

CAPITOL STUDIES

MAY 5, 2021 • WEEK 17



SEVEN DEADLY
SINS AND CIVIL
SERVANTS:
SPECIAL TOPICS

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Verse of the Week

Titus 3:5

He saved us, not on the basis of righteous deeds which we have done, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

Sex Slavery & The Vile Vial Lady



SEX SLAVERY IS AN ENORMOUS PROBLEM worldwide and always has been. Sex is among God's greatest inventions and is susceptible, for that reason, to the greatest of attacks and perversions. On Super Bowl Sunday I shudder, realizing sex trafficking is alleged to be at an all-time high. During Super Bowl 50, I winced as my heart was sliced with fear when I saw a razor-blade graphic in my Twitter feed from Rev. Dr. Russell Moore. He had tweeted about the horrors of female genital mutilation and American Christians' need to pray and fight against it. For any who drone, "You can't legislate morality," I point to these atrocities and say, "Of course you can, and, in a civilized society, you simply must. Do you really not realize that all laws are moral?" From America's solid Judeo-Christian ethical foundation, our history shows more than 200 years of legislation against things like rape, child pornography, and prostitution.

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier, V. D. M.

(This study is adapted from an earlier series by Rev. Gauthier, 1960–2020.)



INTRODUCTION

Today we will reach back 2,000 years, digging into the archaeological rock of the Gospel of Luke. We will uncover truths embedded there more relevant to our lives than yesterday's newspaper. I will introduce you to a lady I met in Luke 7:36-50 twenty-nine years ago. She has taught me much about sin, sex, salvation, and the Savior. I nicknamed her the "Vile Vial Lady." She had been a slave to sinful sex but became a silent servant to our Savior. She is silent in our passage, but her silence speaks 1,000 words.

1. A TALE OF TWO SINNERS: VILE VS. VIRTUOUS

Let us first observe the beauty of the *Vial* Lady, in contrast to a wealthy, respected male leader in her community, as she crashes a dinner party that he hosted for the Lord.

Luke 7:36-39

Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Jesus to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined on a couch at the table.

³⁷And there was a woman who was known as a sinner of that city; when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of myrrh perfume, ³⁸and was standing behind Him at His feet, was weeping, was raining on His feet with tears, and kept wiping them with the loosened hair of her head, and was deeply kissing His feet, anointing them with the perfume.

³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet he would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner." ¹

Our first scene has all its main characters (Jesus, a Pharisee, and a Vile Lady) silent. Our passage occurred after the Inauguratory Year of Jesus' ministry (the first 10 months) during the Years of Popularity (the next 18 months). Jesus was 20 months into a very popular ministry. He has not yet hit the Years of Opposition (His final 16 months, which end in the week-long story of His death by crucifixion). Those dark hours were far away, and Jesus was at the top of His game—ever popular.

The Pharisee who had invited this intriguing young Galilean Rabbi into community via an intimate dinner may have collected celebrities and desired a mere stroke to his ego. Pharisees were powerfully rich, extremely self-disciplined, orthodox, non-paid religious leaders in Israel in Jesus' day. Regarding the dinner setting (and recalling Levi's party), Jesus ate reclining on a low triclinium couch:

[A triclinium was] a couch for reclining at meals among the ancient Romans, arranged along three sides of a square, the fourth side being left open for bringing in food or tables.... In early Old Testament times people sat at their meals.... Reclining was a luxurious habit imported from foreign countries.... [T]he ruler or governor of the feast is called the *architriklinos*, that is, the master of the triclinium.²



The host and master of the dinner did not expect this sinner, this vile lady, to uninvitedly interrupt, touch, or engage Jesus' body. Luke, a master storyteller, used verbs that created a slow-motion silent movie effect so we could watch and learn. All her actions took time: she was standing behind; she was silently weeping in the dimly lit dinner hall; she was gently raining tears onto His sacred feet; she was wiping them with her (scandalously!) unbound hair; she was deeply kissing His feet; she was rubbing them with a very costly evaporating-oil, myrrh perfume.

