

I want to share with you a question by Martyn Lloyd-Jones (who is certainly not known as a Pentecostal preacher.) ... When he was pastor at Westminster Chapel in London... and well-known for his Reformed theology... he asked his congregation a question. ... Near the end of his life... he said to them:

"I want to talk to you today about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. You may call it what you want, but I want to know, have you experienced the fullness of the Spirit? I know all of you listening to me come (as I do) from a Reformed background. But it's not good enough. I know that all of you would want to say to my question about the Holy Spirit, 'Well, we got it all at conversion; there's no need for any more experience.' Well," said Martyn Lloyd-Jones, "I have only one other question to ask you. If you got it all at conversion, where (in God's name) - is it?"

Do you come from a brand of Christianity that sees exuberant worship as "inappropriate"? ... I will admit that I do. ... But I cannot justify it Biblically. Sincere / exuberant praise is all over the Bible – and today we will see it defended by Jesus.

Christian psychologist (Dr. Larry Crabb) has written: "*The core problem is not that we are too passionate about bad things - but that we are not passionate enough about good things...*" ... [P A U S E] ...

TODAY - the narrative that we come to in our study through the Gospel of Luke... is a study of contrasts. It will illustrate the difference between a person who gives a cold shoulder to the Lord... and a person whose heart is full of love and gratefulness. We are about to see a spectrum with two polar opposites at each end.

You will probably see yourself somewhere on this spectrum (somewhere between these extremes)... and what we think about Jesus has a great deal to do with where we find ourselves. ... *We are not too passionate about bad things. We are **not** passionate enough about good things...*”

Luke 7:36-50

We do not know exactly why Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus to dine in his home. No group of men was more consistently hostile to Christ than the Pharisees. ... Luke mentions them twenty-eight times and always as being hostile to Jesus. ... But... Perhaps Simon invited Jesus because Jesus had preached in the synagogue... and it was considered a meritorious act to invite traveling rabbis to a Sabbath meal. ... No doubt Simon also had other reasons. ... Perhaps he was curious. ... Maybe he liked to boast about the celebrities he knew. ... It is even possible that he had some spiritual interest.

Whatever the reason for Simon’s inviting Jesus to dine with him... it was overlaid with a nasty animosity. We see this in the way Simon purposely omitted the common courtesies accorded any honored dinner guest. Normally the host placed his hand on the guest’s shoulder and gave him the kiss of peace. ... But this was not done for Jesus. ... Customarily a guest’s sandals were removed... and his feet were washed when he entered... or while he reclined at the table... removing the dust of the street and refreshing him. ... Jesus’ feet were left embarrassingly dirty. ... Dinner guests were also anointed with a touch of olive oil. ... But there was no such kindness for Jesus.

Simon treated Jesus with callous... calculated contempt. ... He carefully avoided every custom that would make the Lord feel at home. ... And all the guests and onlookers ***knew*** it... as they took their places around the table.

In that day the homes of well-to-do people were built around central courtyards in which formal meals were served. ... The guests reclined on the left elbow on low-lying couches... eating with the right hand. ... One's feet would extend away from the table... in keeping with the belief that the feet were unclean and offensive by nature. ... At such occasions the doors of the home were kept open... and the uninvited townspeople were free to wander in to observe the conversation. ... Typically there was a great deal of coming and going by the onlookers.

So... many people (in addition to Simon's dinner guests) were aware that Jesus had been slighted... as His grimy feet extended behind for all to see. Though Jesus was perfectly at ease... the conversation was strained. Everyone sensed that a lively exchange was imminent. ... But no one expected what followed. ... It began with a chorus of murmurs as a woman emerged from the shadows and silently stood behind the feet of Jesus.

Luke 7:36-38

The woman (from the crowd of uninvited guests)... came up and wept over Him. Her tears washed His feet... and she dried them with her hair.

