

A WONDER OF GRACE

2. The Woman that was a Sinner The Loving Penitent

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Luke 7:37-38.

By C. H. Spurgeon

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This is a marvellously vivid gospel incident. Every detail is plainly and forcefully set forth, so that we can picture the scene, making it live before us, without much mental effort. And yet, in some respects, there is a great reticence, a divine delicacy, gloriously characteristic of so tender a book as the New Testament. The evangelist — “the beloved physician,” Luke — does not lay bare the minute particulars of this woman’s life’s sins, but delights to dwell rather upon the story of her penitence and its fair fruits, and so makes her to shine resplendently as a wonder of redeeming grace. The symptoms of her soul’s horrible malady he reveals in a single phrase, and that of general description, but upon the details of her gracious cure he delights to dwell.

We will consider the life of this famous penitent, as the Holy Spirit shall help us, under three heads, and notice, first, *her former character*; then, *her deed of love which showed her new character*; and, thirdly, *our Lord’s treatment of her*.

Firstly let us very briefly look at THE WOMAN’S CHARACTER, to begin with, in order that we may see the horrible pit out of which she was taken.

We do not know much about her. Romish expositors generally insist upon it that she was Mary Magdalene, but this

appears to other writers to have been quite impossible. Certainly it does not seem probable that a woman possessed with seven devils should follow the trade of “*a sinner.*” Demoniacal possession was akin to madness, and it was frequently accompanied by epilepsy, and one would think that Magdalene was more fit to be a patient at an infirmary than an inmate of a reformatory. Some have even been so mistaken as to suppose this woman to have been Mary of Bethany, but this will never do. One cannot associate with the lovely household of Martha and Mary the horrible course of pollution implied in the vice which earned for this woman the special name of a “*sinner.*” Besides, although both women anointed our Lord, yet the place, the time, the manner were all different. I need not stay to show you the difference, for that is not the point in hand.

This woman was distinguished by the title of “*a sinner,*” and her touch was regarded by Simon the Pharisee as defiling. We are all sinners, but she was a sinner by profession, sin was her occupation, and probably her livelihood. The name in her case had an emphatic sense which involved shame, and dishonour, of the worst kind. The city streets wherein she dwelt could have told you how well she deserved her name. Poor fallen daughter of Eve, she had forsaken the guide of her youth, and forgotten the covenant of her God. She was one of those against whom Solomon warns young men, saying, “*Her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.*” Yet as Rahab was saved by faith, even so was she, for grace covereth even a harlot’s sins.

She was *a well-known sinner*: ill-fame had branded her, so that Simon the Pharisee recognized her as one of the town’s unhallowed sisterhood. Her way of life was common town talk; persons of decent character would not associate with her, she was cut off from respectable society, and, like a leper, put outside the camp of social life. She was a sinner marked and labelled: there was no mistaking her, infamy had set its seal upon her.

She was one who had evidently *gone a great way in sin, because* our Saviour, who was far from being prejudiced against her, as Simon was, and never uttered a word that would exaggerate the evil in anyone, yet spake of “*her sins which are many.*” She loved much, for much had been forgiven; she was the five hundred pence debtor as compared with Simon, who owed but fifty. It is not difficult to imagine her unhappy story, because that story is so commonly repeated around us. We know not how she was at first led into evil ways. Perhaps her trustful heart was deceived by flattering words and promises; perhaps the treachery of one too dearly loved led her into sin, and afterwards deserted her to loneliness and shame. Perhaps her mother’s heart was broken, and her father’s head was bowed down with sorrow; but she became bold enough to pursue the sin into which she had at first been betrayed, and became the decoyer of others. That long hair of hers, I fear, is rightly called by Bishop Hall “the net which she was wont to spread to catch her amorous companions.” She was a sinner of the city in which she dwelt, and, though her name is not mentioned, it was far too well known in her own day. She had lived an evil life *we know* not how long, but, certainly, she had greatly sinned, for her own flowing tears, as well as the Saviour’s estimate of her life, prove that she had been no ordinary offender. Let equal sinners be encouraged to go to Jesus as she did.

