

Introduction

How much has God forgiven you? In [Luke 6](#), Jesus taught that we tend to be far more aware of the speck in our brother's eye than the log in our own eye. [Luke 7:36-50](#) explains why that tends to happen. This passage contrasts a Pharisee with a sinful woman. Their view of themselves shaped their view of Christ.

The sinful woman

[Luke 7:36-38](#) “36 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. 37 And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, 38 and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.”

The Pharisee: Verse 40 tells us this Pharisee was named Simon. The Pharisees were a sect within Judaism that began around 150 B.C. The Pharisees emphasized strict obedience to the Mosaic Law, including their traditions. After the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, the Sadducees (chief priests) lost much of their authority and influence and the Pharisees rose to even greater power. Rabbinic Judaism, which is mostly what we see in Judaism today, developed out of Pharisaic Judaism.

A woman came into Simon's house while Jesus was eating. *What did she do to Jesus's feet?* [Luke 7:38](#) “... weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.”

[Luke 7:39-40](#) “39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” 40 And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.””

What problem did Simon, the Pharisee, have with Jesus's interaction with the woman? [Luke 7:39](#) “... 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.” Jesus letting a sinful woman anoint and kiss His feet, caused Simon to doubt that He was a true prophet.

Illustration of debtors

[Luke 7:41–43](#) “41 “A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” 43 Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.””

In the illustration, how much did each debtor owe? [Luke 7:41](#) “... One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.” **Denarius:** A denarius (plural - denarii) was a Roman coin made of silver. It was equivalent of a daily wage (e.g., [Matt 20:2](#)). So, one man owed a month and a half of wages. The other man owed more than a year of wages.

What does Jesus mean that the one with the greater debt will love the moneylender more? Jesus’s point is that a person who is **deep** in debt is more grateful for freedom from that debt than the person who has a small debt. One’s view is “I can pay this back somehow.” The other’s view is “I don’t think I will ever be able to pay this back.”

The woman’s forgiveness

[Luke 7:44–47](#) “44 Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.””

What was different between Simon’s and the woman’s treatment of Jesus? [Luke 7:44–46](#) “44 ... you gave me no water for my feet ... 45 You gave me no kiss ... 46 You did not anoint my head with oil ...” [Luke 7:44–46](#) “44 ... she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 ... from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 ... she has anointed my feet with ointment.” **Oil/ointment:** It may be significant that the cultural expectation was to anoint your guest’s head with oil (which was inexpensive), but the woman anointed Jesus’s feet with ointment/perfume (which was expensive).

In light of Jesus’s illustration in 7:41-43, why did the woman show Jesus greater love than Simon? [Luke 7:47](#) “... her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” The woman expressed love more than Simon because she was forgiven more.

There are two important points to note in verse 47. First, the woman’s sins were many, yet she was forgiven. Forgiveness of sin does not depend upon **how many** or **how severe** your sins are. Forgiveness of sin depends on **how extensive** God’s **grace** is.

Second, it is important to note that they did not owe different debts. [Romans 6:23](#) “23 For the wages of sin is death ...” The debt we owe Christ for atonement of our sins is eternal death. This is equally true of all people. The worst sinner owes the same debt as the faithful church-member. The distinction between Simon and the woman is that Simon did not realize he owed a sin-debt at all and the woman understood that her sin-debt was **so deep** that she would never be able to pay it. Notice in the illustration ([Luke 7:42](#)), neither debtor could pay their debt.

[Luke 7:48-50](#) “48 And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” 49 Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” 50 And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.””

What did those who ate with Jesus question about Him? [Luke 7:49](#) “... Who is this, who even forgives sins?” This is the second time in Luke that Jesus has forgiven someone’s sins ([Luke 5:20](#)). As people pointed out in [Luke 5](#), only God can forgive sins. Jesus only has authority to forgive sins because He is God.

Conclusion

How much has God forgiven you? Am I the righteous Pharisee who loves little, not because I have been forgiven little, but because I don’t acknowledge how much forgiveness I need. Am I the righteous Pharisee who sees clearly the flaw in my brother’s eye?

*Or am I the sinful woman who loves much, because I **know** how much I need forgiveness. Am I the sinful woman who sees the log in my own eye, seeking God’s mercy rather than condemning my brother. Those who are forgiven much, love much.*