

The Wonder of Jesus Lesson 9 2Q 2008

The Tenderness of His Love

SABBATH

Read the first two paragraphs “Matthew 9:35 tells how...”
Thoughts?

I have patients that if I read these paragraphs to them would get angry, “If this is true then why didn’t Jesus give us food when we were hungry? Why didn’t He stop my step father from abusing me? Why didn’t He stop my friend from getting killed in a car accident?”

What would you say to someone like this?

SUNDAY

The woman caught in adultery – is everyone familiar with the details of this story?

Some Christian authors suggest the woman caught was the same woman who anointed Jesus’ feet prior to His crucifixion and that this woman is the sister of Martha and Lazarus and the niece of Simon the leper. Further, some suggest the details are that Simon, the girls uncle is the one who sexually exploited her as a young girl and this led her to become a prostitute. In that society how might a young girl feel after being sexually exploited by her uncle? So she goes into a life of prostitution.

With this background we have several elements to explore, how Christ treated Mary, how Christ treated the men who accused her and how Christ treated Simon.

Here is one Christian author’s perspective on the events:

Simon the host had been influenced by the criticism of Judas upon Mary's gift, and he was surprised at the conduct of Jesus. His Pharisaic pride was offended. He knew that many of his guests were looking upon Christ with distrust and displeasure. Simon said in his heart, "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." {DA 566.1}

By curing Simon of leprosy, Christ had saved him from a living death. But now Simon questioned whether the Saviour were a prophet. Because Christ allowed this woman to approach Him, because He did not indignantly spurn her as one whose sins were too great to be forgiven, because He did not show that He realized she had fallen, Simon was tempted to think that He was not a prophet. Jesus knows nothing of this woman who is so free in her demonstrations, he thought, or He would not allow her to touch Him. {DA 566.2}

But it was Simon's ignorance of God and of Christ that led him to think as he did. He did not realize that God's Son must act in God's way, with compassion, tenderness, and mercy. Simon's way was to take no notice of Mary's penitent service. Her act of kissing Christ's feet and anointing them with ointment was exasperating to his hardheartedness. He thought that if Christ were a prophet, He would recognize sinners and rebuke them. {DA 566.3}

To this unspoken thought the Saviour answered: "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. . . . There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell Me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged." {DA 566.4}

As did Nathan with David, Christ concealed His home thrust under the veil of a parable. He threw upon His host the burden of pronouncing sentence upon himself.

Simon had led into sin the woman he now despised. She had been deeply wronged by him. By the two debtors of the parable, Simon and the woman were represented. Jesus did not design to teach that different degrees of obligation should be felt by the two persons, for each owed a debt of gratitude that never could be repaid. But Simon felt himself more righteous than Mary, and Jesus desired him to see how great his guilt really was. He would show him that his sin was greater than hers, as much greater as a debt of five hundred pence exceeds a debt of fifty pence. {DA 566.5}

Simon now began to see himself in a new light. He saw how Mary was regarded by One who was more than a prophet. He saw that with keen prophetic eye Christ read her heart of love and devotion. Shame seized upon him, and he realized that he was in the presence of One superior to himself. {DA 567.1}

Christ might have extinguished every spark of hope in Mary's soul, but He did not. The Heart-searcher read the motives that led to her actions, and He also saw the spirit that prompted Simon's words. "Seest thou this woman?" He said to him; she is a sinner; "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. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven." {ST, May 9, 1900 par. 14}

Those present, thinking of Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead by Christ, and who was at this time a guest in his uncle's house, began to question, saying, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" But Christ continued, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." {ST, May 9, 1900 par. 15}

How did Christ treat Mary, the woman caught in adultery?

Neither do I condemn you. He treated her with respect, love and restored her dignity, why? Because we cannot fulfill God's purpose for our lives if we live in guilt, shame and self-loathing.

Do you see when Christ treats her such that this is the Father speaking, “if you have seen me you have seen the Father?”

How did Christ treat the men who brought her before him? He knew their secret sins and knew they were trying to trap Him, yet He protected their reputations. What does it say about God that He will protect the reputations of His enemies?

How did He treat Simon? What would you do today if you knew one of the church elders molested his niece leading her into a life of prostitution and after the pastor reaches out to her and brings her to Christ and baptizes her into the church he questions the worthiness of the pastor, has hardness in his heart and looks down on this woman as being unworthy to be in the church? If you knew what he had done how would you handle it?

What does it say about God that He would seek to protect the reputation of Simon? What does it say about God that He didn't publicly expose Simon? Is there a lesson for us?

What does it say that Jesus didn't ask everyone to pray for Simon? Or go behind Simon's back to the church board or the conference committee to express His concern for Simon?

In all these situations how would we be tempted to act? Would we be tempted to choose sides? Would we see all of the parties involved as suffering from the same terminal condition and in need of the same remedy? Would we seek to heal them all?

Imagine an AIDS ward where everyone there is dying, but some are dying of PCP, others cytomegala virus, others from carposi's sarcoma, others from meningitis and they have broken into groups criticizing and attacking those with different manifestations of the disease?

Imagine you were Mary, involved in prostitution – how would you feel if you turned around and saw your parents there? Parents how would you feel if your daughter was molested as a

child and ended up in such a situation? Would you hate her? Would you want to punish her? Or would your heart go out to her wanting to heal her? Does this give us some insight into how the unhealed wicked will feel when they come face to face with God in the end and what God's attitude toward them will be?

