

# Forgiven Much

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**Bible Text:** Luke 7:24-50  
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Direct your attention back to the portion of scripture that we read together a few moments ago from the gospel of Luke 7 and we'll be considering together with the Lord's help this evening that text beginning in verse 36, the account of Jesus in the house of Simon and the entrance of this woman who is a sinner. The title of our sermon is "Forgiven Much." Luke 7. It opens in verse 36, "And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat." When many come to the four gospels within the New Testament and they sit down to read it, perhaps even hearing it read publicly, it is easy for a person to approach that reading with a mindset that thinks, "Well, this is an accurate historical record of something that took place 2,000 years ago," and to think, "Well, this is a depiction and description of what we know of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ those 20-some centuries ago." But there is, while all of that is true, there is a fault in this, a fault in this approach because what is actually happening is this, the Lord Jesus Christ tells us himself, "I am the same," that he is the same today, yesterday and forever, that the Christ whom we read about in the gospels is none other than the same Christ who is now exalted to the right hand of the majesty on high, and when we open our Bibles and when we turn to the four gospels and we begin to read these accounts that are given, it is as if the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the present exalted Christ is coming alongside us in the present and saying, as it were, "Let me show you my glory. This is who I am. This is what I do." And in that we have a very different, a very different perspective on all that is transpiring in these accounts. Christ, the present Christ is showing us something of his present glory in the pages of these inspired gospels.

So we come to this text, this account is only recorded for us in the gospel of Luke. It's not in the other three gospels and it is a precious passage. It should be a very precious passage to any and every sinner because here we have something of the glory of Christ, and in that the glory of God, that is opened up to us that when seen, when known, when felt causes the heart to swell with love and gratitude. And so this evening, I would like us to come to this passage and as we seek to work our way through it, to expound this portion of God's word, to consider it under three points, that it organized around the three characters that appear in this passage. We have, first of all, the woman; then we have Simon; then we have the Lord himself.

So first of all, we'll consider this woman. In verse 36 it says, "And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat." So this is the context for us. There is a formal meal. In the ancient Middle East, this would have been a semi-public event that was happening. So there you can picture it, an open courtyard, a long table that was low-lying, there would have been padded seats, perhaps enough to seat 20 people, all of whom would have been reclining at this table, their left arm ordinarily on the table, their feet tucked behind them facing the other way. And so you have the group of immediate guests who are around the table but then you would have all of these onlookers. So there would be people from the community coming and they weren't guests but they also weren't intruders either. They were welcome to observe what was transpiring and in the passage it's literally they were lying down at meat, when it says "sat down to meat," they're lying down at meat.

Then in verse 37, you have the picture set before us and it says, "And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner." Now all of the commentators for the most part have agreed this is a tactful way of describing a woman who was probably a prostitute. She was a notorious sinner. She was a recognizable sinner. And until very recently she had been playing her trade and she was, as a result, one who was despised in the community, she would have been thought of as a tramp. But in her own experience she would have gone through indescribable brokenness and abuse and rejection, something considered filthy. This woman in that context and within that community, within Israel, this was a woman who knew the law of God, she knew, "Thou shall not commit adultery." She knew the other details and applications of that law. She would have heard and known something of the condemnation that comes with sin, the curse of the law. There was no pretense with her. She was one abiding under the wrath of God. She had come, evidently as the text unfolds, she had come to see her true self, no longer making excuses, she wasn't a victim, she wasn't blame-shifting any longer. She saw the depths of her true self and it wasn't just a propositional truth that she had read in her Old Testament scriptures, she had actually experienced that the way of the transgressor is hard. She had lived that out in her own life.

She also knew something about the Lord Jesus Christ. She would have known that he was the holy one of God, which even the demons acknowledged in his earthly ministry, that he was wholly harmless and undefiled, that therefore as such he was of pure eyes than to behold iniquity. Here was the embodiment of holiness, of righteousness, of justice, and given her life, given her background, given her history, given all that she is, given all that God is, all that the Lord Jesus Christ is, what could possibly motivate her, what could prompt her to be so bold as to draw near to the Lord Jesus Christ? How dare she do this? For her filth to be associated with one who is so holy?

