Smiles on their faces. They are an amazed crowd. They're amazed at the things that Jesus is doing. They've been watching the miracles. They're an expectant crowd because they know that wherever Jesus goes, things happen. And there is sort of a clashing contrast here because as they are going into the gate of the city, there's another crowd coming out of the city led by the mourners who are wailing. And we see in this crowd coming out of the city this reed kind of a basket in which there is a body that is being carried to the burial place which is just outside of the little village of Nain. Still there to the present day. You'll find this place filled with tombstones, just sarcophaguses, right outside of the little village of Nain. They're carrying this body to place it in one of these limestones, sarcophaguses or sarcophagi, I guess you'd call it, for you English majors. Octopus, you don't say octopuses.

And so Jesus' attention was drawn to the little woman who was sobbing. This was her only son and she was a widow. That means she's going to be alone, without any support, without anyone. Husband dead and now her only son is dead. And so Jesus said to her, "Weep not." He had compassion on her. That word compassion is a great word, it speaks of the deepest kind of sympathetic emotion that one can experience. Understanding, emotions of tenderness and caring.

And he came and touched the bier (7:14):

That was, of course, a no-no, as far as the religious Jews were concerned. To touch a dead body or anything that had touched a dead body would constitute a ceremonial uncleanness. But Jesus touched the bier.

and they that were carrying him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise (7:14).

This is something interesting to me. We have three occasions in the scripture where Jesus raised the dead. And in every case, He spoke to the dead as though they were alive. You don't talk to corpses. But Jesus did. And in every case, He spoke to them as though they were alive. To this corpse, He said, Young man, I say unto you, Arise. To the daughter of Jairus He said, Little lamb, arise. To Lazarus, He said, Lazarus, come on out of there. Interesting, isn't it, that He spoke to the dead as though they were alive.

And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak (7:15).

What a way to break up a funeral procession. Again the contrasting crowds. Those that are coming in with Jesus, the many people, the multitude, they meet at the gate of the city, the one crowd coming out, filled with sorrow and wailing; the other coming in, filled with joy and anticipation. But as the result of the

encounter with Jesus, the whole crowd ended up rejoicing and glorifying God.

And there was a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God has visited his people. And this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judaea, and throughout all the region round about (7:16,17).

It scattered, the rumor went as far south as Judaea. Everybody began to hear about the things that Jesus was doing.

And so the disciples of John [came to John who at that time was in prison] and they told him of the things that Jesus was doing. And John called unto him two of his disciples and he sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist has sent us unto thee, saying, Are you the one that should come? or shall we look for another (7:18-20)?

Now John had earlier said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: there is one that is coming after me, He is mightier than I am, I am not worthy to untie His sandals: He's going to baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire (Matthew 3:11). And when John saw Jesus, John said, "This is He of whom I spake (John 1:15)" who was coming after me, who is mightier than I, whose shoe latches I'm not worthy to untie. And he turned to his disciples and he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

John has been spending some time in Herod's prison which must have been extremely difficult for John because John was an outdoorsman. He was a man of the desert, rugged, outdoor individualist. And to be cooped up in a little prison, no doubt was difficult. But John's concept of the Messiah was the same as the Jews' concept of the Messiah. He thought that the Messiah was going to lead them in military victories to overthrow the Roman government and to by force establish the kingdom of God, overthrowing the governments of man.

And so when Jesus began to manifest His power but did not announce any kind of political platform, He wasn't rallying an army. He wasn't speaking of rebellion. John probably a little tired of sitting in prison sent his disciples to Jesus to ask, "Are you the one? Or shall we look for another?" In other words, he's more or less saying, Hey, let's get the show on the road. I'm tired of sitting in jail. Let's go.

Jesus, interestingly enough, did not give to the disciples of John a direct answer.