But *all her sin was known to Jesus.* I mention this, not at all as a fact you do not know, but as one which any trembling sinner may do well to remember, if you have fallen into the same vice in a greater or less degree, whether others know it or not, Jesus knows all about it. Our Lord allowed her to wash his feet with her tears, but he knew well what those eyes had looked upon. When he allowed those lips to kiss his feet, he knew right well what language those lips had used in years gone by; and when he suffered her to show her love to him he knew

how foul her heart had aforetime been with every unhallowed desire. Her evil imaginations and unchaste desires, her wanton words and shameless acts were all before the Saviour's mind far more vividly than they were before her own, for she had forgotten much; but he knew all. With all her tender sense of sin, she herself did not apprehend all the heinousness of her guilt as the perfect mind of Jesus did: and yet though she was a sinner, a well-known sinner, and known best of all to the Saviour to be such, yet, glory be to divine grace, she was not cast out when she came to Jesus, but she obtained mercy, and is now shining in heaven as a bright and special star to the glory of the love of Christ.

When this woman stood in the house of Simon she was *a believing sinner*. We do not know how she became a convert, but, according to the harmony of the gospels, this particular incident fits in just after Matthew 11; that is to say, if Luke has written his story with the intent of chronological correctness — and if the harmonies are right, this passage comes in after the following blessed word, “*Come* unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest: take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Did this woman hear this gracious invitation? Did she feel that she was labouring and heavy laden? Did she look into the face of the great Teacher and feel that he spake the truth, and did she come to him and find rest? Doubtless her faith came by hearing: did she hear in some crowd in the street the sweet wooing voice of the Sinner's Friend? Was this the means of making “*the woman that was a sinner*” into the woman that anointed Jesus feet? We are not informed as to the particular means, nor is it of any consequence. She was converted, and that is enough; how it came about is a small matter. Perhaps even she herself could not have told us the precise words which impressed her mind, for many are most assuredly brought to

Jesus, but the work has been so gentle, gradual, and gracious that they feel themselves renewed; but hardly know how it came about. On the other hand, from the marked change in her character, it is highly probable that she did know the day, and the hour, and the precise means: and if so, dear were the words which called her from the ways of folly, sin, and shame. I do not suppose that our Saviour had, at that time, delivered the memorable parable of the prodigal son, but it may have been some similar discourse which won her attention; when she made one of a crowd of publicans and sinners who drew near to hear the Lord Jesus. Pressing forward among the men to catch those silver tones, so full of music, she wondered at the man whose face was so strangely beautiful, and yet so marvellously sad, whose eyes were so bright with tears, and whose face so beamed with love and earnestness. The very look of that mirror of love may have affected her, a glance at that holy countenance may have awed her, and his tones of deep pity and tender warning — all these held her fast, and drew her to abhor her sin and accept the joyful message which the great Teacher had come to proclaim. She believed in Jesus, she was saved, and therefore she loved her Saviour.

When she came to the Pharisee's house she was *a forgiven sinner*. She carried an alabaster box in her hand with which to anoint him, because she felt that he had been a priest to her, and had cleansed her. She brought her choicest treasure to give to him because he had bestowed on her the choicest of all gifts, namely, the forgiveness of sin. She washed his feet because he had washed her soul, she wept because she believed, and loved because she trusted. She was, when she entered the room, in a condition of rest as in her forgiveness, for men are seldom deeply grateful for mercies which they are not sure of having obtained. Though after that deed she rose a step higher, and became fully, assured of her acceptance, even at her first coming she was conscious of forgiven sin, and for that reason

she paid her vows unto the forgiving Lord, whom her soul loved.

Our text begins with a “behold;” and it may well be so, for a forgiven sinner is a wonder to heaven, and earth, and hell. A forgiven sinner! Though God has made this round world exceeding fair, yet no work of creation reflects so much of his highest glory as the manifestation of his grace in a pardoned sinner. If you range all the stars around, and if it be so that every star is filled with a race of intelligent beings, yet, methinks, among unfallen existences there can be no such marvel as a forgiven sinner. At any rate, she is a wonder to herself, and she will never cease admiring the grace which pardoned and accepted her. What a miracle to herself must this woman have been? For a case like hers she had seen no precedent, and this must have made it the more surprising to her: when your case also appears to stand out by itself alone as a towering peak of grace, refrain not from wondering and causing others to wonder. “All glory to God,” may some say, “I whose name could not be mentioned without making the cheek of modesty to crimson, if am washed in the blood of the Lamb! I *who was a* blasphemer, who sat on the drunkard’s bench, who gloried in being an infidel, and denied the Godhead of Christ, I, even I, am saved from wrath through him. I who played a dishonest part, who respected not the laws of man any more than those of God, I who went to an excess of riot, even I am made whiter than snow through faith in Christ Jesus.”

