

THE HOME OF SIMON THE PHARISEE TO SAVE A SINNER
THE HOME OF SIMON THE PHARISEE TO SAVE A SINNER (LUKE 7:36)

The feast held in the home of the Pharisee presents problems. Why did Simon invite Jesus into his home? Was he trying to enhance his reputation as a generous host? There were others who dined with him (see Luke 7:49). Was he hoping to expose violations of Hebrew law regarding the washing of hands before meals? He believed Jesus might be a prophet, but was he hoping to learn more during the meal? His early condemnation of the Savior revealed a need of understanding and concern. He was a typical Pharisee whose life was dominated by tradition.

The appearance of the immoral woman was not surprising, for the presence of such people was welcomed at functions where guests desired illicit entertainment. That unexpected visitor did certain things destined to make her famous: (1) she came with a gift, (2) stood behind him weeping, (3) washed His feet with her tears, (4) wiped them with her hair, (5) kissed His feet, and (6) anointed His feet with ointment.

Her Reputation... How Condemned

Apparently this woman was a lady of the night who earned a living by breaking the heart of God. She had evidently invested some of her money in precious ointment which she hoped would increase her attractiveness. It supplied aroma which lured customers into moral degradation. Nothing was recorded to explain her first contact with the Savior, therefore it must be assumed she had attended one of His open-air meetings where her life was transformed. His message illuminated the dark recesses of her soul, and forgetting other people, she was condemned by her conscience. It is interesting that she and the proud Pharisee were brought together by Luke to provide an illuminating contrast. Simon the Pharisee was proud, pitiable, and popular, the woman was defiled, disturbed, and determined. Yet the woman had a far better chance of being forgiven than the self-confident host.

Her Resolve. . . How Concerned

Perhaps this woman had listened to Jesus and had gone away troubled. If that were true, she returned later to discover the Preacher was being entertained in a nearby home. The Bible says, "When she

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knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house..." Evidently, the woman made inquiries and was told of the invitation given by Simon. That could have hindered an ordinary person, but this lady earnestly desired to meet the Preacher and was ready to overcome any obstacle preventing that achievement. Her appearance in Simon's home had far-reaching repercussions. It was not difficult to gain admittance to the home; she might even have been there earlier!

Her Repentance... How Convincing

Simon, who was haughty, proud, and self-confident, expressed no surprise when the woman unceremoniously entered, and even his criticism of Christ was not audibly heard. "He spake within himself." The woman looked around, recognized the Lord, and walking toward Him, "stood at his feet behind him weeping." It was doubtful whether she had ever wept in the presence of men. Laughter was the hallmark of her trade, but her attitude had changed. She felt unclean, unwanted, and undeserving of favor. There was great similarity between this episode and another which told of Christ's visit to the home of Simon the leper. There were two Simons, two women, and two boxes of very precious ointment. One woman came to Christ because of her defilement; Mary came because of her devotion. The one Simon

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invited the Lord to supper because of unrevealed reasons. The other welcomed the Lord because he desired to pay a debt of love owed to his Savior. The woman's tears revealed the sorrow filling the soul of a penitent woman who was morally bankrupt.

Her Regeneration. . . How Complete

"She kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment." When that treasure was purchased, she had no idea how it would ultimately be used. She hoped it would increase her attractiveness, but the meeting with Jesus of Nazareth changed her plans. Indiscretion and failure terminated when a new life began. She would never need that kind of adornment again; the box of perfume was given to Jesus as evidence of a new commitment. Paul was correct when he wrote, "if any man [or woman] be in Christ, he [or she] is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

"Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him:

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for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). When Simon watched from the head of the table, his eyes had become speculative. He had considered the possibility that Jesus was some kind of a prophet but evidently did not believe compassion, kindness, and tenderness were attributes of God's chosen servants. He had his own ideas concerning what was right or wrong and appointed himself judge of his Guest.

The message concerning the creditor who had two debtors destroyed Simon's conceit. Jesus spoke of two men who owed five hundred and fifty pence respectively. Both were forgiven, but the Lord asked, "Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?" Simon's answer revealed embarrassment, for he answered: "I suppose he, to whom he forgave most." Probably the Lord smiled when He replied, "Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman and said unto Simon: Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:43-48).