But in the same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them (7:21,22),

He just for an hour or so ministered to the people that were coming. Healing those that were sick, opening the blind eyes, and just ministering and after an hour or so of ministering, then He answered or responded to the disciples of John and He said unto them,

Go your way, and tell John the things that you have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever is not offended in me (7:22,23).

When Jesus began His public ministry, after the baptism by John and after the temptation in the wilderness, you remember that He came to the synagogue in Nazareth, His hometown and they handed to Him the scriptures. And Jesus took the scroll of Isaiah and He opened it to where it said, "The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD has anointed me to preach the good tidings unto the meek; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD" (Isaiah 61:1,2).

Basically, that's exactly what Jesus is doing. He's fulfilling the prophecy concerning the Messiah as was written by Isaiah. So just go back and tell John the things that you've seen, the things that you've heard. John knows the scriptures. He'll understand that I am indeed the Messiah.

So when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went you out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind (7:24)?

John, you remember, was baptizing down in the Jordan river and the Jordan river was filled with reeds on the banks of the river. All of these reeds that were blowing in the wind. Jesus said, Is that why you went down to the wilderness? Just to see these reeds by the Jordan river that are blowing in the wind?

What did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously appareled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts (7:25).

John you remember wore a coat of skins, leather coat, rugged. Men who wear the silks, they're in the kings' court. They're not in the king's prisons.

What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare the way before thee (7:26,27).

Jesus then quoted from Malachi chapter three, verse one, where Malachi prophesied of the forerunner of the Messiah. He is saying of John that He is the One that Malachi was speaking of. He is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Malachi chapter three, verse one, and on through the third chapter and on into the fourth chapter of Malachi. The prophecies of the forerunner of the Messiah.

For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist (7:28):

Quite an acknowledgment by Jesus.

but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he (7:28).

Our position in Christ is a position that is greater than any of the prophets of the Old Testament had the privilege of experiencing. This glorious relationship that we have, Christ in you, Christ dwelling in you. Our privileges, our position in Christ exceeds the relationship that the people could have to God in the Old Testament. They were always separated by a veil from God. But in Christ, we have boldness to come unto the Father, into the holy of holies, behind the veil. What a glorious privilege is ours as children of God and this relationship we have now through Jesus Christ Who has removed the veil so that we have access to the throne of grace where we might find mercy in our time of need. And so, he who is least in the kingdom of heaven actually enjoys a greater position than Elijah, Elisha, or the greatest of the prophets, even John the Baptist.

And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John (7:29).

When Jesus spoke so positively of John, they all sort of consented, Yes. Because they had all gone out and been baptized by John and recognized that the Holy Spirit was upon John and his was a legitimate ministry of God.

But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptized by John (7:30).

You remember that when they asked Jesus a question that He did not want to answer, "He said to the Pharisees, I will ask you a question, and if you answer My question, I'll answer yours. John's baptism, was it of God, or was it of man? And they got in a huddle and they said, We can't answer that question. Because if we say, It was of man; then the people will all get angry at us because they believe John was a prophet. If we say, It was of God; then He's going to say, Well then why weren't you baptized? And so they knew that He had them so they said, We can't answer your question. Jesus said, I won't answer yours" (Matthew 21:24-27).

But this baptism of John, even here there was a controversy concerning it. When Jesus talks about John and affirms John, the people all say, Yeah. But the Pharisees and all, they sort of hang back because they rejected the wisdom and the counsel of God, they were not baptized by him.

And so the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and you have not danced; we have mourned to you, and you have not wept (7:31,32).

Jesus no doubt had observed the children in the marketplaces, they are playing their various games, let's pretend, and let's pretend it's a wedding. We play the pipes but you didn't want to dance. So let's play funeral, and we'll wail and howl, but you didn't want to play funeral.

For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine (7:33);

He was quite an ascetic, he ate locusts and wild honey.

and you said, He has a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and you say, Behold He's a

gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children (7:33-35).