The vile lady snapped the neck of the alabaster vial to minister to Jesus in contrite worship. As that sweet aroma filled the room, the self-righteous Pharisee was filled with unspoken judgments against her—“That *vile* woman”—and against Jesus—“He is certainly not a holy man, or *He* would know that *she* is the nasty, sex-enslaved type.” Luke wrote that she had been literally “of the nature of a city reputation, given over to sin.” Dr. Joel B. Green explains:

Undoubtedly, this characterization marks her as a prostitute, by vocation, a whore by social status, contagious in her impurity and probably one who fraternizes with Gentiles for economic purposes.³

The richest imaginable aroma filled the dining hall, but the air was also thick with enormous misunderstandings about these two sinners.

2. A TALE OF TWO DEBTORS: A DEVASTATING DIFFERENCE OF DEBTS

The divine Son of Man read the mind of silent Simon, the Pharisee host, breaking the tension of our so far silent passage.

Luke 7:40-43

*And Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he replied, “Speak, Teacher.”*⁴¹ *“A capitalistic moneylender had lent to two debtors: one owed him five hundred days’ wages, and the other fifty.”*⁴² *When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Due to this, which of them will love him more?”*⁴³ *Simon answered saying, “I take it the one whom he forgave more.” Jesus said, “You have made a correct judgment.”*

The New Testament is not simple with Simons since it contains fully nine of them. The most famous are Simon Peter; Simon Niger, the strong African cross carrier; and Simon the Pharisee—here a cold-hearted host to our reclining Lord.⁴ Simon was wealthy (as was Luke’s narratee Theophilus). Now Simon speaks for the first time with only two words.

Simon says, “Speak, Teacher,” so this Rabbi of riddles, this Preacher of parables, built Simon an invisible bridge from the known to the unknown. Simon knew about finance and debt, so Jesus told a tale of two debtors with unpaid balances to a commercial lender.

The median household income in Nebraska was \$61,439 in 2019.⁵ By that standard, a debt of 500 days’ wages would be just over \$118,000. A debt of 50 days’ wages would be about \$11,800. Dallas Seminary’s Darrell Bock teaches more:





Now comes the twist to the story.... [T]he twist supplies the element that Jesus uses to make his point. The moneylender, rather than forcing the debtors to pay, freely forgives the debt. A modern analogy might be the cancellation of a house mortgage or a debt on a car.⁶

Christ's analogy was simple. Jesus was not now the physician He was last week at Levi's party mansion. He was now, by analogy, a resource manager to whom every human being owed a moral debt—including Simon. The good news—the gospel—is that God saves us from our sins apart from good works, graciously initiating forgiveness!

“HE SAVED US, NOT ON THE BASIS OF RIGHTEOUS DEEDS WHICH WE HAVE DONE, BUT ACCORDING TO HIS MERCY.” – TITUS 3:5

Jesus' economic analogy was simple, and a simple question followed. “Which forgiven debtor would feel and show the most love to such a forgiving creditor?” Simon had walked right over that bridge. He realized he had walked right into Jesus' teaching trap, so his answer is reserved. His Pharisaical training taught him a rabbi's questions often concealed surprises. Simon aloofly admitted the easy answer: “The greatest love comes from the debtor who realized he had been forgiven of the greatest debt.” Jesus nodded, “Right answer!” The answer was easy, but now its application would prove hard because, in this banquet hall, only one of the two indebted sinners was showing the divine Creditor the love His great forgiveness deserved. That sinner was simply not Simon, the respectable host. That sinner was the vial woman, with her vile reputation, her broken vial of myrrh, her broken heart, her dripping tears, and her running mascara. She risked showing her love for Jesus. She had not ceased kissing His feet.

3. A TALE OF TWO LOVERS: THE LAVISH LOVER VS. THE LITTLE LOVER

Luke 7:44-46

Turning toward the woman, Jesus said to 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.

