

Meeting Expectations,  
February 3, 2013

part 3 of Relating to God series

What would you do... if you were the worst sinner in town? What would you do if you were the worst sinner in town and felt the weight of your guilt every time someone looked at you because they know you are the worst sinner in town? People shun you, ignore you, turn away from you, frown at you, maybe make snide remarks to each other about under their breath. Life would be hard if you were that person.

What if... one day you hear of someone who has the authority to forgive your sin, and you take that message to heart. What would you do? Would you go and find that person and tell how sorry you are and how much you want to change if only you can be forgiven? Is that what you would do?

Let's look at a story of someone who was the worst sinner in the community, and everybody knew it, and she heard of someone who could forgive her sin. Let's see what she did.

**Luke 7:36-50 (NIV)** Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is--that she is a sinner."

Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Notes:

- *Jesus had already healed someone previously with the statement, "But so you will know that the Son of Man [Jesus] has authority to forgive sins"... Jesus then healed a paralyzed man.*

- *A "denarius" was a days wage for a common laborer. So this is about 15 months of minimum wage, which may not seem like much, unless it is the only job you have.*

- *That culture had certain expectations for an invited/honored guest. You would*

*kiss the person on the cheek, put some oil on their head, wash the dust from their feet. Jesus was an invited guest, but not an honored one, as Simon did none of these things to Jesus.*

The woman had heard of this man who forgave sins. Jesus proved He had authority to forgive sin, by healing people who were known sinners, (Luke 5:24). We see this earlier in Luke's book. She has come to Jesus to plead her case for forgiveness. She does so, not in words, but with tears and actions. She risks censure, persecution, and abuse. She knows she will be embarrassed in doing this, but she is desperate for a fresh start with God. So she has come to Jesus.

If you are desperate for a fresh start with God today, you need to come to Jesus too. In Him you will find what you need,

There are two kinds of sinners in our world. The first kind of sinners are obvious sinners. They sin externally, in their words and actions. They are not good people, don't pretend to be good people. They do drugs, cheat on their taxes, abuse people, are always looking for ways to get around the rules. They cuss and drink and get drunk, are always fighting with someone. There is lots of drama in their lives. They don't pretend to be good. They are quite honest in who they are, in what they are. That is a pretty broad picture. I think you know there are thousands of degrees of such sinfulness.

The other kind of sinners are not as obvious. They do not sin much at all in words and actions. They may or may not go to church. They are hard working, pay their taxes, care for their relatives, try to get along with most people, don't do drugs, don't get drunk, don't cheat on their taxes, and don't cuss, at least not in public. Again, this is a broad painting. There are thousands of degrees of such people, many who do sin outwardly more or less.

All the people of this second group still sin. In fact, they commit most of the same sins as the first group. The only difference is that while the first group sins first internally and then externally, the second group mainly sins internally. Jesus said that **All sin starts in the heart.** We all sin.

Those who commit murder first did so in their heart. They committed the sin of hatred, of thinking someone else's life mattered less than their own. They committed these internal sins before they committed the outward sin of murder.

Those who steal already committed the sin of coveting what someone else had. Those who commit adultery already committed adultery in their hearts.

We, as church people, have much more in common with Simon than we do with the woman. And we're proud of that fact. All of us in the church are this second group of sinners. We are good, church-going people. We do sin sometimes in our words or actions, but usually just what we like to think of as little stuff. For the most part we appear as really good people, people who don't struggle with sin. But there is plenty of sin going on inside of us.

While we do not physically attack people or murder people, we harbor hate and/or resentment in our hearts. While we don't steal, we desire what others have. While we don't commit adultery, there is lust in our eyes.

We tend to believe that our sins, those we are willing to admit, that our sins are not as bad in God's eyes as the external sins. In reality **there is only one level of sin.**

The only meaningful difference between Simon and the woman is that the woman was aware of the depth of her sins.

The woman publicly shamed and embarrassed herself by coming to this party and doing what she did. She shows great faith in Jesus' ability to forgive sin. She demonstrated great humility and courage by coming to Jesus and doing what she did.

Jesus sees all of that in her and forgives her.

Simon was not aware of the depth of his own sins. If he admitted to any sin at all, it was slight. His sins were inconsequential. He did not think he needed any help from Jesus.

How about you, do you need help from Jesus? You might be thinking, "I only need a little bit of help, Jesus. I'm a pretty good person Just top off my righteousness tank."

If this is what you think, then you are going to love Jesus little. You're going to love Jesus little, like Simon did. And if you love Jesus little, you will obey Him little also.

I said last week that there were things Jesus hoped for in our relationship with Himself. He hopes that we will share ourselves, the real us, with Him in prayer. And He hopes that we will let Him share Himself with us in Bible reading. All we know of Jesus we learn in the Bible.

But in addition to what Jesus hopes for is something that He expects. He expects our obedience. He has the right, as our Savior and Lord, to expect our obedience to Him. Yet even as He expects obedience, He desires it to be out of our love for Him. Love for Jesus and obedience to Jesus parallel each other.

**John 14:15** (NIV) If you love me, you will obey what I command.

Now you can take this statement as a command. Many people do. I did for a long time. But it isn't really stated that way. Instead, it is stated as more of a fact or an observation. I think He is simply stating a truth. He is saying that, "You know, your obedience shows your love for me. I've noticed that those who really love me, obey me. I've noticed that those who don't obey me, no matter how much they say they love me, really don't love me very much.

Obedience, out of gratitude to Jesus, is how we relate to Jesus.

If you are thinking, "Jesus, I'm probably 70, 80, even 90 percent good. I only need about 10% help from You for me to go to heaven." Maybe you know you need a lot more help than 10 percent. Maybe you are thinking, "I'm only about 10 percent good, Jesus. I need You for the other 90 percent."

The truth is that unless you come to Jesus empty, you cannot be saved. You are not saved by a combination of your goodness and Jesus' goodness. You have to come to Jesus and admit that you've got nothing for which to stand before God. All the goodness you have, all the good you have done, amounts to not even close to anything that matters.

The apostle Paul said it this way:

**Philippians 3:4-9 (NIV)** If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Paul gives us first his high Jewish pedigree. Then he goes into his goodness credentials. The Pharisees were the most upright people in the community... at least outwardly. There was plenty of hypocrisy, greed, hate, lust, etc. in them. Jesus points that out many times. But outwardly they were the models of goodness. Paul was no exception. He claims to have lived the Law of Moses without fault.

But he chucks it all out the window. He says it is all rubbish, trash, worthless. Instead, he knows he needs the righteousness of Christ alone and trusts in Jesus for that, just like the woman did, just like we all must do.

We must have a right view of ourselves before God. We must have a right view of Jesus. We must love Him in that truth, or our obedience will be lacking.

I asked you earlier what you would do if you were the worst sinner in town. Well you ARE the worst sinner in town. I am the worst sinner in town. We are ALL the worst sinners in town. There is only one level of sin.

Come to Jesus today, confessing that you are at that level, and asking for forgiveness based on what Jesus did for you, and you will be forgiven and can have a fresh start with God. And look at the benefits.

**John 14:23 (NIV)** "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

**The benefit of obedience to Jesus out of love for Jesus is fellowship with Jesus.**

Now that's good news.

Invitation

If you are desperate for a fresh start with God today, you need to come to Jesus too. You need to come and admit your sinfulness. Receive Jesus as your Savior, your rescuer from the consequences of your sin. Receive Jesus, too, as your Lord, by turning away from your sinful ways to live in obedience to Jesus out of gratitude for the forgiveness He will show you.