

Series: God's Life-Changing Truth – Part 10

Luke 7:36-50 ESV

Can Well-Known Sinners Be Forgiven?

Sunday, March 22 at 8:00 & 10:45

Fifth Sunday in Lent – 2015

During Lent: Wednesday Services at 11 & 7; Meals at 12 & 6

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Most people have a reputation – *something that others tend to know about them!* Some have **good** reputations—*faithful, kind, honest*, but others have **bad** reputations—*thief, liar, bum*, or even worse—*prostitute, rapist, mass murderer!*

Sometimes we might make a connection between someone's *reputation* and *his ability to be saved*. For example: God could certainly save a bum, *but could He save a mass murderer?* So we might conclude that such a *reputation* would result in *disqualification*. Let's see if that is true as we focus on **Luke 7:36-50**. Let's also see if we can answer today's key question: Can well-known sinners be forgiven?

1. **The Setting:** ³⁶ **One of the Pharisees asked him [Jesus] to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table** [*possibly the seat of honor*]. // Earlier in Luke chapter 7 the Bible records that Jesus raised a widow's son to life and spoke very highly of John the Baptist. Then a Pharisee in the crowd, *who had possibly witnessed the raising and heard the teaching*, invited Jesus to eat with him.
2. **The Incident:** ³⁷ **And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner** [*Likely a prostitute or an adulteress.*]

(*TLSB, 1724*)], when she learned that he [Jesus] 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. // So the woman had a reputation – *and it was not good*, yet amazingly and boldly she came into the Pharisee's house to where Jesus was reclining. Then, *shockingly to some or to most*, she tenderly applied her ♦tears, ♦kisses, and ♦ointment to Jesus' feet. But why? God had made her sorry for her sins and gave her faith to trust in Jesus as her Savior, *so she expressed that sorrow to her Savior!* On another occasion Jesus had said: "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." (Matt. 5:4 NAS)

3. **The Story:** ³⁹ **Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself [in his mind], "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." ⁴¹ **"A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii [about 500 days wages – a very large amount], and the other fifty [about 50 days wages – a significant but much lesser amount]."** 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."

// So we can readily understand: Forgiven a little, *love a little*; forgiven a lot, *love a lot*. But what does it mean to love? Even though many may say, “I love you,” that is *not* love! Love is not *saying* but *doing*. Which is better: (1) Many loving words, *but no loving actions*. Or (2) many loving actions, *but no loving words*. The answer is obvious! So what does it mean to love? We love **God** by *doing His Word!* We love **others** by *doing for them according to their needs*. So for the woman, *who was a known sinner*, she did not SAY, “I’m sorry,” but she DID: I’m sorry!

4. **The Teaching:** ⁴⁴ Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon [the Pharisee into whose home He had been invited], “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. // So she took loving action to wash Jesus’ feet!
 - ⁴⁵ You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. // “In the ancient East, the kiss of greeting is equivalent to a handshake.” (TLSB, 1724) So she took loving action to welcome Jesus!
 - ⁴⁶ You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. // “Offering olive oil for personal grooming was a personal courtesy, reserved for important guests.” (TLSB, 1724) So she took loving action to express Jesus’ importance!

⁴⁷ Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven--for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” // Think about the life-long Christian who lives an *ordinary* Christian life, versus the convicted felon who – *following his conversion to Christ* – lives an *extraordinary* Christian life! Such things can be common, *but they come from a wrong perspective*. The one with the *fewest* sins and the one with the *most* sins both deserve hell; therefore, *having received God’s gift of heaven*, they should both *love much* out of thanksgiving for God’s goodness!

5. **The Application:** ⁴⁸ And he [Jesus] 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.” // So earlier, *by grace through faith*, she had received God’s forgiveness. But now, *through the very words of Jesus*, she received the assurance of God’s forgiveness and the blessing of God’s peace! Even we, *when we know Jesus as Savior*, are already forgiven; however, to *hear His words in the absolution and receive His body and blood in the Supper* fill us with assurance and peace!

Conclusion: So, can well-known sinners be forgiven? *Yes!* Jesus lived and died for ➡the least of sinners, ➡the most of sinners, and ➡everyone in between. Therefore, let us †rejoice in Jesus our Savior and †love much *because we have been forgiven much!* And all God’s people said: **Amen!**