***“Tell it unto sinners, tell,
I am, I am saved from hell.”***

Let all know it upon earth, and let heaven know it, and let the loud harps ring in yon celestial halls, because of matchless grace.

Behold, then, this woman’s character, and remember, however fallen you may have been, the grace of God can yet

save you.

Now, secondly, let us consider, at some length, THE DEED OF LOVE WHICH INDICATED HER CONVERSION. Her conduct as a convert was wide as the poles asunder from that of her unregenerate state: she became as evidently a penitent as she had been a sinner. One of the expositors upon this passage says that he cannot so much expound it as weep over it; and I think every Christian must feel very much in that humour. O that our eyes were as ready with tears of repentance as were hers! O that our hearts were as full of love as hers, and our hands as ready to serve the forgiving Lord. If she has exceeded some of us in the publicity of her sin, yet has she not exceeded all of us in the fervency of her affection!

Let us notice what she did, and the first of twelve matters to which I shall call your attention is *the earnest interest which she took in the Lord Jesus*. ***“Behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat.”*** She had a quick ear for anything about Jesus. When she heard the news it did not pass in at one ear and out at the other, but she was interested in the information, and straightway went to the Pharisee’s house to find him. There were hundreds in that city who did not care a farthing where Jesus was. If they heard the general gossip about him, it did not concern them in the least, he was nothing to them; but when she knew it, she was in motion at once to come even to his feet. Jesus never again will be an object of indifference to a forgiven sinner. If the Lord has pardoned you, you will henceforth feel the deepest interest in your Saviour, and in all things which concern his kingdom and work among men. Now, if you have to remove to any place, you will want to know first, “Where can I hear the gospel? Are there any lovers of Jesus there?” If you are informed about a town or country, the information will not be complete till you have enquired, “How is the cause of god prospering there.” As you look upon your fellow-men, the thought will strike you,

“How do they stand towards Christ” When you attend a place of worship, it will not matter much to you whether the edifice is architecturally beautiful, or the preacher a learned man, and a great orator, you want to know whether you can hear of Jesus in that place, and be likely to meet with him in that assembly. Your cry will be, “Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest?” If you perceive a sweet savour of Christ in the place, you feel that you have had a good Sabbath-day; but if Jesus Christ be wanting, you consider everything to be wanting, and you groan over a lost Sabbath. A soul that has tasted Christ’s love cannot be put off with anything short of him, it hungers and thirsts after him, and any good word about him is sweet unto the taste. Is it so with you?

Notice, next, *the readiness of her mind to think of something to be done for Jesus.* “***When she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house she brought an alabaster box of ointment***” — *she* was quick and ready in her thoughts of service. She would not appear before the Lord empty, but the resolve to bring an offering, and the selection of that offering, were quickly made. She would get that alabaster box of aromatic balsam, the daintiest and costliest perfume that she had, and she would anoint his feet to do him honour. Many minds are inventive for the things of the world, but they seem to have no quickness of thought in reference to the service of Christ: they proceed with dull routine, but never flash out with spontaneous deeds of love. This woman showed an original genius in her love, she was no copier of a former example; her plan of service had the dew of freshness upon it. Mary of Bethany did something like it, but that, was afterwards: this was the woman’s own original idea. Her thoughtful soul struck out this new path for itself. It is a great thing for Christian people to carry on works commenced by others, for what should we do if the established agencies of the church should come to a stand still? But it is pleasant to see quick wits and thoughtful faculties

exercising themselves for Jesus and devising means to serve him. It is well, for instance, when a beloved sister is so fired with the love of Jesus that she feels – “I am somewhat different from other women, both in character and past experience, and I have peculiarities of gifts and disposition, therefore I will let my soul follow the bent of my gracious inclination, and I will give myself to work which is unusual in the church, but which will be specially suitable for me.” Oh, for more of that voluntary service which, so far from requiring to be urged, does not even need to be instructed, but shows a sacred suggestiveness and affection which supplies the place of teaching and example. We need more contriving, inventing, and planning for Christ. See how we act towards those we love: we consider what will please them, and plot and plan some pleasant surprise for them. We put our heads together and ask, “*What* shall it be? Let us think of something new and off the common.” That thoughtfulness is half the beauty of the act. I wish that loving believers would lay their heads together and say, “What shall be done unto him whom the Lord delighteth to honour? What shall we do for Jesus our Redeemer? What could we do best, and what is most needed to be done just now?” For, you see, this woman did the most fitting thing that could be done. Simon had not washed his feet, it was most proper that she should wash them: Simon had not kissed him, but somebody should do so, for he deserved every honour, and therefore she did it. Simon had not poured oil upon his head, or shown him any token of respect; but her warm heart, by the Holy Spirit, who is the creator and fosterer of all love, devised and carried out the right thing at the right time, as earnest believers always do when they are willing to give full liberty to the warm dictates of their loving hearts. Note that.