Well, she knows all these things that I've described but that's not all. She has evidently come to know far more. She has seen perhaps from a distance Christ. She's heard something of his message. She's watched what has transpired in his ministry, his tenderness, his compassion, healing the blind sinners, delivering the possessed sinners, raising those who were dead. Perhaps she's heard reports of others who have told her things. He has been known to eat, this Jesus of Nazareth actually has eaten with publicans

and with sinners, that he has stood and preached and said, "I have not come to save the righteous but to call sinners to repentance." She's perhaps heard that he even claims the power to forgive sin, that they were told that he is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world even from the early days of John the Baptist's own ministry. In other words, that there is something found in this man who he himself is a fountain that is open for sin and uncleanness, and if that is not enough he says again and again to various people in various circumstances, "Come unto me." Yes, in that well-known incident where he says, "Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest," but all through he's saying, "Come." And that word "come" appears again and again in a whole variety of circumstances and she has taken this in, she has heard this, she has seen this, but she has believed him. She has believed that he is all that he says he is and she has responded to that invitation to come. Yes, she knows the bad news and knows it well but she also believes the good news and she is drawn to the Savior of poor, vile sinners. "I have come not to save the righteous but to call sinners to repentance." And she recognizes, "I need that description. I am a sinner." And in being drawn to the Savior, he fills all. As we were hearing this morning in a different account, he fills all for her.

So here she is and she's coming. She's willing to come. She's desirous to come. She's bold to come. She understood, in other words, what many in our day and age and even in many churches today still have not understood and that is that this Savior will receive all who come to him, who come to him by faith, who come to him with repentance, who come to him on his own terms, and the woman is transformed as a consequence. Well, we can talk about this woman but we have to face the truths that are being pressed in this text upon our own hearts, you know, where does this leave you, my friend? Where does this leave you? Are you ready to humble yourself? Are you ready to take the Lord at his own terms, to enter in on the Lord's terms which means entering as a vile sinner, unqualified in and of ourselves, unable in and of ourselves to bring anything to him?

Now notice in this text, she knows when and where to find him. She knows where he'll be. In verse 45 Jesus says, "this woman since the time I came in," so she was there early, she was there anticipating it from the time he came in. Here she is, she has boldness, boldness for the likes of her to even go into the house of this Pharisee and to draw near and be associated, perhaps at first lurking in the shadows and watching from a distance. Perhaps she even sees the mistreatment, of which we'll speak more in a moment, of Simon, the way in which he mistreated the Lord. And she boldly goes and she approaches, she comes to him, not to Simon, not to others that are at the table but she comes and stands behind the Lord Jesus Christ and there she is with his feet tucked behind him. She bursts into tears and the floodgates open and they run down her face and they cover the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, and her shoulders are heaving and sobbing and Christ's feet are being wet with them, and she begins to stoop down and she's wiping his feet with her hair. What a spectacle this is. It's a spectacle to us 21<sup>st</sup> century America, how much more in that time, in that place, in that day and age.

The feet were the most unclean part of the body. I mean, a slave, of which there were many in this era, could not be required by their master to wash their feet. It brings significance to the words of John the Baptist who says, "It's not meet for me to unloose

the sandals of the Savior." Or you think of Psalm 110 where the enemies of Christ are going to be made his footstool. Or as we sing elsewhere, "His shoe cast over Edom," in the Psalms, and so on. But this is the picture that's being given to us. There's something shocking in it. And she obviously had not planned to wash his feet. She didn't have a towel with her and so she uses her hair. She had come with the purpose rather of anointing him. But here she is and the text says literally in the Greek "she kisses again and again and again." This is a gesture of humility. It's a gesture of abject devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, of love for him. And that love has swelled to such proportions that it has eliminated her sense of shame. She has taken away, she throws away, if you will, her self-composure in seeking to express her devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then next what happens in the text, she begins to anoint him with oil. You shouldn't think of like a pasty kind of ointment that we might use like lotion or something, but this is a woman who evidently had prepared, she had gone home first and she's brought her most precious possession, she's brought her chief investment for the future. This was her piggy-bank, if you will, only worth far more, perhaps a year's wages. It would have been a vase of fine-grained gypsum, a long neck that had to be broken. It was costly. It was intensely fragrant so that when the neck of that was broken, the smell would have not only filled the room, it would have waft out the windows and doors, it would have filled the streets and the surrounding community with its fragrance. This is an offering, this is an expression of thanksgiving, of love, of desire for him. In other words, it is an expression of this woman in a very concrete and in a very tangible way that there was nothing, absolutely nothing that was too much for the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing could be too much in her expression of devotion to Jesus Christ.

