

Forgiveness Based on Faith

Key Verses: *“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. ... And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”*
—*Luke 7:47,50, New American Standard Bible*

Selected Scripture:
Luke 7:36-50

THE WORDS OF OUR KEY

Verses were spoken by Jesus following his giving the parable of the creditor and two debtors. He gave the parable while at the home of a Pharisee named Simon, who had been listening to Jesus’ preaching, and invited him to his house for a meal.—*Luke 7:36*

While Jesus and Simon were eating, a woman from the city, who was known to be a sinner, came to the home, evidently aware that Jesus was there. She brought with her an alabaster box of fine ointment. The account continues, stating that she “stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.”—*vss. 37,38*

When Simon the Pharisee witnessed what had happened, he reasoned within himself that if Jesus were truly a prophet, he would have known that the woman was a sinner and should not have allowed her to touch him. Jesus perceived his thoughts and saw the

opportunity to provide a lesson.

Jesus then spoke this parable to Simon. “There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?” (vss. 41,42) The Pharisee answered that he supposed the one who had the greatest debt would love the creditor the most. Jesus confirmed that he had reasoned correctly.—vs. 43

However, the lesson Jesus wished to impart was not yet complete. He pointed out to Simon that although he had been hospitable by inviting him into his home for a meal, he had not provided water for his feet or oil for his head, nor had he shown any special brotherly affection toward him. This woman, on the other hand, had washed his feet with her tears, and anointed them with ointment. In a loving act of humility, she had even kissed his feet.—vss. 44-46

By her works, Jesus said, “she loved much,” whereas Simon had only loved “little.” Jesus pointed to her works because only through them would Simon be able to see the proof of her faith. In our Key Verses Jesus declared that the woman’s greater love was developed by a realization of her sinful condition and a sincere desire to be relieved from it. He said to her, “Thy sins are forgiven. ... Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” (vss. 47-50) In reality, of course, it was the woman’s faith, not her works, which led to her forgiveness.—Eph. 2:8,9

Those of God’s people who are faithfully serving him will be found filled with a genuine love for their “Head,” Christ Jesus, and all the members of the “body.” (I Cor. 12:12-14; Eph. 4:15,16) The basis of their love, as in the woman’s case, will be found in a large appreciation of their own imperfections and of God’s mercy and grace toward them in the forgiveness of their sins. These conditions will surely manifest themselves, as did the woman’s, by humble service at the feet of the Master. ■