

# THE SINNER AND THE PHARISEE

*“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’.” —LUKE 7:39*

In Jesus’ day, the Pharisees were the hierarchy of Jewish religion, and they made assumptions about people based on outward appearances, reputations and behaviour. Simon was a Pharisee who had invited Jesus to his home for dinner, but by ignoring the usual customs in welcoming Him, he revealed his skepticism, and perhaps animosity towards Jesus.

While Jesus was reclining back, a woman came in, carrying an alabaster jar of perfume. She was weeping and wiped Jesus’ feet with her tears, then with her hair, kissed His feet and poured her perfume on them. Simon knew this woman was sinful, and immediately assumed if Jesus was a prophet, He would have known that too and insisted she leave.

But Jesus told Simon this parable. “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 cancelled 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. (Luke 7:41-43).

The point of this story was to let Simon know, just like the sinful woman, he, too, is in debt. Neither he nor the woman is able to pay their debt, so both need the generosity and grace of the lender. The Pharisee is actually the one in greater need, because he is unaware of his true

diagnosis, but the woman comes to Jesus weeping, seeking cleansing and forgiveness, which Jesus graciously gives.

One of the biggest mistakes we can make is to become pleased with ourselves, and set our code of behaviour as a standard for all, which is what the Pharisees did. They had certain checklists, against which they themselves were okay, but as a result, they were dismissive and condemning of others who failed to make the grade. The parable Jesus told illustrated not what He knew about the woman, but what He knew about Simon. And that was a shock, because one of the sins of Pharisaism is to want other people to be searched by God and convicted, but we don't expect to be searched ourselves.

There was no brokenness in Simon's walk with God, only self-assurance. We cannot look at others and assume that spiritually we're doing fine, because we've kept the rules better than most. Jesus looks upon the heart, and a heart that is self-assured and proud leaves no room for Him to enter. It is in our humility, failures and brokenness that Jesus is pleased to work.

***PRAYER: Dear Jesus, Keep me from ever judging others by the way I conduct myself. There is so much about me that needs your work, and I pray that I always remain humble before You. Thank You, Lord.***

***TO REFLECT UPON: Am I inclined to judge others by what I conceive to be a set standard for Christian living?***