As we said this morning, Jesus loved to eat with people. He loved to be at the party, to enter in to the enjoyment and the intimacy of dining with people. And already He's been in trouble here in Luke's gospel for going to the big party that Matthew threw when Matthew quit and resigned from his tax collector job to become a disciple. Invited all of his tax collector friends to his house and Jesus went to eat. Remember how they found fault with Him because He was eating with the sinners and the tax collectors.

One of the Pharisees desired that Jesus would eat with him (7:36).

And as we said, He's never one to turn down an invitation for dinner. Going so far as to invite Himself to dinner. Even as He has invited Himself to eat with you. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him [or I'll have supper, I'll eat with him]" (Revelation 3:20).

The Lord loves that intimacy of just eating together. There's something special about just eating together and especially in that culture. Because in that culture it was tantamount to becoming one with each other. And so the Pharisee desired that He would eat with him.

And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat (7:36).

Actually He laid down as was the custom, reclining on the left elbow. They didn't have tables and chairs, the food was spread out there on the table on the floor. You see pictures of the last supper and the beautiful china and silverware and all, it wasn't like that. It was far different. You would lie down and you could get more people around the food by lying in a prone position. And so as Jesus was there,

Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner (7:37),

In the Greek language it indicates that she was a prostitute.

when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And she stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment (7:37,38).

There is another case in the gospel of John where Jesus had gone to dinner and how that Mary, the sister of Lazarus took this precious ointment and poured it on the feet of Jesus and the whole house was filled with the fragrance and how she also with her tears washed His feet and wiped them with her hair. And people sometimes say, Is it the same? No, it isn't. It isn't the same feast. This happened early on in the ministry of Jesus. The other feast was just six days before He was crucified. It was at the end of the ministry of Jesus, the account in John. In fact, it tells us it was six days before the Passover and He was crucified on the Passover. So they are different occasions but similar kind of things as far as the love and tenderness towards Jesus that was expressed by the women.

I believe that this woman was already saved. In Matthew's gospel this particular event came right after Jesus had been speaking to the multitudes where He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light: and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28-30). Perhaps she was in the crowd that heard Jesus say that and hearing Jesus say that, came to Him and received forgiveness. It would seem from the story that she knew the Lord already. And it was probably when she heard that Jesus was at the house of Simon the Pharisee, she came with others to the feast, not to eat of the feast but just to be around there.

The houses all had open courtyards in the middle. And the house was built around an open courtyard. The courtyard was the place for the social activities. When they would have a feast with an honored guest, they would leave the front door open and people were free to come and go to hear the conversation and to see what was, and to hear the words really of the honored guest. Usually was a rabbi and they would come to hear the words of wisdom.

When Kay and I were in New Guinea, we were invited out to a village and the chieftain had prepared a feast for us. It was quite an experience. They dig a hole in the ground and they put rocks in it and they build a fire and get the rocks very hot. And then they lay these banana leaves over the hot rocks and then they put the food on the banana leaves. And then they put more banana leaves and more food, more banana leaves, and more food, and they just fill up the hole with food. And they have a bamboo that goes down on into the

bottom to the rocks and then when they get the hole filled with food, they cover it with dirt. They put the banana leaves on and they cover that with dirt. And then every once in a while they'll pour water down the bamboo shoot and it gives you the steamed vegetables and food in. Some of it was edible and some of it was questionable. Some of it was actually quite good. And so we were there, it was quite an experience because the village chieftain and all of the village leaders were there with us at the dinner. But all around the fence there were all these people. The whole village was congregated at the fence. They were outside and the little boys, all peeking in and watching us eat. And whenever we would have something that we sort of questioned, I would take it over to the fence and just sort of slip it to the little boys who were quite anxious to eat it.

But it was something like that where you have these kind of public feast. The public doesn't eat of the feast but they gather out of curiosity. There's a special guest and ceremonies and all. So it was with this woman. Joined the crowd who came in.