⁴⁵You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint My head with olive oil, but she anointed My feet with myrrh.”

Simon refused to see his sins for what they were—just as bad as those of the silent “city sinner” at Jesus' feet. Simon sees sin. Simon says, “Vile!” Jesus agreed (her sins *were* many). Simon says, “I am holier than she!” Jesus disagreed. As proof, He gave three rapid-fire rebukes for Simon's loveless omissions of normal courtesies for traveling rabbis: cool **water** to comfort dust-caked feet, **kisses** of honor, and soothing **oils** for the face and hair.

Jesus stressed simple Simon's triple, loveless lack, saying, “**Water** Me, none you but she.... **Kiss** Me, none you but she.... **Oil** Me, none you but she!” Speaking to Simon but looking at the Vial Lady, Jesus explains her



lavish love. That uninvited underdog socially risked to do from her heart what the master-host refused to do. Did the vile woman break the neck of her vial trying to earn Jesus' favor (recall Titus 3:5)? Let us look at the lovely main character of our passage—and learn from her lavish love.

Luke 7:47-50

Jesus said, "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, had already been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸Then He said to her, "Your sins have already been forgiven." ⁴⁹Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰And He said to the woman, "Your faith had already saved you; so go in the peace which that provides."

The VILE Lady, as most in sexual slavery, became desperate, forging a chain of sin and a stain to her name that would not leave. The VIAL Lady lavished love because she became aware before that night that she desperately needed the forgiveness she had found by faith in a very popular Rabbi. Today, that Teacher tells us that her love was *proof* of her forgiveness, not *the reason for it*. Those are two very different things. To say "The windows are wet *because* it is raining" speaks of *the proof* of the rain, not *the cause* of the rain. To say she earned forgiveness *because* she showed love for the Lord is to swap the *proof* with the *cause* and to *reverse* and entirely *miss* His point.

**THE VILEST SINNERS SEE THEMSELVES AS THE
GREATEST DEBTORS AND, ONCE FORGIVEN,
BECOME THE MOST LAVISH LOVERS.**

Jesus sent a wonderful worshipper back out into the streets that night, filled with peace. Romans 5:1 echoes, "Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (emphasis mine). Her faith had already saved the vile lady, and to this day, the vial lady's lavish love for the Lord is living *proof!*

A BRIDGE AND TWO QUESTIONS

Dear Honorable Senator: Today these verses walked over the Bible study bridge through your eye gate and into your mind. Which sinner have they found you to be? Are you the respectable, privileged male Simon with little public devotion or affection because your debts are "little"? Alternatively, are you like the vile vial woman, willing publicly to make a mess of things since you are deeply grateful that the Savior has taken your mess and your sin and graciously forgiven both?

A vile vial minister, your unworthy servant,

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier



Verse of the Week

Titus 3:5

He saved us, not on the basis of righteous deeds which we have done, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

FOOTNOTES

1. All Scripture quotations are from my own translational paraphrase, based on the *New American Standard Bible 1995 Update*, made carefully, reverently, and respectfully after diligent study work in the original Greek Scriptures.

2. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, “Triclinium,” William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1939, <https://www.internationalstandardbible.com/T/triclinium.html>.

3. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997, pg. 309.

4. The other six Simons are (1) the magician, (2) the tanner, (3) the father of Judas Iscariot, (4) Simon the lesser (sometimes known as Simon the Zealot, an apostle), (5) the half-brother of Jesus, and (6) Simon the leper, a host to Jesus for a dinner one week before His death (Matt. 26:6-13).

5. United States Census Bureau, “Nebraska Quick Facts,” <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NE/PST045219/>.

6. Darrell L. Bock, *The Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament*, “Luke 1:1 – 9:50,” Baker Books, 1994, pg. 699.

Personal Study Notes



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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

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6:45–8:00 A.M. Wednesdays
Room 1022, Facilitated by
Sen. Clements & Sen. Arch

STAFF

12:00 P.M. Wednesdays
Room 1022, Facilitated by
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