She loved him, as Jesus goes on to show and say and defend. She has a heart that is full of affection to him. And you look at the display of this love, of the respect, of the honor in all that she did, washing and kissing and anointing him. What's happening? The saving sight of the Lord Jesus Christ has resulted in a self-denying devotion to him. The saving sight of him has brought her to a self-denying devotion to him. I wonder if there is anything in this passage as you read the graphic descriptions that are given to us, is there something in your own heart that resonates with her, something that is reflective of her, that sympathizes with her, that actually understands the logic, what is it that makes her tick, why the motivation, what is driving her in all of these things? What do we know of what is described of this woman, the depths of our own sin being brought to the Deliverer and Savior of the most vile and chief sinners? And having seen and laid hold upon him by faith as he is brought in the overtures of the gospel and as he himself comes and speaks to us and says, "Come unto me. Come to me." As the Lord comes and woos as well as warns, and as the Lord sets forth the disclosures of his own saving glory, that he is powerful and able to save, that he is willing to receive and save, and the heart of the penitent sinner in whom the Spirit is at work is being drawn out, and all of a sudden everything beautiful in this world, the vases full of fine-grained gypsum and all of their modern equivalents to us, look by way of contrast to him as dust and dung, that know in light of the glory of Jesus Christ the value that you previously put on other things is grossly diminished because of the value that is now placed on what a Savior, what a God,

what a Redeemer, and his beauty as the one who is chief among 10,000 casts everything else into the shadows.

This is the woman that is presented here in this passage but then, secondly, we have by way of contrast we have Simon, Simon the Pharisee. In verse 36 we're told that he invites Jesus. Why? Why did he invite the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, the text doesn't tell us. We don't know and so we're not sure. We do know for certain that it was not out of love for him and it was not out of respect for him. Perhaps, like on other occasions with the Pharisees, he intended a trap, perhaps he intended to interrogate him with questions and if so, if that was his motivation, this woman has provided the perfect occasion that he would have sought, but as is always the case, he is caught by the Savior in his own trap. What's described here is this: he insults the Lord Jesus Christ. He insults him by omitting all of the standard social customs that everyone would have observed under ordinary circumstances. He doesn't give water for the feet of the Lord Jesus. You come to the home, you come to the house, to the meal and so on, a basin would have been provided, you know, the feet walking on dry arid climate and dusty roads would have been caked with the dirt and so on, and there would have been provided an opportunity for that. That's omitted. He doesn't receive the customary greeting of a kiss. He doesn't provide for him even the cheap common oil that they would have anointed their heads with, which again in that hot blazing sun would have been parched and oil providing moisture, if you will, or comfort to the scalp. All of that is omitted.

There's contempt that's being demonstrated. I mean, what would the equivalence be, perhaps in different portions of our country it would be different, but the idea of someone coming to your home that you've invited for a meal, you would shake their hand, that would be a common thing for us as they come in the door. You might in the winter take their coat in order to hang it up or offer them something to drink or whatever the case may be. It would be the admission of what would be ordinary, only in this circumstance it is elevated even higher than in our circumstances, and yet here is the Lord Jesus Christ going to the Pharisee's house. He doesn't turn down the invitation. The Lord Jesus Christ does not distance himself. He actually attends and though they mistreat him, here is Christ absorbing it. He is absorbing the intentional insults and hostility.

Notice in verse 39, "Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it," that is, what Jesus has done in relation to this woman, "he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner." In other words, Simon the Pharisees, he considers himself to be a first-rank religious leader. He has theological acumen. He has spiritual discernment. He can spot a prophet anywhere and he condemns Christ. He condemns Christ. He thinks that he catches Christ. "This is no prophet. This is a sham. This is a fake. He can't be a prophet. He's certainly not a prophet. He's allowing himself to be touched by this woman, a tramp, a woman of the night, a sinner."

So he condemns the eternal Son of God, the Incarnate Word, and next he condemns the woman. Isn't it interesting the way in which he speaks of this woman. You know, here is a man who cannot see his own sin. He, unlike her, has never seen his true self. He rides

