



The Greatest Motivator - AGAPE!

I am completely fascinated with the following Biblical story about a terribly sinful woman whom Jesus forgave – for the strangest of reasons! Not a one of us are without sin; all of us have, at one time or another, failed to live according to God’s Word. This you can’t deny. But, as Christians, we’ve all been forgiven because of Jesus Christ’s works on earth. This forgiveness is a perfect forgiveness, still one that most people won’t accept. Nevertheless, it is true. From the following account, we will learn that agape and forgiveness go hand in hand.

The word agape is often translated into “love.” I do not believe that



this is a proper translation; it is highly misleading since it starves out the true meaning of agape. The one word agape refers to a collection of behaviors as listed in 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7.

(1 Cor 13:4-7) Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, {5} Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; {6} Rejoiceth not in

iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; {7} Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

It is quite literally a lifestyle. Jesus awarded this sinner of a woman the dignity of agape, meaning that he recognized something about her that the others simply would not see.

He de-emphasized her sinful nature and emphasized her agape nature! I hope that you

learn the absolute importance of living a lifestyle of these agape characteristics and how they will change your life from being sinful to being forgiven and accepted by God.

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(Luke 7:37-50) And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, ...

This woman was a sinner, meaning that she almost never hit the mark of a godly lifestyle. She was “markless.” *Can you imagine shooting an arrow – and NEVER hitting the target?* Well, this woman was like this. A target of godliness was simply never hit. But, she did do something special that the others apparently didn’t embrace.

... when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, {38} And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

She wasn’t hopeless though. She recognized who Jesus was and wanted to make a difference in his life. I don’t know if you can imagine just what this woman did, but she was incredibly demonstrative with her actions. When someone brought out an “alabaster box” of anything, it represented a most valuable thing to that person. This was her keepsake and she was bound and determined to spend it on Jesus. She stood at his feet behind him weeping, gathering her tears for one purpose – to wash his feet! Can you imagine how much crying this would have taken? This is amazing! She then used her hair, her glory, to wipe her tears onto Jesus’ feet. After she did this, she anointed his feet with her special, expensive oil. Symbolically, this woman gave to Jesus her most prized possessions.

{39} Now when the Pharisee

which had bidden him saw it, 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.

But what did the Pharisee think about this great sacrifice? What did he think about Jesus? What are you thinking? To the casual observer, it looks really silly, almost stupid. After all, would you do this? Most would not. Certainly, the Pharisee wouldn’t. He was absolutely ashamed of this act and wanted to disassociate himself from it as far as possible. He was disgusted. Interestingly, the Pharisee kept his thoughts to himself just then. But, Jesus had something to say about it.

{40} And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

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Jesus must have known what the others were thinking because this story he told focused exactly on this situation.

{41} There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. {42} And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

Forgiveness was the topic of this story. You just have to wonder who needed forgiveness more, the sinning woman or the Pharisees? Jesus related how a creditor handled two of his debtors, people who owed him money. One owed him 500 pence, and the other 50. Interestingly, neither had any money from which to pay him back so he forgave them both! Then Jesus asked an amazing question? “Which of them will

love him [the creditor] most?”

What would you answer to this question?

{43} Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most...

I really like how Simon answered him. He said, “I suppose.” I’d say that he was petty nervous. Don’t forget the intense pressure of this situation. *There was this crying, sobbing woman, kneeling at Jesus feet,* wiping those precious feet with her tears, hair and expensive ointment. There were the “others,” who vehemently disagreed with this whole scene. Not a one of them in the room appreciated what had just taken place, and they all certainly joined in thoughtful chorus proclaiming what a sinner this woman really was!

...And he said unto him,

Thou hast rightly judged.

But, Jesus just ignored all of this and answered Simon – you’re right! Can you imagine the relief Simon experienced? Yet, I’m sure he was still very uptight. Jesus continued teaching:

{44} And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman?...

