

The Parables of Jesus
Those Who Love God More
Luke 7:36-50

God's grace unnerves, even offends, those who put their trust in their own good efforts to gain acceptance with God.

When the gospel of God's grace is rightly and fully proclaimed, people will inevitably reject it as a *scandalous* doctrine that leads to immoral license.

Romans 3:8 *Why not say—as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say—“Let us do evil that good may result”? Their condemnation is deserved.*

Romans 5:20. *The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? May it never be!*

Strong warning is given in the book of **Hebrews** to those who already know God's grace, and then trample it under their feet with defiant sin. Paul never took sin lightly because of God's unending grace.

Galatians 5:13 Paul warned the church not to use their liberty in Christ as a license to sin.

However, we must never water-down grace. When we understand grace like it should be understood—when we recognize the ramifications of the kind of unconditional, unfathomable, immeasurable grace God offers to sinners in Christ, we will inevitably be accused of a scandalous doctrine, because that kind of grace offends our sense of fairness.

To help us see just how amazing God's grace really is, Jesus shared a short but startling parable in **Luke 7**. It all began one evening when we read in **v. 36** that a Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus over for dinner. While Jesus reclined at the meal with this Pharisee and his friends, a very strange, even awkward, thing happened.

vv. 37-40 *And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that Jesus was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.”*

Some scholars believe this woman, in **Luke 7**, is none other than the woman caught in adultery in **John 8** whom Jesus saved from being stoned to death.

The Pharisee is incensed that Jesus would allow a woman with such a scandalous reputation to touch and kiss him like that. But Jesus saw her behavior in a totally different light.

Jesus' response was simply this: *Because she had been forgiven of extraordinary sin, she loves God with an extraordinary love.*

vv. 41-43 *“A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.”*

Blaise Pascal, said it so well. *Love has reasons that reason cannot understand*, and God's grace is not dispensed on the basis of sound bookkeeping practices.

vv. 44-50 *Then turning toward the woman Jesus 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 from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”*

When it comes to the grace of God, all the rules of what a person deserves and doesn't deserve are irrelevant. When it comes to grace, the word *deserve* doesn't even apply. When it comes to grace, credits and debits don't matter, because all accounts were paid in full at the Cross. It was at the Cross of Christ that God did all his bookkeeping with exacting precision. That's where there was hell to pay. That's where God finally got even, and when he did, he did it to himself!

It's easy for us to forget; no matter how good we think we are, each of us is much more like Hitler than we are like God.

It's easy to forget how much it cost God, how much grace it took for him to allow you and me into his family.

We forget that all we are, all we have, all we will ever be is because of his grace, of which we don't deserve an ounce and yet he has lavished it on us in his Son. (**Eph 1:6-8**)

When we forget God's grace, it's easy to fall back into a bookkeeping relationship with God, and one of the ways that finds expression in our daily life is we compare our redeemed lives against the fallen lives of others and judge, oppose, and shame them rather than remember that, but for the grace of God, go we.

Pharisaism is alive and well, today—in both conservative and liberal camps of the church and society.

Philip Yancey - *What's So Amazing about Grace?* "Our legalism is being expressed in an ungracious spirit of moral superiority and a fierce attitude toward opponents in what some call a "cultural war."

"God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." (**John 3:17; 12:45-48**)

Christians, who hold harsh attitudes towards immoral people, are acting out their inner hostilities because of their own unresolved guilt which they have refused to allow God to heal by his grace.

Paul Tournier - *Guilt and Grace* "I cannot study this very serious problem of guilt with you without raising the very obvious and tragic fact that religion—my own as well as that of all the believers—can crush instead of liberate."

David Seamands - "Many years ago I was driven to the conclusion that the two major causes of most emotional problems among evangelical Christians are these: the failure to understand, receive, and live out God's unconditional grace and forgiveness; and the failure to give out that unconditional love,

forgiveness, and grace to other people...The good news of the gospel of grace has not penetrated the level of our emotions."

The key to being able to love with Christ's kind of compassion and care is to allow God's grace to penetrate our life so thoroughly that we accept it at the level of our emotions.

Then, grace is not merely a matter of theological intrigue. Rather, it grips us at the very heart of who we are and how we view who we are and how we experience life.

Then, we are no longer motivated to be good and do good by guilt and fear. We no longer have to play games with unresolved guilt behind religious masks, but we can accept, value, treasure and love one another, just as we know in our heart-of-hearts how much God accepts, values, treasures, and loves us.

When God's grace in Christ penetrates our hearts at the level of our emotions, three things happen. There is...

...*honesty*, rather than *hiding*

...*humility*, rather than *hubris*

...*holiness*, rather than *hypocrisy*

Sociologists have a theory called *The Looking Glass Self*. It goes like this: *You become what the most important person in your life thinks you are*. That most important person may be a wife, father, boss, etc.

Who might you become, if the most important person in your life is Jesus, and you think of yourself as he thinks of you—loved and cherished beyond your wildest dreams? So much so, that the more extraordinary depths Jesus had to go to love and save you, the more extraordinary depth of love you will have for him!

We must never forget this, and that's why Jesus gave us Communion.