She stood behind Jesus. She began to weep, her tears falling on His feet. Twice we read of Jesus having His feet washed with tears. There's also another possibility here. Not just the tears that were shed at that moment, tears probably of joy, emotion, because of the transformation that Jesus had brought into her life. She couldn't quite fully comprehend the changes that have been wrought since she encountered Jesus. How dramatic the change has been. Thinking of His love and His tenderness, His compassion towards her knowing what she was.

But in those days, tears were considered a valuable keepsake. And whenever a person would cry, they had little tear bottles. They would hold these tear bottles up to their eyes and they would catch the tears. And so every woman had her little tear bottle filled with her tears which were sort of an emotional thing because it was a reminder of the sorrows and of the pain that they had experienced in life and then mingled with the tears of joy.

You can buy today those tear bottles in Israel. They're probably, they tell you these are part of the archaeological finds but they probably are made in one of the Arab factories over there. But they look authentic, they look old and they are shaped after the tear bottles that they did have. And so I have one of these little tear bottles. I don't have any tears in it but I have one of these little tear bottles and they are interesting. But they were prized very highly because the emotions of life were all bound up in this little bottle. People prize these quite highly.

It is quite possible that she took her tear bottle and poured it on the feet of Jesus. He is the end of a lot of tears, the tears of grief and sorrow that come into our lives as the result of sin. The pain that sin so often brings. And if it indeed was her tear bottle and that she put with the tears that she was shedding a rather poignant kind of an experience of just acknowledging the days of tears are over. My life's been transformed. My life's been changed.

She stood at His feet behind Him because He was reclining. His feet were behind Him and she stood there at His feet as He was facing across the table at the host. He was the guest of honor supposedly but not much honor was given to Him by the host. "And she began to wash His feet with tears"—so that "with tears" could be the tears that she was shedding at the moment plus the tear bottle—and she did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and then she kissed his feet." The Greek, the word kissed there is, to put it in modern English, she smothered His feet with kisses. In other words, she just was kissing. As Jesus later said, "she hasn't stopped kissing my feet." She was smothering His feet with kisses. And she anointed them with this perfume from her alabaster box.

Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spoke within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that is touching him: for she is a sinner (7:39).

They believed that defilement could be transferred by touching. If you would touch a person who was a sinner, you would be defiled. If you would touch a woman, you could be defiled. Touching a Gentile was defiling.

As we mentioned earlier, Jesus was heading towards the house of a Gentile when the Gentile centurion said, No, don't trouble Yourself. We remember how that Peter, when he went to the house of another

centurion Cornelius, in Caesarea, how that he was reluctant and hesitant to go into the house. Had he not had a vision in which the Lord told him, “Don’t call that unclean which I have cleansed” (Acts 10:15). Now you go, don’t ask any questions. Just do what’s bidden you. I’m sure he took a big swallow when he walked into the house of a Gentile. This was a no-no. He had never been in a house of a Gentile before in all of his life. This is breaking tradition. This is difficult. This is hard. And I’m sure there was just a lot of reluctance in Peter as he entered into the house of Cornelius, the house of a Gentile.

Mark Martin who pastors one of the Calvary’s in Phoenix was a Seventh Day Adventist pastor. He was listening to our radio broadcast in Phoenix, became quite interested in the teaching of the word. As we were going through Romans, he discovered the grace of God and a new relationship to God, not by the law but by grace. And so he left his pastorate in the Seventh Day Adventist church and he started a church he called Calvary Fellowship.

And so he called me after a time and he told me about his starting an independent church there. He was still enjoying the radio broadcast and wanted to meet me and wanted to seek affiliation with Calvary Chapel. He said, Actually, you’re the one that has taught me and brought me out of the bondage that I was in and I took the name Calvary. I was afraid to call it Calvary Chapel because I didn’t have permission but I call it Calvary Fellowship. So I said, Well it’s interesting Mark, I’m having a meeting over in Cottonwood next week with the pastors from Arizona. Why don’t you come on up to this conference and we’ll have a chance to sit down and talk to you about becoming affiliated with Calvary Chapel.