Because uninvited townspeople were allowed to wander in... it is not so odd for her to be present where a dinner was being given. They would

generally seat themselves along the wall... observe everything that was happening and even engage some of the invited guests in conversation. Nevertheless... that this particular woman (widely known as a “sinner”) had the courage to enter the home of *a strict Pharisee*... (well) **that** was unusual!

As a woman from “across the tracks”... she would know what to expect from Simon — bitter scorn from a biting tongue. ... But she came anyway. The only way we can explain it is by assuming that the urge within her to express gratitude to Jesus was so irresistible that nothing could stop her from doing what she wanted to do. ... Overwhelmed with genuine sorrow for her past sinful life... the woman stood at Jesus’ feet.

She came because Jesus was there. The fact that she brought a very expensive flask of perfume – tells us that she came with a plan. ... She was there because of gratitude. ... Somewhere... somehow... (possibly through a public sermon... or maybe through a private... unrecorded conversation)... Jesus’ words had gone to her heart... and she had turned to Him and so found forgiveness.

Her joy was probably coupled with sorrow. She (no doubt) observed how Jesus was so disgracefully treated by Simon. So she thrust herself forward to honor Jesus — **disregarding** the rejection and scorn that were sure to come her way.

She was at his feet with her perfume... about to anoint the Savior’s feet... when everything (sure enough!) went wrong! ... Her tears began to fall like raindrops in the dust... streaking His soiled feet. ... She had not meant for this to happen! ... And she had no towel. ... So the poor woman did the

best she could by unloosing her long hair and wiping clean the Master's feet.

This was socially unacceptable... because a woman was to loosen her hair only in the presence of her husband. ... The *Talmud* says that a woman could be divorced for letting down her hair in the presence of another man. So grave was the offense that the rabbis put a woman's loosening her hair and uncovering her breasts in the same category. ... The guests and the onlookers were in intense shock.

But the woman kept on anointing the Lord's feet. ... The aroma filled the courtyard. ... Then she repeatedly kissed his feet. ... The Greek verb means "to kiss again and again." ... The woman was a self-forgetful mess — crying unashamedly... her nose runny with weeping... her hair stringy with the muddy mixture of dirt and tears.

Please try to picture just how how awkward this scene was... and how everyone silently watched the woman and her emotional display. ... No one said anything until Jesus broke the silence. They were all in shock!

(LISTEN!) You and I would (no doubt) be embarrassed if we were 1st century Jews witnessing such a display. ... On the surface... THIS WAS SCANDALOUS! ... (Yet) it was clearly passionate. This was unrestrained / sincere worship. ... It was an uninhibited display of love... by a redeemed soul. ... It was an act of desperately joyous humility. This dear woman loved Jesus! Despite her sad past... she was brimming with spiritual life! AND Jesus defended it.

We are not too passionate about bad things. We are not passionate enough about good things! ... [P A U S E] ...

This woman had been living with intense guilt. She was guilty of sin... and her culture let her know it wherever she went. ... But now her guilt was gone — and the crushing burden had been lifted from her shoulders! So she wept. She had been given a new heart. She felt pure, washed. Her life had been one of constant rejection, but now she was accepted by God. Her tears were tears of both ongoing repentance and ongoing joy.

Consider her hair. It was her womanly glory... but she loosed it to wipe the Savior's feet. ... **His glory** was her first priority. ... Here was a woman who loved Christ! ... What an example for all of us!

Robert Falconer tells the story of his witnessing among destitute people in a certain city and of reading them this story of the woman who wiped Jesus' feet with her tears. ... While he was reading... he heard a loud sob and looked up at a young... thin girl... whose face was disfigured by smallpox. ... After he spoke a few words of encouragement to her... she said: *"Will He ever come again, the One who forgave the woman? I have heard that He will come again. Will it be soon?"*

After sobbing again uncontrollably... she said: *"Sir, can't He wait a little while? My hair ain't long enough yet to wipe His feet."* ... [P A U S E] ...

