

Do You Know How Much You've Been Forgiven?

Luke 7:36-50

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"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." - Luke 7:41-43, ESV

Today's passage has Jesus saying something very unusual. He actually tells a Pharisee, "You have judged rightly." Sadly for the Pharisee, he doesn't seem to fully grasp the significance of his correct conclusion. The question posed by Jesus was obvious, as was the correct conclusion. However, the right application of the conclusion to the life of the Pharisee would have required humility and self-awareness, two things the Pharisee sadly lacked.

What about us?

The superficial (and incorrect) way to understand what Jesus is teaching with this brief parable of the moneylender's two debtors is to conclude that some of us only have a few sins that need to be forgiven by God, while others have a great number of very bad sins which God must forgive. Thus, the respectable churchgoer who pays his taxes and drives safely would only need forgiveness from God equivalent to 50 denarii. On the other hand, the vile sinner who is really messed up would need ten times as much forgiveness from God, right? Wrong.

This teaching is similar to the time when Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick," Jesus was not saying then that some people are so spiritually healthy that they don't need Him, but rather He was saying that some people think they are so healthy that they think they do not need Jesus. It's the same here.

Some people think they only need a little bit of forgiveness from God, and so they will only love little and forgive little. Those who know the truth and who understand how much they need God's forgiveness will love much and forgive much. How can we know which of these descriptions applies to us?

1. Are we tempted to think that years of walking with the Lord have so reduced our sin that we are now righteous and respectable, and thus have very little for which we need to repent? Or are we actually growing in our awareness of our sin, so that we are more broken by it and more acutely aware of our need for forgiveness day-by-day?
2. Do we think the real problems in the world are "out there" - in Hollywood, politics, the music industry or the public schools? Or do we see that our own hearts are our biggest problem and that we need salvation from ourselves?
3. How do we react when a notorious sinner comes to know the Lord? Do we rejoice with the angels in heaven or do we question skeptically?
4. Is our worship of God filled with love and gratitude? Or is it an empty routine?

If you believe in Jesus and have received salvation in Him, you have indeed been forgiven much. So, let us love much and forgive much in response to all that has been given to us!