Notice, thirdly, *her promptness of action*. She did not merely think that she had an alabaster box to give, but she took it at once, and hastened to pour out its contents. *Dear* friend, you

have been saved by grace, and you have an alabaster box upstairs which you have long meant to bring down, but it is there still. Half-a-dozen times or more, when you have had your heart warmed by the love of Christ, you have felt that now was the time to bring out the box, but it remains sealed up still. You were so pleased with yourself for having such earnest feelings and generous resolutions that you stopped to admire yourself, and forgot to carry out your resolutions. You have done nothing, though you have intended a great deal. Do you not sometimes feel as self-contented as if you had done something wonderful when, after all, you have only mapped out what you think you may possibly do at some future time? Indeed, it is a mighty easy thing to make yourself believe that you have really done what you have only dreamed about. This is wretched child's play, and the woman before us would have none of it. She saw the occasion and she seized it. Jesus might not be in her city again, and she might not be able to find him for many a day. The thought struck her, and she struck the thought while yet the iron was hot, and she fashioned it into a fact. It is usually true that second thoughts are best, but it is not so in the service of our Lord. The first suggestions of love, like the first beams of the morning, are not to be excelled for beauty and freshness. Good things had better be done at once, without a second thought. "I consulted not with flesh and blood," said the apostle. Why, then, do it. Get it done first and even then do not think of it, but go on to something beyond. In this sacred work "he gives twice who gives quickly." Promptness of action is the bloom upon the fruit which delay would brush off. What grace had the Lord to this poor fallen woman! She shames the best of us.

Observe, in the fourth place, her *courage*. She knew that Jesus was at meat in the Pharisee's house, and she soon found him reclining, in the Oriental fashion, with his feet near the door, for Simon was so uncivil that he was sure to give him a poor place at the table. Seeing the Lord, she ventured in. It

needed no small bravery for her to enter the house of a Pharisee, who, above all things, would dread to be touched by such a character. In her bad times she had seen the holy man gather up his garments, and leave her a broad space on the streets; for fear that she should pollute his sacred person. She must have felt, as all penitent sinners do, an inward shrinking from the cold, hard, self-righteous professor of purity. She would have gone anywhere in that city rather than into Simon's house. It must have cost her a great struggle to face his frowns and severe remarks. Perhaps, however, I am wrong; indeed, I think I am, for she was so full of the desire to show her love and to honour the Lord Jesus that she forgot the Pharisee. Ay, and if the devil had been there instead of Simon, she would have dared even him in his den, to reach her Lord. Still, there was much courage needed for one so lowly in her penitence to be able to bear the cold, contemptuous look of the master of the house. Conscious that she had been a castaway from society, yet she courageously fulfilled her mission, fearless of cruel remarks and taunting charges. O poor, timid seeking soul, the Lord can give to thee also the courage of a lion in his cause, though now thou art timid as a hare.

When, then, the penitent had reached the Master's feet, note well how one grace balanced another, and observe *her humility* tempering her courage. Her boldness was not forwardness nor indelicate impertinence; no, she was as bashful as she was brave. She did not advance to our Lord's head, or thrust herself where he would readily see her, much less did she presume to address him, but she stood at his feet behind him, weeping. She was probably but a little way in the room, she courted no observation; she was near Jesus, but it was near his feet, and weeping there. To weep at his feet was honour high enough for her; she sought no uppermost seat at the banquet. Ah, dear friends, it is a blessed thing to see young converts bold, but it is equally delightful to see them humble, and they are none the

worse for being very retiring if they have been great sinners.

