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TWO TYPES OF SINNERS.

– LUKE 7:36-50. – *MAY 13.* –

"Thy faith hath saved thee."

SIMON was a very common name amongst the Jews, and hence it is not so remarkable that there were two Simons at whose homes Jesus was entertained. It is a little peculiar, however, that there are so many features of similarity connected with the two entertainments – that at both of them our Lord's feet were anointed, etc. (Compare Matt. 26:6-13.) It is supposed that about a year and a half elapsed between the two events, that recorded by Matthew being just prior to our Lord's death, "anointing for my burial."

In this lesson we see Simon, a Pharisee, evidently considerably impressed with our Lord's character and teachings, and more favorably inclined toward him than the majority. He thought it would be pleasant to invite Jesus to dinner, thus to honor him, and possibly have a little notoriety himself in connection with the noted Nazarene.

When our Lord accepted the invitation and attended the dinner Simon treated him kindly and politely, but did not go to any extreme of politeness in his entertainment; perhaps thinking of him as not being [R2626 : page 138] used to special attentions, but rather as being a companion of fishermen and common people generally. Simon therefore did not salute him with a kiss on his arrival, as was usual with honored guests, for that would have seemed like bestowing too much honor upon an ordinary person whom he, as a Pharisee, was not yet prepared to fully endorse; nor did he send the servant to take off the Master's sandals and to wash his feet, according to the custom of the best entertainers of that time. He may have said to himself, This man and his disciples are not used to being entertained in such style, and my servants would recognize themselves as being on a par at least with any of these men except the Teacher himself. Without, therefore,

going to the extremes of polite entertaining, the Pharisee had nevertheless cordially welcomed the Lord to his table, feeling no doubt that in doing this he was honoring the Lord, and not sufficiently realizing that he was the one who was being honored, in the privilege of entertaining so noble a guest. How will Simon regard the matter when, in the resurrection time (during the Millennium), he ascertains that his guest was "the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"?

The Apostle urges upon us all, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels [God's messengers] unawares." The Lord wishes his people to be generous with such things as they have (but not to be vaingloriously extravagant), hence it is written again, "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet [proper] and it tendeth to poverty." It is a part of our present lesson to learn of our own mean selfishness, which all have inherited through the fall, and gradually, under the instruction of the Lord's Word, to get the victory over this and become more generous – more like our Father in Heaven.

Let us be specially generous and hospitable toward the "brethren," who really represent the Lord himself; not only as "ambassadors for God," but also as "members of the body of Christ."

The "woman of the city" mentioned, was evidently a common character, widely known to the people of the city, though she might not be known to Jesus and the disciples, who were not residents. Whatever the woman's previous life may have been, she had experienced deep contrition of heart, and a desire to live a better life. She had heard about Jesus, the great Teacher, and that unlike the Pharisees he did not disdain to speak with and to encourage fallen ones and to help them up again. She felt that she would like to go to the Lord in prayer for forgiveness, and would like to make a fresh start in life, to seek thereafter to live more consistently. She knew not how to

approach the matter; she knew not what to say respecting herself; she would merely take a little offering in her hand, and while he was reclining at dinner, after the custom of that time, and while his feet would be easily accessible to her, she would venture to anoint them with the fine ointment which she had brought with her. Saying not a word, her heart too full of utterance, she reached the Master's feet, and there her tears trickled over them. By her tears he should know, more eloquently than she could voice her sentiments in words, what were the true longings of her heart for forgiveness and for reconciliation.

How merciful and considerate of our needs, is the Lord's provision that when we come penitently to his feet for forgiveness we are not required to approach him through another, nor to formulate our petition in some exact form of language – he can read our hearts and accepts our tears and even our humblest efforts to make amends and to serve the "members of his body." And even though he may delay the message of forgiveness it is but to let the roots of penitence and faith sink deeper in our hearts.

Jesus for a time seemed to heed her not, and she may have questioned whether or not he was misunderstanding her motives and her prayer, but the fullness of her heart found vent in still more tears, and tenderly she wiped his feet and anointed them with the ointment. The Pharisee, meantime, was saying within himself: Now it is most fortunate that I invited Jesus to dinner to-day, and it is fortunate that this woman came in; it affords a proof, a test, respecting the ability of Jesus to read the hearts of those about him. If he were a prophet, if he were specially empowered and enlightened of God, he would have known the character of this woman; but he evidently does not know her character, and therefore is permitting her to anoint his feet, and this seems to be a proof that he is not a prophet.

But Jesus, fully conscious of all that was going on, and with a clear knowledge of the heart of the poor woman at his feet, and of the self-satisfied Pharisee who entertained him, was planning a way by

which he might do good to both of them – a way by which he might set before all present a great truth. Therefore he put a parable to Simon, saying that a certain creditor had two debtors, the one owing a large amount, the other a small amount, and when they were totally unable to pay he cheerfully and promptly forgave them both. Then our Lord pointed his lesson on this little parable, by enquiring which of **[R2626 : page 139]** the two forgiven ones would be most appreciative of the creditor's leniency? Simon, who had not as yet caught the import of the parable, promptly answered that the one who had the largest debt forgiven would undoubtedly be the one who would be most appreciative, and our Lord approved this answer. Then directing attention to the woman, he reminded Simon that although he had been kind in inviting him to dinner, and although he appreciated his attentions, nevertheless the still greater attentions of the woman, and the still greater marks of respect which she had showed, were evidences that while they both loved, the woman loved the more; and the intimation clearly is that the greater love was developed by a greater realization of sin and a greater desire to be relieved from it.