Mark came up to the conference. I met him and those Arizona fellows really know how to eat. They always have a great steak barbecue. It’s just really great. We sat down at the table and started to eat. I was sharing with Mark how that there was another Seventh Day Adventist pastor up in Fresno who left the ministry of the Seventh Day Adventist church and also wanted affiliation with Calvary Chapel. How that he was a great guy and we met him on several occasions but I said, He’s still hung up with the law. He’s still a vegetarian and he still doesn’t eat meat and he still seem to have these hang ups. And so he couldn’t really make a real transition into the Calvary Chapel because of his hang ups.

About that time they put the steaks down in front of us and we dug in. I didn’t know that but in all of his life, he had never eaten meat. But he downed the steak. I’m certain it was hard to swallow. All of the tradition and all. But he went home and he said to his wife, Honey, we are now really free.

But this business of touching and being defiled by touching. And the Pharisees were very, very severe in this. As we mentioned this morning, they would wrap their robes tightly around them so that the robes would not swish out and accidentally touch a woman or a Gentile or a sinful person.

And so the Pharisee when he saw this woman who had a reputation and he no doubt knew her. He did because he said, She’s a sinful woman, he knew her. And so when he saw this woman washing the feet of Jesus with her tears and wiping them with her hair, and then smothering them with kisses, he thought to himself, He can’t be a prophet. If He were a prophet, He would know who was touching Him. He would know what a sinner she is.

And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have something to say to you. And he said, Master, say on (7:40).

Jesus then gave him a little parable of,
the creditor who had two debtors: one owed him five hundred pence, and the other owed him fifty pence (7:41).

Translated into today would be something like fifty thousand dollars and five thousand dollars. And neither one was able to pay their debt, so he forgave both of them. Now which one [Jesus said] loved him the most? Simon said, I guess, the one that he forgave the most. And Jesus said, You have judged rightly (7:42,43).

And then Jesus went on to compare the hospitality that he had given to Jesus with the woman’s graciousness towards Him. He was sort of a very crude reception of Jesus. When you were invited to dinner in that eastern culture, as you arrive at the house the first thing is that there would be a servant at the door with a basin of water to wash your feet. You would leave your sandals at the door and they would wash your feet and you would enter in. The host would then kiss you in greeting. And then he would take a bit of

perfume, the essence of rose oil and put it on your forehead to just give a fragrance in the room bespeaking the fragrance of the conversation and all and the time that was shared together, that it might be a beautiful fragrant experience.

He said, Simon, you didn't do any of these courtesies for me. You had no water to pour on my feet. You didn't greet me with a kiss. Nor did you anoint my head. [You failed in the common courtesies offered to a guest.] But this woman, she washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. And she hasn't stopped kissing my feet from the time I came in. And she's anointed my feet with the perfume (7:44-46).

[And He said,] I say unto you, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven (7:47);

That's where it would appear that Jesus is talking about a past action. "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." He, perhaps, has already met her. She knew who He was. She came in gratitude.

for [He said] she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little (7:47).

There are people who are moral, good people. You talk to them about Jesus and they will talk to you about honesty and integrity and public service and being a good citizen in the community. They are moral, they don't cheat, they don't steal. In fact, by their estimation they live a pretty good life and oftentimes do not have a real sense of spiritual need. They're quite spiritually smog and complacent. These I think are some of the hardest people to reach.

You know where the easiest place for evangelism is in all the world? The prisons. Evangelism is just a snap there. These fellows all recognize their need. They're looking for help. And when they are truly converted, they become real dynamos because they love much. They realize they've been forgiven much. So little love, much love. And we all fall in one category or the other, or somewhere in between. Where would you rate yourself? Much love? Great love for the Lord? Deeply passionate towards Him? Or is there just a little love? Or are you in between?