FRIDAY

Read question three – thoughts?

What is the problem with this question? What is the false premise, the incorrect assumption? The false assumption is that if we don't hold people accountable then they get away with sin. Why is this a false assumption and where does such an idea come from? This idea comes from the false belief that God's laws are imposed and required imposed penalties be enforced. But the laws of God are natural laws and violations bring their own penalties.

Imagine, how well would you sleep tonight if you molested a child today? And if you could sleep well how damaged a person would you be?

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death.
{1SM 235.2}

Sin damages the sinner, no one gets away with it. It is a falsehood that we have to hold people accountable, we are to work to bring people to Christ for repentance and healing!

What about correcting others? What is the balance?

“I have seen the great sacrifice which Jesus made to redeem man. He did not consider His own life too dear to sacrifice. Said Jesus: "Love one another, as I have loved you." Do you feel, when a brother errs, that you could give your life to save him? If you feel thus, you can approach him and affect his heart; you are just the one to visit that brother. But it is a lamentable fact that many who profess to be brethren, are not willing to sacrifice any of their opinions or their judgment to save a brother. There is but little love for one another. A selfish spirit is manifested.” {1T 166.2}

To hate and reprove sin, and at the same time to manifest pity and tenderness for the sinner, is a difficult attainment. The more earnest our own efforts to attain to holiness of heart and life, the more acute will be our perception of sin, and the more decided our disapproval of any deviation from right. We must guard against undue severity toward the wrong-doer. But while we should seek to encourage him in every effort to correct his errors, we must be careful not to lose sight of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. While there is need of Christlike patience and love toward the erring, there is constant danger of manifesting so great toleration for his error that he will consider himself undeserving of reproof, and will reject it as uncalled-for and unjust. {Sketches from the Life of Paul 321.2}

How do you understand this? As a parent do you ever become tolerant and accepting of drug addiction? Why not? Because you know it only does one thing and one thing only – destroy those you love. Do you ever hate your child caught up in such an addiction? This is the balance, hate the sin which infects us all, but love each other.

MONDAY

Read first paragraph – thoughts? What about the sentiment at the end that the children died because of Christ? This is a falsehood, a lie, a distortion and many of my patients struggle with this type of confused thinking. Did God or Christ make and decisions to kill those babies? Did God or Christ give any instructions to kill those babies? No! Did God and Christ take action to heal mankind and destroy sin? Yes! What would have happened if God and Christ said, “Oh, my, if I go to earth as a human baby then many babies will die, I just couldn’t live with that so I will stay here in heaven instead”?

How do people do this? A man is in an unhealthy relationship in which his girlfriend is controlling, manipulative, constantly goes into rages if she doesn’t get her way. He realizes it is unhealthy and wants to end it, but she has told him if he does she will kill herself. He says, “I just couldn’t live with that, if she kills herself it will be my fault” and therefore stays. Is this healthy thinking? Is it true that if she kills herself it is his fault?

Read last paragraph “Those children...” how would you feel if as a child you sat on Jesus lap and He put His hands on your head and you heard Him bless you? Would it make a difference in your life today? How and why?

Why did Jesus give such a stern warning on how we treat children?

Mark 9:42 "And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck.

Explore neurobiology of brain development, traumatic impact on neurodevelopment and psychological impacts of increased fear, insecurity and inability to trust on long term relationships and adaptation.

TUESDAY

Luke 10:38-42 is the account of Martha requesting Mary to help in the kitchen and Jesus gently reminding Martha that Mary had chosen the better option – how do you understand Jesus answer in light of:

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Matthew 25:34-36

And other texts that speak about servant love – isn't such activity exactly what Jesus wants for us?

Where was Martha's focus on service or self? Was she focused on uplifting others, providing for others what was in their best interest? So being aware that Mary needed to be at Jesus feet she gladly did the work to provide Mary the opportunity? Perhaps Martha was concerned with what others would think of her as a hostess? Was Jesus suggesting that Mary was pursuing the most important thing, to be like Jesus genuinely loving others more than self?

Love is giving, but there is giving in order to give and giving in order to get what is the difference?

WEDNESDAY

Loving our enemies – why is this so hard to do? What are the barriers that keep us from doing this?

What has helped you love those who have done you wrong?

Read last paragraph – thoughts? What did they not know? Did they not know who Jesus was? Did they not know what they were doing to themselves?

Did some of them see Jesus put the ear back on Malchius? Did some of them get knocked down by the brilliance of an heavenly angel just hours before?

How damaged must their minds be to be able to ignore all this evidence, do we get insights into what sin does to the mind? Do we get insights into why some are lost?

THURSDAY

Read paragraph “If God shared...” thoughts? What is the implication buried subtly in this paragraph? That God has limited patience and that God sets time limits on us? Does God have limited patience or did the children of Israel have limited usefulness? In other words did God stop His willingness to work with them or did they stop their willingness to work with Him? Notice how the lesson suggests that God is the one who lost patience and set limits.

What about the passage in Revelation 22:11:

Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy."

Does this mean God is saying, “time’s up, here I come ready or not”? Does God run out of patience? Or does this passage refer to the time when all people will have been so settled either into the truth about God or the lies of Satan that no one is movable anymore? All are eternally settled by their own choices in one of the two camps?

Does it make a difference in how we see it?