Let me ask: "Do you have the same desire and attitude of gratitude for what the Lord has done for you?"

From her presence (there in the courtyard of this Pharisee)... we can see that the woman who wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair really didn't care what others thought - only what the **Lord** thought. ... While others gave the Lord a cold or cool shoulder... her heart was tender toward Christ.

Why do **we** care so much about what others think concerning the way we worship our Savior...?

Listen to what Charles Spurgeon wrote about this woman's love and our passionless worship:

“O for more of this love! If I might only pray one prayer this morning, I think it should be that the flaming torch of the love of Jesus should be brought into every one of our hearts, and that all our passions should be set ablaze with love to him.”

Now we move to the other end of the spectrum in our passage. Many believers are closer to this end... than the woman's uninhibited expressive love. ... The drama in our passage naturally switches from the woman... to the response of Simon (Jesus' host.) ... Simon's thoughts were filled with indignant judgmentalism.

Luke 7:39

Has Simon been wondering whether Jesus is really a prophet? ... If so... he wonders no longer. ... In Simon's opinion... Jesus flunked the first test. He is convinced that if Jesus was a prophet... He would immediately have discerned the character of this “sinner” – and not allow her to touch Him.

Simon's righteousness was the kind that would prefer that Jesus kick the repentant woman away - back to her sin and misery. ... Simon (the moralist)... had an “arctic heart” (a permafrost of the soul.) ... Simon's real problem was *blindness*. ... It was easy for him to say: “**She** is a sinner!” ... but impossible for him to say: “**I** am also a sinner!”

In reality (of course) Jesus knew precisely what was going on in the woman's heart — and in Simon's heart too. ... So the Lord decided to teach him a few things with a little parable.

Luke 7:40-43

The parable does not deal with the amount of sin in a person's life... but the awareness of that sin in his/her heart. ... Simon and the woman were both sinners. ... Simon was guilty of sins of the spirit (especially pride)... while the woman was guilty of sins of the flesh. ... Her sins were known... while Simon's sins were hidden to everyone except God. ... *But both of them were bankrupt... and could not pay their debt to God.* ... Simon was just as spiritually bankrupt as the woman... only he did not realize it.

What we all must understand is that the condition for being forgiven is to realize that we are broke... and in debt (whether we are good moral people... or well-known sinners.

“God... the world is so full of compulsive liars. The only honest man I know is myself. ... Surely I'm acceptable to You...” ... “In this very immoral X-rated world... my life is much like a wholesome G- rated movie...” ... “I'm faithful to my wife. I love her and my children. I am a good husband... father... and son. I figure that's about all I'll need!” ... “My money (lots of it!) goes to the needy...” “I volunteer at the crisis pregnancy center. I really do care...” ... “The world needs more people like me... and so does heaven.” ... “My goodness will surely be accepted.”

God does recognize these things... but nevertheless we are all debtors. Regardless of our individual morality... we are all broke. ... What is necessary is a *consciousness of sin*. The depth and passion of our

personal Christianity depends on how clearly we see our personal guilt—and then our forgiveness in Christ.

Why do many Christians show so little love for Christ? Because they have never truly seen what great sinners they are... and then how sure... sweet... and complete Christ's forgiveness is. ... Such people (though believers)... treat the Lord very much the way Simon had treated Jesus.

... [P A U S E] ...

Luke 7:44-46

We don't know how Simon reacted, but he is exposed. He knew everything about religion... theology...morality... acceptable worship... and Scripture. He knew all about *the things of God*... but somehow he missed the essence of it all - which this woman captured. ... The woman knew how sinful she was. ... Simon's problem was that he thought he was better than he was... and he misunderstood the nature of God... Who wants our humility.

Jesus basically points out that Simon was the failure - not the woman. Simon was the one who gave Jesus the cold shoulder - not this woman.

