

Jesus Forgives

Be a woman who accepts His forgiveness

By Mary L. Dubler DVM, MS

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Now we look at two unnamed but well-remembered women who had encounters with Jesus. The first is the prostitute or woman of questionable morals who enters the home of Simon the Pharisee and the other is the woman caught in adultery who is brought to Jesus. Let's examine the story of the prostitute as it is given in the book of Luke 7:36-50:

Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner." And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher." "A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. "When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?" Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly." 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. "You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. "You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?" And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

This woman who was a sinner enters Simon's house and anoints Jesus' feet with perfume and tears. The fact that she is labeled as a sinner and is looked at so scornfully by Simon indicates that she must have indeed had grievous sins (Jesus Himself says that her sins "are many"). Her behavior also witnesses to the grievousness of her sin in that she can't even face Jesus but approaches Him from behind. She is ashamed and does not want to meet His gaze. However her desire for forgiveness overflows in her tears and she anoints Jesus' feet with a mixture of tears and perfume.

Since Simon had not provided water for Jesus' feet (as was the custom for a host to do so his guests could wash the dust from their feet) the woman's tears and the perfume mix with dust. She is not put off by this, however, and she kisses Jesus' feet and uses her hair to wipe and clean them. She is taking the most humble and lowliest position, showing Jesus her love and adoration.

The woman undoubtedly has heard Jesus speak or heard about His message of purity, compassion, forgiveness and love, and she knows in her heart that He is the answer to her desire to be free of her burden of sin. She finds out where Jesus is, gets the vial of perfume and comes to Simon's house. Jesus and Simon are not by themselves; the story relates that others are reclining at the table with these two men. Imagine the courage it took for this sinful woman to enter the house of someone she knew would be disgusted at the sight of her. Imagine the courage it took for her to go around that table full of men and stand at Jesus' feet. What is driving her past these obstacles? It is *faith*. She knows that her hope lies only in Jesus, and she must do this for Him.

While the woman is kissing and anointing Jesus' feet, Simon is thinking, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner." This thought reveals that Simon is actually questioning Jesus' credibility, basically saying that no man of God would ever let a woman like that touch him.

Jesus knows what is in Simon's thoughts. So He tells Simon a parable about the two debtors, and Simon has to admit that the person who is forgiven more loves more. Then Jesus contrasts the outpouring of the woman's love with the indifference and lack of hospitality showed by Simon the Pharisee.

Jesus caps this amazing scene by stating that because of her love and faith in the Lord her sins are forgiven. The woman hears the words she longs to hear, "Your sins have been forgiven." The last thing Jesus says to her is, "Go in peace." Imagine the peace released into this woman's heart when Jesus tells her that her sins are forgiven! Now the tears are shed for joy and not as a result of the sorrowful, hopeless weight of sin. She is free! Not free to go into the life she had before, but free to be a new creature who says no to sin.

Now let's look at the account of the woman caught in adultery. This is found in John 8:2-11:

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?" They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."

What an incredible scene this is. Undoubtedly there is a sizeable crowd gathered around Jesus as He teaches in the temple, and the scribes and Pharisees bring a woman to the center of the court. She has been caught in the act of adultery. Imagine the shame and fear she must be feeling as she stands in the midst of all these people with her accusers on one side and Jesus on the other. She has been brought to Jesus as an example and as a trap. The Pharisees are not as interested in her as they are about getting Jesus to say something for which they would have grounds to accuse Him.

What is the trap? If Jesus had said, “Stone her,” He would have broken the Roman law which stated that only the Roman government could condemn someone to death. In addition, condemning her would go against His teachings about forgiveness. But Jesus had also previously stated that He did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it [Matthew 5:17]. The Pharisees wanted Jesus to contradict Himself.

How does Jesus avoid the trap? As the scribes and Pharisees press Him to answer He says to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” The older wiser men leave first, being quicker to acknowledge their own sins. Soon Jesus is left alone. Now the adulterous woman stands before the sinless One. Jesus says to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” She then says, “No one, Lord.” Notice that she humbly acknowledges Him as Lord. She realizes that her life is in His hands. She probably also realizes that she deserves to die.

Only Jesus had the moral authority to condemn her to death, yet He does not. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him [John 3:17]. Jesus is willing to carry her sin on His back to the cross so that she might live. Jesus’ gift to the woman caught in adultery is grace and forgiveness.

The law came in so that the transgression would increase, but where sin increased grace abounded all the more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 5:20-21

The law was given so that sin would be revealed for what it is and so that there would be consequences to sin. Certainly this woman would still have to bear many consequences from her sin of adultery. What we see Jesus give the woman is abundant grace; however it is not grace without responsibility. He charges her, “From now on sin no more.”

The grace Jesus gives is given through *righteousness*. He is righteous, and He calls us to be righteous as well. We are not to go on sinning to receive more grace; we are to die to sin.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall

also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Romans 6:1-7

We will still sin because we will not be perfect this side of heaven, but our desire should be to resist the temptation to sin and to be more and more like Christ. If we do sin, then if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [I John 1:9].

The woman of questionable morals and the woman caught in adultery. Why are these women unnamed? The answer could be as simple as no one was able to learn their names. It could be so that we could more easily insert our own names into these situations. Are you a sinner? So am I. We need acceptance and love, forgiveness and peace just like these two women did.

Jesus offers all these things and more, but we must first go before Him in an attitude of love, gratitude and faith. Have courage like the woman of questionable morals who went into Simon's house to see Jesus. He bids us come, warts and all; He will not reject us, no matter how dirty, how sinful, or how unlovable we feel.

When we come to Jesus we must stand humbly before Him, acknowledging Him as Lord as did the woman caught in adultery. We must not try to defend ourselves, somehow justifying our sin. We must confess our sins, and when we do, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [I John 1:9].

After Jesus forgives us, He then gives us two commands. "Go in peace." "From now on sin no more."

In order to "Go in peace" we cannot hold on to self condemnation or bitterness regarding past failures or hurts. Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death [Romans 8:1-2]. Nor can we be unwilling to forgive others. For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions [Matthew 6:14-15].

Just as important as being able to "Go in peace" is the command "From now on sin no more." God is the God of the second chance, however it is not with liberty to continue in sin; He calls us to righteousness. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace [Romans 6:12-14].

How appropriate that these women are unnamed, because our names so easily apply. But just as they were sinners and so are we, we also can go to Jesus, be forgiven, forsake sin, and go in peace. Be a woman who accepts His forgiveness.

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Questions for you to ponder:

1. Do you have any sin that you feel is so bad that Jesus would never forgive you? He forgave the prostitute and the woman caught in adultery. He will forgive you if you approach Him in humility, confess and ask for forgiveness.

2. What is the correlation between forgiveness and love as shown to Simon in the parable of the two debtors?

3. Read Matthew chapter 5. How did the way Jesus handled this situation “fulfill the law?”

4. Read Psalm 32. What happens if you keep silent about your sins?

5. What does it mean to “Go in peace?”