I have been very sorry when I have seen a lack of modesty where it ought to have super abounded. There is more grace in a blush than in a brazen forehead, far more propriety in holy shame-facedness than in pious impudence. Good Bishop Hall says, "How well is the case altered! She had wont to look boldly in the face of her lovers, and now she dares not behold the awful countenance of her Saviour. She had been accustomed to send alluring beams forth into the eyes of her paramours, but now she casts dejected eyes to the earth, and dares not so much as raise them up to see those eyes from which she desired commiseration." Lowliness goes well with penitence. One would not wish humility to be corrupted into cowardice, nor courage to be poisoned into pride. This repenting sinner had both excellences in proper proportion, and the two together put her exactly in the place where a woman that was a sinner ought to be when saved by grace. We see before us our reclaimed sister looking down upon the Lord's blessed feet, and as we mark her flowing tears we pause to speak of *her contrition*. She gazed upon our Lord's feet, and I wonder whether that sight suggested to her how her feet had wandered, and how travel-worn had become the feet of the Lord, who had sought and found her.

***"She knew not of the bitter way
Those sacred feet had yet to tread,
Nor how the nails would pierce one day
Where now her costly balms were shed."***

But she saw those feet to be all unwashed, for Jesus had been neglected where he ought to have been honoured; and she saw therein the memory, of her own neglects of him who had so freely loved her soul. She wept at the memory of her sins, But she wept over *his* feet; she grieved most because she had grieved him. She wept because she had sinned so much, and

then wept because ‘he had forgiven her so freely. Love and grief in equal measures made up those precious tears. The divine Spirit was at work within her, dissolving her very soul, even as it is written, “He causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow;” and again, “*He smote the rock, and the waters gushed out.*” Do you marvel that she stood and wept? Thinking of herself, and then thinking of him, the two thoughts together were far too much for her, and what could she do but both relieve her heart and express it in a shower of tears? Wherever there is a real forgiveness of sin, there will be real sorrow on account of it. He who knows that his sin is pardoned is the man who most acceptably exercises repentance. Our hymn puts it on the right footing when it points, not to the horrors of hell, but to the griefs of Immanuel, by which our pardon is certified to us, as the deep source of sorrow for sin.

***“My sins, my sins, my Saviour,
How sad on thee they fall!
Seen through thy gentle patience.
I tenfold feel them all.
I know they are forgiven,
But all their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on thee.”***

After admiring this woman’s contrition, notice her love. The Holy Spirit took delight in adorning her with all the graces, and she came behind in nothing, but she excelled in love. Our Lord Jesus Christ when he translated her act of anointing his feet expressed it in the one word “love:” he said, “She loved much.” I cannot speak much with you concerning love, for it is rather to be felt than to be described. Words have no power to bear the weight of meaning which lies in love to Christ. Oh, how she loved! Her eyes, her hair, her tears, herself, she counted all as nothing for his dear sake: words failed her, as they fail us, and

therefore she betook herself to deeds in order to let her heart have vent. Alabaster box and ointment were all too little for him, the essence of her heart was distilled to bathe his feet, and the glory of her head was unbound to furnish him with a towel. He was her Lord, her all in all: if she could have laid kingdoms at his feet, she would have rejoiced to do so; as it was, she did her best, and he accepted it.

This love of hers led her to *personal service*. Her hand was the servant of her heart, and did its part in the expression of her affection. She did not send the alabaster box to Jesus by her sister, or ask a disciple to pass it to him, but she performed the anointing with her own hand, the washing with her own tears, and the wiping with her own hair. Love cannot be put off with proxy service; she seeks no substitute, but offers her own person I grant, dear brothers and sisters, that we can serve the Lord a great deal by helping others to serve him, and it is right and proper to help those who are able to labour better and more widely than we can; but still, it is not meet that we should rest content with that, we ought to be ambitious to render tribute to our Lord with our own hands. We cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of doing some little thing for our well-beloved Lord. Suppose this loving woman had had a sister who loved the Master even as she did, and suppose, like a loving sister, she had said to her, "I fear it will be too heavy a task for you to face cold-hearted Simon, I will take the box and anoint our blessed Lord, and tell him that I did it for you, and so he shall know your love." Do you think she would have consented to the proposal? Ah, no, it would not have answered the purpose at all. Love refuses sponsors. She must anoint those blessed feet *herself*. Now, dear friends, you who hope that you have been forgiven, are you doing anything for Jesus? Are you in your own person serving him? If not, let me tell you, you are missing one of the greatest delights that your souls can ever know, and, at the same time, you are omitting one of the chief fruits of the

Spirit. “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” is the question, and if you wish to answer it with proof positive, then go and with your own hands feed the Saviour’s sheep. Surely you cannot love him as you should, unless each day has its deed of love, its sacrifice of gratitude.