high in the saddle. He thinks of himself as advanced, as accomplished, as secure, and so on. He can't see his own sin and as a consequence he cannot rejoice over the repentance of another sinner. He's unable to rejoice over the repentance of another sinner. He is the opposite of the unfallen angels. He is more akin to the demons. Jesus tells us that the angels in heaven rejoice over the repentance of a single sinner. Now we read over that quickly, you think about that for a moment. All that we hear about the angels in scripture, powerful beings, you know, before whom men fall, they faint, they lose all of their strength, they quake before them when they appear in places like Daniel and elsewhere. And now we have this innumerable throng, as it's described, of these powerful angelic beings in heaven and here we are on earth and perhaps in a remote place, in a quiet country church, you know, the gospel is being preached and there the Spirit is accompanying that word and the spark flies, as it were, out of the pulpit and it lands upon a sinner in a pew and the Spirit accompanies it and makes it efficacious, and there it's brought home to their bosom and in the quietness of that remote place, you have a sinner being brought to faith and repentance and drawn unto the Lord Jesus Christ unbeknownst even perhaps those who are sitting around them. It's surely not the case that it will be reported in the newspapers tomorrow or put on the websites or declared in the big cities and so on and so forth, and though the world doesn't see it nor appreciate it, and there's no fanfare whatsoever, the Bible tells us in the quiet reaches, outer reaches of this remote congregation the heavens burst open in thunderous shouts of praise, with joy and rejoicing over the repentance of a single sinner. That's the response of the angels. Look at the response of Simon. No ability to rejoice over the repentance of any.

There's connections here. If we have no sense of sin and if we have no sight of the Savior, and if we have no experience of forgiveness, then there's going to be no love for the Lord Jesus Christ and therefore there will be no love for someone like this woman. There's a hardness here, isn't there? An inability to see sin, inability to see grace, an inability to see Christ, something very devastating, and the Lord Jesus puts his finger on it in this passage. We need to face the full force of this because, my friend, you can have a very decent form of the Christian religion, you can have the Reformed faith in all of its purity as the religion that you profess, and you can be without outward scandal, and yet know nothing of the gospel. There can be a respect for scripture and an ignorance of the cardinal doctrines of the gospel in scripture.

Many see Christ as Simon saw him, as Isaiah says, they looked upon him and did not esteem him; they could not find any beauty in him, in beholding him. There are those who look upon the Lord Jesus Christ and there's no thrill, right, there's a sense of detachment, there's a sense of indifference to the work that he is bringing to pass in the gospel. And he no doubt, you know, Simon no doubt thought that the oil, for example, was a waste to be poured upon Christ and so many today will look upon those who are set aflame with sound and saving faith in Christ and intense love for him and they will look at the Christian life and devotion and all that is involved in it and say, "That is extreme, fanatical, a waste, a waste of gifts, a waste of time, a waste of resources." That's only possible to conclude for one who has never seen the Savior. To see him is to be all absorbed with him. To see him is to withhold nothing from him. To see him savingly is to

be brought to have him as all-in-all, heart and soul and mind, body and being, every bit to be devoted unto him in delight for him.

Well, do we, do you have room in your views of God and in your views of the Lord Jesus Christ that sees him as tenderly receiving sinners, or is there yet within us a self-righteousness that skews God's holiness and shuts out those who are being drawn savingly to him? Here is Simon, he falls in this latter category, an unbroken, self-righteous man who can't see the beauty of Christ or recognize him for who he is, can't see the wonder of wonders in the conversion of sinners, can't see anything that the Bible tells us is truly beautiful. But then that brings us, thirdly, to Christ himself. We see something of the woman, we see something of Simon, but then we see most of all something of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus defends the woman. He speaks up for her. He lifts her up out of her shame. I mean, this is the Christ of the Bible. This is the Christ who is present in the assemblies of his people in public worship, the Christ who by his Spirit is present, the Christ who is exalted in glory, who has not changed. You know, she is slandered and Christ defends her as one who knows him and loves him.

So Jesus turns and he takes the fight to Simon and he does what would have been more shocking than anything this woman did, in some ways, he exposes and rebukes Simon. There's a parable at the center of this text. Jesus tells it to Simon, he says, "I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on." And there's this parable of two men. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors and one owes 10 times the amount of the other. So picture for yourself a ton of money, picture for yourself vast sums of money. And you know, when Simon's listening, really anyone is listening to the parable, you can appreciate the tension because if you're the creditor, if you're the moneylender, you know that if you're lenient what's going to happen? Folk will begin to take advantage of you and your business will be wrecked as a consequence. And so when you hear the account, you can feel something of the tension and yet that's what brings into bold relief what actually Jesus says happens when he forgives them. He has compassion on them. He's tender toward them. There's pity that he shows and he forgives them both, the Lord says. They both have much in common. They both are loaded with debt, it's the same word that's used in the New Testament for "sin," loaded with sin, as it were. Both can't pay. Both are in the same trouble. I mean, it would be, a modern equivalent would be if you without a parachute jumped out of a plane at 5,000 feet or 50,000 feet, it's not going to make much difference when you hit the ground, is it? They're both in serious trouble. They're both in over their heads. And they're both forgiven.