Now, both the woman and Simon are put on the spot. Jesus is standing there, facing the woman, and directing his speech at Simon. “Seest thou this woman?” Of course he could see this woman. Everyone was staring with, more than likely, anger. But Jesus was pretty upset about this too, just in a different way. Simon, can you see what this woman is really doing? He then confronted Simon.

...I entered into thine house,
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thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. {45} Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. {46} My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

Simon offered NONE of the things to Jesus that this sinner of a woman did. Simply none. In the East, you must always offer foot-washing. Why? Because people walked in sandals and their feet were necessarily dirty. It was a wonderful sign of respect and love. Simon didn't do this for Jesus. No one did but a sinful woman. No one properly greeted Jesus, not even a kiss. To add insult to injury, the woman anointed Jesus with oil, something so far above and beyond that these onlookers

would never have thought to do it. By the way, the head is where the oil is placed when getting anointed – not the feet! This woman really made an impact, yet she was a sinner. Do I have your attention yet? Not one of us is without sin. *We have all missed the mark at multiple times in our lives. Yet, we have all been forgiven at that time when we became born again.* This woman had not even been forgiven – yet.

{47} 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.

Jesus then forgave her with the most marvelous love and kindness with which she had just showed to him. She gave him her all; there was nothing more that

she had to give. Jesus turned to her and gave her his all; there was nothing more powerful and healing that he could have done for her. She removed all the dirt from his feet, something that no one else in that house cared to do. *He removed all the dirt from her life, something that no one in that house ever thought possible.* You just have to remember this verse from 1 Peter 4:

(1 Pet 4:8) And above all things have fervent charity [agape lifestyle] among yourselves: for charity [agape lifestyle] shall cover the multitude of sins.

“Love” in these verses, comes from agape. Jesus didn't see her as a sinner. He saw her as a woman trying to live according to agape. Do you know what one thing identifies a real Christian? It is just this. One who lives

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according to agape principles. This principle still applies to us today.

(1 Cor 13:13) And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity [agape].

The Christian, something that this woman was not, is supposed to live according to charity or agape. Jesus was preparing his people for what was to come. *Your lofty goals are sorely diminished if you don't live according to agape.* This woman had the lofty goal of loving Jesus unlike all of those others. Her adherence to agape distinguished her, far beyond, all the others.

{48} And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

Can you imagine the feelings that

rippled throughout that woman's heart and soul? She had been labeled a sinner by EVERYONE in her life. And she was. Her lifestyle was absolutely terrible. She walked through life, forever missing the mark of godliness. Maybe she couldn't help herself? Maybe she was so messed up that no one else could help her either? We don't know. What we do know is that Jesus forgave her of her sins, an act considered to be the absolutely most important thing that could ever happen to someone. *In fact, to this day, there is nothing more important to a person than to know his/her sins are completely forgiven.* Jesus knew this, and now, so too did the woman.

{49} And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

We began this story with that Pharisee "thinking" how preposterous it was that Jesus would let such a woman touch him. Now, these "scaredy cats" were thinking how ridiculous it was that Jesus forgave Miss. Sinner. They were also thinking their true beliefs about Jesus. They simply didn't believe in him and wouldn't accept him as the son of God. No worries! Their strange and worldly ways didn't and couldn't stop God's plan for forgiveness. They didn't stop it for this woman, and no one can stop it for you.

{50} And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

Jesus finalized this work here by telling the woman that her faith had saved her, to go in peace. It's one thing to be forgiven; it's entirely another to accept it

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and to go in peace. *In the midst of the anger and demeaning-ness of the many others surrounding her, Jesus told her two most remarkable things.* She WAS forgiven and she could leave in peace.

The moral of the story is, the more you live according to the agape principles, the more you will be willing to accept God's forgiveness for your life, and the more peacefulness you'll have as you walk forth in this crazy, crazy world. You could have started your Christian walk as one of the worst people in the world, but no matter. You can now live according to agape and go forth in peace. You've been forgiven.

Much love in Christ,

Jerry D. Brown