

Robert R. McLaughlin Bible Ministries

The TREE OF LIFE is a weekly teaching summary.

Tree of Life for 11-01-98

Last week we noted the difference between Holy Spirit conviction and satanic accusations. Holy Spirit conviction seeks to correct and restore the believer whereas false guilt seeks to condemn and guilt the believer into separating from God. The majority of believers do not know how to deal with guilt. We have been delivered from guilt but we must appropriate the release of its hold over us through the truth and power of Christ Jesus.

Part of evil is being manipulated by guilt. Satan uses guilt to keep the believer from growing near to grace. Grace being the means by which God reveals Himself to us. Grace is also that by which Bible doctrine is illuminated. We are nothing without the grace of God! Many believers think that they are able to discern Satan's policy of evil and God's policy of grace. In reality they cannot even distinguish between divine good and human good and evil. Most simply base their erroneous conclusions on overt appearances and we know that this is contrary to the word of God, John 7:24.

Satan's objective is to get people away from grace and truth since it exposes his deception, 2Co 2:11. God's objective is that of restoration, never destruction, John 8:32. God's policy always offers a way of restoration, His policy offers grace, forgiveness and acceptance. A great example of the grace and acceptance of God is seen in Luke 7:36-50. Here the woman

mentioned who was attending to Jesus knows well the forgiveness of God and she was wholly grateful for it. This incident is not the same as the incident found in John 12:1-8 when Mary Magdalene anointed the feet of Jesus in the house of Lazarus with a very expensive perfume. Nor is this the same incident which occurred in Simon the leper's house when an unknown woman anointed the head of Jesus, Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:1-3.

In Luke 7:36-50, this Pharisees who's house the dinner was taking place in was not really hostile toward Jesus (yet), he invited Jesus for the purpose of using Him to gain popularity with His followers. This emphasizes the fact that legalistic people are always users. They use others for what they can gain and then judge and condemn them when they are no longer of service to them. When a person feels he is forgiven little they generally love less. They think they are better than the average believer and so need less grace thereby offering less grace to others. A person's love for God will be in direct proportion to the obligation they feel to God for being forgiven. The one who feels forgiven of much, loves much. To whom much has been forgiven, much will be expressed in the form of gratitude. It is only fitting that our love for God should be increased by our gratitude for His patience and longsuffering with everyone of us. The grace oriented believer operates with graciousness toward people and thankfulness toward God for all they have been forgiven of. Hence, a believer's love for the Lord Jesus Christ is manifested by how he treats others.

It is a great gift from God to be accepted by Him. Yes, our sins, which are many, have been forgiven! In Luke 7:36-50 we have the account of the woman who comes to Jesus while He is dining at the house of Simon the Pharisee. In worship and gratitude she gently weeps behind Jesus then she comes before Him to wet His feet with her tears and dries His feet with her hair. She then anoints His feet with a very expensive perfume which cost her greatly since she was now an X-prostitute. But the Pharisees still view her as she was, a prostitute, and they

are amazed that Jesus would let a woman like this touch and kiss Him and weep over Him.

In reality she is doing what Simon the Pharisee neglected to do according to the custom of receiving a guest into one's home. This custom being to greet the respected and honored guest with a kiss and then cleanse his feet before dinner and anoint him with a fragrant aroma. This woman noticed that Jesus was not properly welcomed and so honored Him herself. The Pharisees were appalled over this and Jesus, discerning their thoughts, brought up a parable to prove that what she did was right and worthy, as opposed to what they neglected to do in their self-righteousness.

Jesus spoke up and addressed Simon, his host. "Simon, I have something to say to you." And Simon replied, "Say it Rabbi." "A certain moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, [one denaris is one days wage] and the other owed fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him more?" Simon answered in indifference and arrogance, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And Jesus said to Him, "You have judged correctly." Then Jesus turned from Simon offering him His back. He then met the woman face to face as He continued addressing Simon. "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss, but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with [scented] oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. For this reason [of grace] I say to you, her sins, which are many have been forgiven [in the past] for she [has for a long time] loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." (Meaning that some actually think they have very few sins to be forgiven of and so in arrogance they think they are better than others.) Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins have been forgiven. Your faith has saved you, go in peace." And those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, 'Who is this man who even forgives sins?'

The phrase, "For this reason" refers to for this gracious reason, you "have been forgiven", meaning forgiven in the past, pointing to the fact that she has already been saved in the past which is why she is so humble in her gratitude toward Jesus. She has been forgiven more and so loves more. Every time this woman had an opportunity to express her love for the Lord Jesus Christ she did so! When we love much, we will go to extravagant measures to show our appreciation and love. In hearing the words, your sins have been forgiven you, this woman was freed from the bondage of the life she was so laden down with. The words of love and acceptance she had so wanted to hear were now freely given her, releasing her soul to love much. Having lived the life of a prostitute, each night she would adorn herself with silk and scarfs and perfume and makeup. She would then stand on a corner inviting attention, inviting gazes of lust and/or disgust, receiving sneers, and some offers. Even with the offers she received, she was not valued but evaluated. Each job left her lonelier. Each night she grew farther and farther from the words of true love she so longed for. Each night the scarlet letter of her position became harder and harder to wash away. But in the forgiveness of grace, in the words of our Lord she found what she had so earnestly sought... forgiveness and acceptance.

Acceptance is a grace gift from God secured for us by the substitutionary expiating work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. Acceptance allows others to be who they are without disapproving of them or losing patience with them. Acceptance means the person is valuable just as they are hence allowing them to be who they really are and not just the image of what another sees them to be. Acceptance is a precious gift and is what set this woman free. Acceptance allows all judgment to rest with the Lord rather than us, Romans 14:1,4,10. Acceptance provides each person the freedom to choose, Romans 14:5, and helps us focus on essentials and not incidentals, Romans 14:17. Acceptance frees the believer to become well acquainted with the love of God. And, the love of God in us is what regulates our scales to that of the Lord's measure. The way you manifest your appreciation for your acceptance in Christ is expressed by your attitude toward others. Are you gracious and forgiving

with others offering them restoration and acceptance or are you judgmental and presumptuous, withholding the grace that was shown to you?

Often times we tend to forget where we came from, meaning we all sin, we all fail, we are all humans and we are all in need of grace and forgiveness. You may think at this time in your life you are a bit more justified than in the past and may therefore even look down on a certain situation and pass judgment where you ought not to. But God has a way of reminding us all exactly who and what we are without Him! NOTHING! It is blind arrogance, as found in the Pharisees, which concludes that the plan of God succeeds or fails on the basis of how you function, rather than on the basis of grace. Self-righteous arrogance is the motivation, while legalism is the function which comes from that motivation. Legalism being, the audacity of the energy of the flesh, the blasphemy of Christian works being substituted for the divine power of grace, and the presumption of replacing our equal privilege and equal opportunity in Christ with the conceit of pretensions from human ability. Under such irrational thinking the individual actually thinks he is pleasing God with his system of morality. The Pharisees actually drove people away rather than welcome them in acceptance to God.

Our sins, which are many, have all been forgiven, this should cause us, like the woman in Luke 7, to offer grace to others and offer all our gratitude to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for His work on our behalf. Because of Christ, God's love is free to work on our behalf, and on behalf of others! The forgiveness and love of God is not something any of us have cornered the market on. It is freely offered to all and is that which unites the royal family of God. Not one is better than the other, we are all in need of divine grace, forgiveness, and acceptance, without which there is no freedom from guilt, no spirituality, and no true happiness.

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