And so Jesus says, "What about the difference, one owes 10 times what the other owes?" He turns to Simon and says, "Which will love him most?" And it strikes me, I mean, you're reading along in verse 43, "Simon answered and said, I suppose," I suppose, really, Simon, you suppose, only suppose that the one who has a mountain more of debt is going to love? You can see something of the man, of his heart, of the crust that is to be found in his own soul and so on. "I suppose the the one who is forgiven most." But then Christ turns to the woman and there she is in a heap on the floor, her hair is a mess, tears have stained her face, and he says, "Simon, do you see this woman?" He makes Simon look at

her. He says, "Do you see this woman?" And then Jesus takes, to use a colloquial phrase, he takes Simon to the cleaners, right, he confronts Simon and in that ancient Eastern culture, you never criticize your host. But Jesus does. He says, "I came and you did not give me so much as one kiss. This woman has continued with many kisses, repeatedly kissing my feet. You wouldn't kiss me on the head, she has kissed even my feet. You wouldn't give me even the most common oil, and yet she's taken this expensive perfume and poured it on me." And here is Jesus setting out this contrast between Simon and the woman to Simon's face. What is he saying? He's saying, "Do you see this woman? She's actually in a higher place than you, Simon."

He's being exposed, isn't he? You can see the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ knows the woman, Christ is not in any way dismissive of her sin. In verse 47 he even says, "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many." Christ isn't just sweeping things under the carpet, he's not saying, "Well, we're going to take God's standard and reduce it, the standard of his law. Or we're going to somehow not consider her sin a big deal or downplay it," or anything else. No, Jesus is holy. He's not going to do that in any way, shape or form. He is not dismissive of her sin. He acknowledges it frankly and openly but he knows Simon's thoughts. He knows what Simon has concluded and so Jesus ventures out and says, "Thy sins are forgiven. Thy sins are forgiven."

Now in verse 47 it says, "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Love is the fruit of forgiveness, so she has come stooping low as she comes through the gospel door, she has a sight of Christ which has been revealed to her, she's coming with faith and repentance before the Lord, she's coming in dependence to receive the washing cleansing that he alone can provide to wash away the defilement and pollution and filth inside and out of her soul and life and history and what have you. She's seeking pardon in him and in receiving pardon, the fruit that is borne mixed with gratitude for the relief from this mountain of debt, this sin which is big enough to crush and grind her under its weight to powder, the fruit is love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

She loves him. Now you contrast, you know, minimizing the place of Christ in the gospel, minimizing or slighting the gift of forgiveness, and there by slighting any experience of the measure, a measure of forgiveness, where does that leave us? It guts the gospel and the fruit of the gospel of love, doesn't it? All the spurious forms in which this manifests itself are exposed. The lack of love is not there, the love for Christ, and all that belongs to him, it is exposed. But let's make something clear here because many of us grow up in very different circumstances from this woman and for some of us our history has been very different from her own history, but the facts are this: every single sinner that has ever been brought to the Savior, every single sinner that has been brought to the Savior has been forgiven much. It is true that there is a mountain, an inexhaustible amount of sin that can be found in the soul of every sinner, and so for every sinner that is brought soundly and savingly to the Savior, all of them have sins that remain.

Christ says to her, as I noted, "Thy sins are forgiven." Do you know these are perhaps the most important words that she's ever heard in her entire life. You think of all that's



happened since she's come into maturity and adulthood, and all that has been involved in her life and history and experience, again, the abuse and heartache and all of the vile evil that has been associated with that, lots of things have been said to her by lots of people, on lots of occasions, over the course of many many years, but none has spoken to her like this man. Here is the Lord Jesus Christ who alone is qualified as the God-man, as the Christ, as the mediator between God and men, here is the one who alone is qualified and he comes and says to her, "Thy sins are forgiven." And how that would have come into her ears and into her mind and would have illuminated, as it were, her heart and soul and everything within her with the sunshine of the light of the world that is shining upon her in speaking these words to her. The Lord Jesus Christ himself, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." I mean, this is something she would have craved, she would have thought perhaps unthinkable, she could barely have dreamed about even, and yet here they are in all of their brevity, in all of the ways in which they come in this concise package, "Thy sins are forgiven." Sin forgiven. A filthy woman cleansed, pardoned, made pure, washed, all because of the coming shedding of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, those debtors that Jesus spoke about, they could do nothing, they could pay nothing. They were forgiven freely. This is the bedrock of the gospel, is it not? And we can come back to it again and again and again and again, that it is God in his sovereign grace who comes and gives the gift of salvation and all of the fullness and freeness of his mercy, that the sinner brings absolutely nothing. They don't manipulate. They can't construct things within their own heart and soul and experience. They can't build up a bank of merit and other things that will somehow contribute to the Lord looking or casting his gaze in their direction or helping them in any way, shape or form. It's Christ and Christ alone. He is all or you have nothing. There's no middle. It's either all Christ or nothing.