On a scale of one to ten, where would you rate your love? Five, six, you realize where that is? Middle ground, it's called lukewarm. Neither hot, neither cold. The Lord wants you to love Him with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength, and those that are forgiven much find it easy to love Him much.

That doesn't mean that you have to be a rank sinner to love much. And that you should go out and just really drink of the dregs of sin in order that He might forgive you and you can then love Him a lot. It's just our attitude towards Him. The thing is, we all of us are sinners, whether we owe five thousand or fifty thousand, we are all sinners. It doesn't make any difference if you're a good sinner or a bad sinner, you're a sinner. If you're a cultured sinner or uncultured sinner, you're still a sinner. And there's a lot of cultured sin around.

None of us can atone for our sin. We are all spiritually bankrupt. Without His forgiveness, we've all sinned enough to condemn ourselves to an eternal destiny apart from God. The beautiful thing is He offers forgiveness. And once we've received that forgiveness, the joy, the blessing, the happiness as David expressed it, "O how blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven" (Psalm 32:1). So Jesus said she was forgiven and thus she loved much.

And then he said to her, Thy sins are forgiven (7:48).

That created a stir to those who were there at the meal.

They began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also (7:49)?

This isn't the first time this happened. As He was teaching in Capernaum, you remember the story of the man who was palsied and his friends brought him and they couldn't get in so they let him down through the roof. And the first thing Jesus said to him, Thy sins are forgiven, and it created the uproar. Who is He to forgive, only God can forgive sins. And Jesus said, What's easier to say, Your sins are forgiven, Arise, talk your bed and walk? But that you may know that I have power on earth to forgive sins, He said to the man with the palsy, Rise, take your bed and walk. Thy sins are forgiven. What beautiful words when spoken to us by the Lord.

Who can forgive sins but God? That was a correct evaluation. Only God can forgive sin, for sin is against God. David when he prayed for forgiveness said, "Against thee and thee only, have I sinned, and done this great iniquity in thy sight" (Psalm 51:4). Have mercy upon me, O God, according to the multitude

of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (Psalm 51:1). Calling unto God for forgiveness because only God can forgive. But Jesus was proving that He was God. And so now again, He says, “Thy sins are forgiven.”

And then he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee (7:50);

That’s always true, “By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8,9). And so, “Thy faith hath saved thee,”
go in peace (7:50).

One of the characteristics of sin is that it leaves your mind in a constant turmoil. When you are living in sin, there is that consciousness of sin that creates just an unrest in your soul. You know you’re doing wrong. You know you shouldn’t be doing it. And as you’re doing it, you’re miserable because you know you shouldn’t be. And yet the flesh is drawing you to it and so you find yourself being torn, torn by the lust of the flesh and torn by the conviction of the Holy Spirit. And you find yourself in this miserable state of just being ripped to pieces.

But once you’ve forsaken the sin and found forgiveness, what peace there is. What glorious peace. Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest.” And then He added, “You shall find rest for your soul” (Matthew 11:28,29). The glorious consequence of being forgiven your sins is that glorious rest and peace, “Go in peace.”

Tonight if you’re struggling with sin, if you’re in a battle and you know that misery of being torn by the desires of your flesh and by the tug of the Spirit, you can go in peace tonight. You can resolve that whole issue. You can surrender that to Jesus Christ tonight and He will forgive. “If we confess our sins, He’s faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). He’ll cleanse you tonight and you can go in peace. Even right now where you’re sitting, you can just ask the Lord to help you, to take away the sin.

Right now you can ask for His strength and power over that sin that’s tearing you up and ripping you up and you can find peace and rest in Jesus.

Father, we thank You for the love that Jesus has for sinning man. And Lord we thank You that as sinners we can touch You and You don’t recoil, and Lord as we reach out that Your hand is there to hold us and to help us. And we ask Lord that You’ll help us tonight. For those Lord that are in this struggle against the flesh, may they begin to experience even this night Your help, Your strength, Your victory. Give them power to overcome evil. In Jesus’ name, Amen.