Of course, in one sense of the word, all are sinners, all have come short of the glory of God, and are hopeless without forgiveness; yet the Pharisee occupied a different position from the woman, because under the Jewish Law Covenant he was already occupying a standpoint of typical justification, and was seeking to maintain that standing by living a life of strict regard for the divine Law. On the other hand, the woman, although under the same Covenant, by living an abandoned life in open violation of the Law, had lost her interest in the national typical justification, and was therefore in a much larger sense of the word a sinner. Simon knew very well that while he was trying to keep the Law he was not keeping it perfectly, but infringed it in various ways from time to time, and yet he was not wilfully an infractor of the Law, as was the woman; hence in this sense of the word there was the wide difference between great sin and less sin; yet both needed the Saviour, and if the Pharisee had realized the truth of the matter he needed the Saviour just as much as did the woman; for

the Law Covenant could not give him everlasting life – to attain that he must admit his sin and accept forgiveness and salvation from sin and its penalty, death, as a gift from the Saviour who honored him by consenting to be his guest.

Then Jesus turned to the woman and said to her, "Thy sins are forgiven." What words those must have been to her! Her prayer was answered – a prayer, which had arisen in her heart, and which had expressed itself through tears and ointment, had been heard, and she was forgiven and all the past treated as forever blotted out. How thankful she must have felt! Poor Simon, however, so far as we know, did not come to the point of saying, Lord, I also am a sinner, and even though I have loved less than this woman I also need to be forgiven, and I pray for the forgiveness of my sins, that I may be counted one of your followers. No; the very fact that he had a religious standing in the nominal Church, and had made a profession of holiness, seems to have stood in his way, and to have hindered him from accepting the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins. And so it is right along. How frequently do we see that people who have been living moral lives, evidently seeking to walk in paths of righteousness, are much less prepared to accept forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ than are some others who have been living more carelessly and who awaken to a realization of their undone condition, and go to the Lord more contritely and more earnestly, and exercise a greater faith, and feel for him consequently a greater love!

There is no intimation, however, that because of his failure to ask forgiveness, and to become a follower of Jesus, Simon was condemned to "hell," etc.; quite to the contrary, he simply followed the course of his nation (blinded by prejudice and false traditions of men). Their rejection of Jesus lost to them the privileges of joint-heirship in Christ's Kingdom, and led to their national rejection from God's favor until the opening of the Millennial age. Then, as the Apostle clearly shows, their blindness shall be removed and they shall be blest with a much clearer knowledge of the truth. Then the Lord

will "pour upon them the spirit of prayer and supplication, and they shall look upon him whom they pierced, and shall mourn because of him." Then when they weep as did the woman with the ointment, God, through the glorified Christ, will have mercy on them and forgive their sins. Then their trial for everlasting life will begin. – See Rom. 11:25-32; Zech. 12:10. [R2627 : page 139]

The other guests at the table were particularly struck with our Lord's declaration that the woman's sins were forgiven her. Not recognizing the speaker to be the Messiah, the Son of God, they questioned the propriety of such words, but this was one reason why our Lord uttered the words; it was one of his unostentatious methods of calling attention to the fact that he was the Messiah, and that as such, and in view of the work which he was yet to do all power to forgive sins was in his hands.

Then he said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace." He wished her to know that it was not her tears that had brought the forgiveness; that it was not the value of the ointment that had moved him to forgive her, but that the thing which was pleasing in his sight, and on account of which her sins were forgiven, was her faith. She not only realized her own sinful condition, but she had realized that this great Teacher had the power to forgive her and to restore her, and she had trusted, and acted upon this, and our Lord wished her to realize that the reward she had received was because of exercise of this faith. And so we may realize in respect to all of the Lord's favors in the case of each one of his people. When we come unto the Lord, with tears of penitence, we are to know that they do not prevail; and if we present gifts we are to know that they do not prevail, and that the tears and the offerings could avail us nothing except as we present to the Lord our faith, accepting him as the one who has power to forgive sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And not only is this necessary at the beginning of the Christian way, but similarly faith is necessary all the journey through. If we do not continue in faith we cannot progress. "According to thy faith be it unto

thee," would seem to be the Lord's method of dealing with all who are his disciples, from first to last of their Christian walk and experience.

The center of the lesson, then, is abiding faith in the Lord: faith when he seems not to notice us; faith when things seem to be going prosperously with us in our spiritual affairs and in our temporal affairs; **[R2627 : page 140]** and faith equally strong when the currents and forces seem all to be against us. The victory that overcometh the world is the faith that in all conditions is able to look up to the Lord with absolute confidence in his goodness and faithfulness, and to realize that according to his promise eventually all things will work together for good to us because we are his people. – 1 John 5:5; Rom. 8:29.