Observe, next, that *her service was rendered to the Lord himself*. Read the passage and place an emphasis upon the words which refer to the Lord: “*She stood at his feet, behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.*” It was not for Peter, and James, and John that she acted as servitor. I have no doubt she would have done anything for any of his disciples, but at this time all her thoughts were with her Lord, and all her desire was to honour *him*. It is a delightful thing for Christian people to lay themselves, out distinctly for the Lord Jesus. There should be more ministering unto him, more definite aiming at his glory. To give money to the poor is good, but sometimes it is better to spend it upon Jesus more distinctly, even though some Judas or other should complain of waste.

***“Love is the true economist,
She breaks the box and gives her all;
Yet not one precious drop is miss’d,
Since on his head and feet they fall.”***

One is glad to serve the church; who would not wait upon the bride for the bridegroom’s sake? One is glad to go into the streets and lanes of the city to gather in poor sinners, but our main motive is to honour the Saviour. See, then, how she who was once a harlot has become a zealous lover of the Lord, and is ready to wash her Lord’s feet, or perform any service which may be permitted her, if so be she may work a good work upon him.

Further, remark, that what she did she did very *earnestly*. *She*

washed his feet, but it was with tears; she wiped them, but it was with those luxurious tresses which were all unbound and dishevelled, that she might make a towel of them for his blessed feet. She kissed his feet, and she did it again and again, for she did not cease to kiss his feet, or if she made a moment's pause, it was only that she might pour on more of the balsam. She was altogether taken up with her Lord and his work; her entire nature concurred in what she did, and aroused itself to do it well. True love is intense, its coals burn with vehement heat, and it makes all things around it living. Dead services cannot be endured by living hearts. I know some people, I hope they are Christian people, but they belong to the cold-blooded animals, you never perceive the smallest warmth in them; they are patent refrigerators, walking masses of ice. If you shake hands with them, you think you have got a dead fish in your hand, there is nothing hearty and warm about them. If such people speak about Jesus Christ, it is in the coolest possible terms. If they preach, their sermons are best appreciated on a hot summer's day, when you need something cool and airy: but the man who feels he has been forgiven much, and owes much to the Saviour, throws his whole heart into what he has to say for him. Give me a woman that is full of love to Jesus, and you shall see how she will labour in the Redeemer's service. I have heard of a preacher who was so intensely earnest that, when one complained of his sermon being short, an old farmer replied, "Short, yes, but look at the weight of it. Every word he spoke weighed half-a-hundredweight." I like a preacher of that kind who is so full of love that every word is a power. Everything we do for Jesus should be done intensely, earnestly, vehemently. To keep back part of the price from him would be shameful, to be neither hot nor cold would be fatal, to be consumed with zeal for him is no more than his due. To do no more than you feel obliged to do, and that in about as slovenly a style as well can – this is a poor, dead way of living, of a soul redeemed of blood.

He who loves much cannot endure a sleepy religion: he devotes himself to the Lord Jesus with all his heart.

Furthermore, notice the woman's *absorption in her work*. There she stood, anointing his feet with ointment and kissing them again and again. Simon shook his head, but what of that? He frowned and cast black looks at her, but she ceased not to wash his feet with her tears. She was too much occupied with her Lord to care for scowling Pharisees. Whether anyone observed her or not, or whether observers approved or censured, was a very small matter to her, she went quietly on, accomplishing the suggestion of her loving heart.

And *what she did was so real, so practical, so free from the mere froth of profession and pretence*. She never *said* a word: and why not? Because it was all act and all heart with her. Words! Some abound in them, but what wretched things words are wherewith to express a heart. As in a glass darkly can we see the reflection of a soul's love in its most passionate utterances? Actions are far more loud-voiced and have a sweeter tone than words. This woman had done with speech, for the time being, at any rate, and tears and dishevelled hair, and poured-out balsam must speak for her. She was too much in earnest to call anyone's attention to what she was doing, or to care for anyone's opinion, much less to court commendation, or to answer the ugly looks of the proud professor who scorned her. This thorough oblivion of all except her Lord constituted in a measure the charm of her deed of love; it was whole-hearted and entire loyalty which her homage revealed. *Now*, dearly beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, I do pray that you and I, as pardoned sinners, may be so taken up with the service of our Lord Jesus Christ that it may not matter to us who smiles or who frowns; and may we never take the trouble to defend ourselves. If people find fault, or even wish for anybody to commend *us*, but be so taken up with *him* and the work he has given us to do, and with the love we feel to *him*, that we know

nothing else, if all others run away from the work, if all discourage us, or if they all praise us, may we take but small notice of them, but keep steadily to our loving service of Jesus. If grace enables us to do *this*, it, will be greatly magnified.