She comes to discover that it is indeed Christ who is all-in-all, and she is brought to receive forgiveness of sins and with it all of the love that that manifests and gratitude and with that holiness. You know, there are many who are so foolish as to think that if you preach the gospel, and if you preach the forgiveness of sins which is to be had freely in the person of Christ on account of his own work and so on, it will lead people to licentiousness and the Bible turns that upside down onto its head, it inverts that whole notion and crushes it to smithereens. The Bible tells us the exact opposite, that the wonder of the gospel when it is preached in its fullness and freeness, and when accompanied by the Spirit to bring a saving work in the hearts of souls, it actually is the very thing that produces through the ministry of the Spirit the fruits of holiness.

Love for Christ, right? Paul speaks about various motives that motivate the person who is in a state of grace in their Christian life. One of those is that the love of Christ constraineth us, right, he says, "I pray for you that you'll know the depths and the height and the breadth and the width, that you'll know what is unknowable, that you'll comprehend what is incomprehensible." That's the language that he uses, that you'll be able to peer into and understand something of the depths, the inexhaustible infinite depths of the love of God in Christ Jesus. He says, "I'm praying that, that somehow you in Ephesus will know more of the fullness of this," or the same thing for those in Philippi or

in Colossae. He prays similarly, "that you'll have a sight of these things and a knowledge of these things." Why? Because the love of Christ constraineth us and the saving sight of that love in the Lord Jesus Christ is actually what puts wind in the sails of the believer, it is what drives them under the Spirit by God's grace forward in love for him, and in new obedience, and in pursuit of holiness, and in watchfulness in the fear of God, and godliness and all of its various expressions.

What they loved, the believer, what they had previously loved they now hate, but it's not as if that's where it stops. "Well, I have to hate this thing, this sin that's plagued me, tormented me or followed me or tripped me." No, no, what is it? It's displacing that thing. Christ and love for him is by the Spirit brought to pass in the soul so that the love for him excels the love for these other things. It's equivalent to hating them. He displaces these other things so that the soul is drawn out in pursuit of fellowship and communion of him. This is what explains self-denial in the Christian walk, and explains practical obedience, and all that it produces. It's not mere duty, it is preaching Christ crucified in the gospel to those that are even in a state of grace, and the open disclosures of the love of God in Christ that fuel the Christian in their pursuit of him.

So here is this woman and she is sent away, in verse 50, "he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Here is a woman who has known nothing but war, nothing but anxiety, hostility. The fact is that she, like every other sinner, is at peace with sin and at war with God, and in coming to the Lord Jesus Christ she has been put at war with sin and at peace with God, and the peace of God follows that peace with God. He says, "Go in peace." Perhaps she had heard the words, "He who cometh unto me I will by no means cast out," but whether she did or not, she came and she was not cast out. She found the Lord to be good to his own word and she came to lay hold of him and all that he has promised to be and do for those who come to him. She is sent away in peace and she is sent away with an unquenchable love. The object of faith is Christ. The object of love is Christ. The object of hope is Christ.

So my friends, it continues to be to the present hour. The Lord comes in and among us this evening by his Spirit. It is the living Christ, the present Christ, who draws nigh unto us in his word in the ordinance of preaching and he says, "Behold me. Behold my glory."

Let's seek the Lord's face together in prayer.

*Our Lord and our God in heaven, the God who is Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the God who is thrice holy so that the angels say, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty who was and who is and who is to come." Thou art the God who is also a God who comes in the bounty of thy goodness so that when Moses said, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," thou didst say unto him that all thy goodness would pass before him. O Lord, grant that thy goodness would pass before us as it is opened to us in thy word, and as it is seen in the person of thy Son the Lord Jesus Christ. And grant that thy Spirit would accompany the word to draw us with a magnetic and irresistible pull to the Savior that we might indeed lay hold of him. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*