What made the difference in the attitude of these two folks? This woman found forgiveness from the Lord and expressed her gratefulness to Christ. Simon did not seek God's forgiveness and his actions demonstrated that his life was not changed or touched by Jesus. ... Simon was focused on this woman's depth of depravity... but Jesus was focused on her magnitude of love and gratefulness.

Let me ask right here: “Are you noticing all the faults of others... being critical of their behaviors... while minimizing or ignoring your own failures? Do you fail to express your gratefulness to Christ day by day - because you are worried about proper worship decorum and care too much about what others might think...?” ... Get a life... and flush that kind of thinking from your mind! ... Life is too short for such a waste of time and energy.

Luke 7:47

She wasn't forgiven **because** of her great love. ... Her great love was **evidence** that she had been forgiven. The full force of what Jesus said is this:

“Therefore I tell you, forgiven are her sins, many though they be. They are forgiven, as is clear from the fact that she, conscious of this forgiveness, has shown that she loves me so intensely. It is the person who is forgiven little who shows little love.”

What Jesus teaches is that the outpouring of love results from the sense of having been forgiven. ... We should all show a deep love for Jesus... whether we are shy or extroverted... dispassionate or passionate. ... Such love is the telltale sign of real faith!

When Jesus touches some people's lives... they do the minimum in return. They seem to have no water for His feet... or oil for His head. ... The kisses are grudging... if there are any at all. ... There is no impulse from the heart. ... They do their “religious duties” (what a miserable phrase!)... but there is no soul in it.

Why do many Christians show so little love for Christ? Because they have never truly seen what great sinners they are... and therefore do not

recognize the magnitude of Christ's forgiveness. ... Such people treat the Lord very much the way Simon had treated Jesus. ... *We are not too passionate about bad things. We are **not** passionate enough about God's forgiveness.*

We Christians (who have the life of Christ within us)... need to be regularly reminded of the inclination to sin that also lives within us and that will flourish if we fail to tend our souls. ... I have been a believer for about fifty years... and I know how easy it is to be dulled as to what I really am.

But I need to learn from the Apostle Paul:

1 Timothy 1:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

Paul the worst of sinners? ... Really? ... Yes! This is not pious self-effacement. The more Paul walked with Christ... the more sensitized he became to the tasteless... colorless... odorless carbon monoxide of inner sin. ... He knew how suddenly he could succumb to things like burning envy... or judgmentalism... or unrighteous thinking.

Paul's spiritual health rested upon the knowledge that he was a sinner in need of the constant grace of God. ... This is true of all of us. ... Do not succumb to the self-righteous delusion that God's grace has been so effectual in your life that you don't need it anymore.

Do you see your weakness? ... Do you realize how much you need our Savior's presence and enablement? ... Do we understand the danger of the carbon monoxide within?

Luke 7:48-50

Forgiveness is ready from God; there is no hesitation or shortage on His part. ... Our part is to come with humility and loving submission to Jesus... and to receive the forgiveness He offers by faith. ... Have you put your faith in Christ? If not, stop giving the Lord a cold shoulder and embrace Him with a warm heart, just as this woman did in this passage. Trust Him to take you to Heaven when you die.

During the Spanish-American War... Clara Barton was overseeing the work of the Red Cross in Cuba. ... One day Colonel Theodore Roosevelt came to her. ... He wanted to buy food for his sick and wounded Rough Riders... but she refused to sell him any.

Roosevelt was perplexed. His men needed the help and he was prepared to pay out of his own funds. ... When he asked someone why he could not buy the supplies... he was told, "*Colonel, just ask for it!*"

A smile broke over Roosevelt's face. Now he understood. The provisions were not for sale. All he had to do was simply ask and they would be given freely.

The same is true for salvation in Jesus Christ. Trust in Him today!

(And) if you know that your sins have been forgiven – let it show in your worship! ... Do you care too much about what others may think of you? ... Be MORE like the woman than the pharisee.