See, dear friends, what grace made of "***the woman that was a sinner.***" Perhaps you thought her worse than yourselves in her carnal estate; what think you when you see her as a penitent? What think ye of yourselves if you stand side by side with her? Do you not blush for very shame, and ask for forgiveness of your Lord for the slenderness of your affection?

Thirdly, let us see THE SAVIOUR'S BEHAVIOR TO HER. What did he do? First, he silently *accepted her service*. He did not move his feet away, did not rebuke her, or bid her begone. He knew that reflections were being cast upon his character by his allowing her to touch him, yet he did not forbid her, but, on the contrary, continued-quietly enjoying the feast of repentance, gratitude, and love, which she spread for him. He was refreshed by seeing such grace in one who had aforesaid been so far from God. The perfumed balsam was not so grateful to his feet, as her love was to his soul, for Jesus delights in love, especially in penitent love. Her tears did not fall in vain; they refreshed the heart of *Jesus*, who delights in the tears of repentance. The applause of a nation would not have solaced him one half so much as this woman's pure, grateful, contrite, humble love. His silence gave consent, yea, even approbation, and she was happy enough to be allowed to indulge herself in expressions of adoring affection.

Then the Lord went a little farther, he turned round and *looked at her*, and said to Simon, "Seest thou this woman?" That glance of his must have encouraged her, and made her heart dance for joy. As soon as ever that eye of his lighted on her she could see that all was right; she knew that, whoever frowned, there were no frowns on that brow, and she was filled with supreme content.

Next, *the Lord spoke, and defended her triumphantly*, and praised her for her deed; yes, and he went beyond that, and *personally spoke to her*, and said, “*Thy sins be forgiven thee,*” setting a seal to the pardon which she had received, and making her assurance doubly sure. This was a joy worth worlds.

***“Oh, might I hear thy heavenly tongue
But whisper, ‘Thou art mine;’
The heavenly word should raise my song
To notes almost divine.”***

She had a choice blessing in hearing from his own lips that her faith was firmly based, and that she was indeed forgiven. Then she received a direction from him as to what to *do* — “*Go in peace.*” A forgiven sinner is anxious to know what he may do to please his Lord. “*Show me what thou wouldst have me to do,*” was Paul’s prayer. So our Lord Jesus seemed to say, “Beloved, do not stop here battling with these Pharisees. Do not tarry in this crowd of cavillers. Go home in perfect peace; and as you have made home unhappy by your sin, make it holy by your example.” That is just, I think, what the Lord Jesus would have me say to my dear friends who have followed me in this discourse. You see what grace can do, go home and let your family see it. If any of you are conscious of great sin, and have received great forgiveness, and therefore wish to show your love to Jesus, do what is on your heart, but at the same time remember that he would have you go in peace. Let a holy calm abide in your breast. Do not enter into the vain janglings and endless controversies of the hour. Do not worry yourself with the battles of the newspapers and magazines that are everlastingly worrying poor souls with modern notions. Go in peace. You know what you do know; keep to that. You know your sin, and you know Christ your Saviour; keep to him, and live for him. Go home into the family circle, and do there everything you can to make home happy, and to bring your

brothers and sisters to Christ, and to encourage your father and mother, if they have not yet found the Saviour.

Home is especially a woman's sphere. There she reigns as a queen: let her reign well. Around the hearth and at the table, in the sweets of domestic relationships and quiet friendships, a woman will do more for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ than by getting up to preach. In the cases of men also, many who long to flash in public had better by far shine at home. Go home in peace, and by a happy, holy life, show to others what saints God can make out of sinners. You have seen what sin and the devil can do to degrade, go and prove what grace and the Holy Spirit can do to elevate, and may many, cheered by your example, come and trust your Lord.

The second of seven booklets.