The phrase "since the time I came in" might suggest the woman was within the Pharisee's home even before the arrival of the Lord. Her repentance and love were manifest as soon as Jesus entered. If that were true, then the Savior planned two things when He accepted Simon's invitation. He desired to rescue a woman from evil and at the same time deliver a message to the Pharisee and his guests. The interpretation of the earlier verse presents another problem. Did the Lord find the woman, or did she find Him?

An elderly man, recently converted, was taunted by his companion who said, "Sam, they tell me that last night you found Jesus." The man replied, "No George, I didn't find Jesus—He found me."

Her Redeemer. . . How Compassionate

Sometimes white lilies emerge from the filthiest of ponds, and this was so when a redeemed woman forsook the repulsiveness of her profession. She listened to every word uttered by the Lord, and

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the impact upon her soul became evident.

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(1) How Different! When the Pharisee saw the woman anointing the Lord with ointment, he murmured disdainfully, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." It would not have mattered what she did, the critical host would have condemned her. Yet Jesus, the chief guest, was kind, sympathetic, and loving. The warmth of His compassion brought hope to her despondent soul. He made her feel that God loved her, that her sins could be forgiven. The Pharisee represented relentless laws, but the Lord was introducing a new way of helping people in need. "For the law was given by Moses [and misinterpreted by the Pharisees], but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

(2) How Definite! It was said of the Savior that "he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt. 7:29). That fact was emphasized during the supper in Simon's house. Christ's defense of the woman was remarkably effective. When He contrasted the host's hospitality with the attitude of the repentant sinner, the impact upon the proud Pharisee was unmistakable. Jesus concluded His remarks by saying, "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much" (Luke 7:47). This was a direct contradiction of the teaching of the Pharisees who taught that pardon was the reward of endeavor. Sinners were required to work their way into the favor of God. Jesus rejected that doctrine and insisted that love for God was better than sacrifices. He endorsed the words of David who said, "For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:16-17). David, the king of Israel, looked into his own soul and trembled; the woman looked into the face of Jesus and believed.

(3) How Discerning! The Pharisee remembered her evil reputation. Christ saw what she could become and said, "Thy faith hath saved thee" (Luke 7:50). She had not complied with any of the laws related to repentance and sacrifice, and as far as is known, was not even religiously inclined. She was an unfortunate sinner struggling to survive amid circumstances which threatened to destroy her soul. Simon believed he was pleasing God; the woman hardly knew where she was until she met Jesus. The listeners at the supper quickly recognized the Lord's claim to be unique. They said, "Who

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is this that forgiveth sins also?" They were evidently aware of His reputation as a healer, but even miracles were less important than His ability to pardon sin. They believed that only God had the authority and power to forgive transgressions. At a later date the religious leaders accused Jesus, saying, "This man maketh himself equal with God." Describing that incident, John wrote, "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:18). While the people in Simon's house considered this matter, the Lord saw a precious soul emerging from degradation. His words, "Thy faith hath saved thee" could have great depths of meaning. Was He suggesting that in addition to being saved from immorality, she was being delivered eternally from the consequences of evil?

(4) How Delightful! "Go in peace." Apparently Jesus often used these words, for He repeated them when speaking to the wom-

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an who touched the hem of His garment (see Luke 8:48). All people who have received pardon from the Lord should "go in peace" and never worry about former indiscretions. When God forgives, He forgets. He said, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34). if God has buried sins in the sea of forgetfulness, Christians should leave them there! To resurrect former mistakes and worry about them is to destroy the peace that should fill the souls of all believers. Since God has forgotten our sins, we should emulate His example.

Perhaps one of the pleasures in eternity will be listening to this woman's testimony. We have no information about anything that happened after her departure from the home of the Pharisee. Did she marry or seek new employment? Was she ever tempted to return to her former occupation, and did she overcome as she remembered her meeting with the Savior? Jesus said He came into the world to save sinners. The woman would have appreciated that statement. Had He not entered into the home of Simon to save her? The great Physician had transformed a part of the Pharisee's house into a consulting room where perfect health was restored to her ailing soul.

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