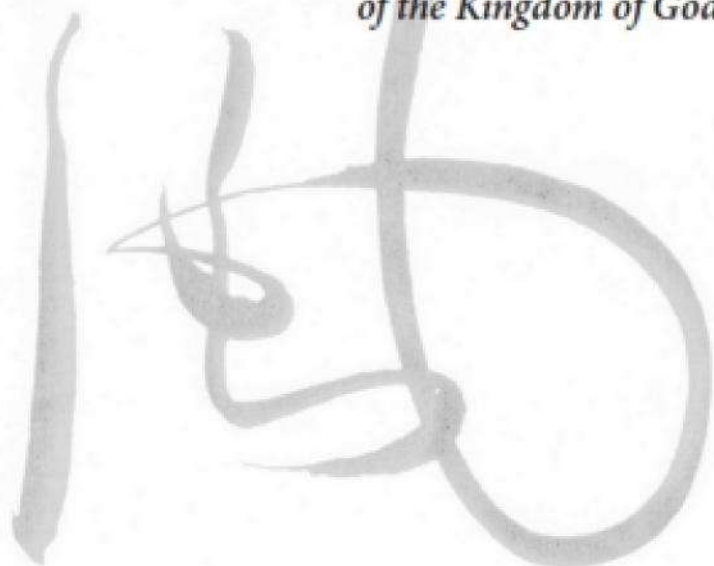


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Is She a Sinful Woman or a Forgiven Woman?
An Exegesis of Luke 7:36-50
Part I

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Introduction

The Gospel of Luke is a beautiful book. It contains unique stories that cannot be found in the other Gospels, stories that have fascinated me. At the time I was in Bible School, even though I had never studied theology, Greek, or any issues among the Synoptics, I was able to see that Luke had a special ability to write stories. By reading his product, my faith has grown. After I entered Bible school and seminary, I was engaged in studying historical backgrounds, the Synoptic issues, etc. It made a deep impact on me when I came to know that the Gospels are not merely storybooks that have been preserved from the ancient times but are collections of *pericopes*, and there are intentions and purposes for which the author of each Gospel placed each *pericope* in a particular place in their Gospels. There are four Gospels and each of them reflects the author's understanding of Jesus, the author's purpose, and the readers' needs. At the same time, we are able to see whom Jesus really was to the people who lived in the Jewish culture in the first century, to the readers each Gospel author wrote to and to us who live in this present age. The more we study the Bible, the more we can love Jesus. The more we understand what is behind each story in the Gospels, the more we understand the meaning of the good news. This paper will present who Jesus was to the people of his time, to the readers of the author and to us today. In Luke, we can see a very interesting and significant story (Luke 7:36-50).

There is an issue in this passage. There was a certain woman who wept and wet Jesus' feet with her tears. She kissed them and anointed them. Some pastors and Christians have recognized that since she showed her great love to Jesus; her sins were forgiven. Sometimes, I heard this misinterpretation in Sunday school and church. It caused me great confusion that in order to receive salvation and forgiveness, I should show love or good deeds. Some Bible translations, including

Japanese and English versions, are not correct so I believe that the same confusion has existed among both new believers and mature Christians. I do not support the view that in order to receive forgiveness, I have to love first because as a human, how could we love someone from whom we cannot receive any benefits? It is natural to think that she received something from Jesus before she entered the Pharisee's house. I love Jesus because He came to me first not because I came to Him first and asked Him for forgiveness. I would like to prove and to know when this woman was forgiven by doing an exegesis on this passage. This exegesis will lead us to understand the relationship among love, forgiveness, and salvation in the present time and will reflect the heart of the Gospel, the reason that Jesus came to earth. In this paper, I will present textual criticism, exegesis and applications that can be applied to ones' personal interactions with God and people.

Part I of this paper will discuss the preparation of the Lukan passage, including its relationship to the same passages in the other Synoptic Gospels, a translation of the passage and a textual criticism. Part I will also present my exegesis of the passage from Luke 7:36-43. Part II will present the remainder of my exegesis from 7:44-50, conclusions and applications.

Preparation of Luke 7:36-50

Translation of Luke 7:36-50

Verse 36: And one of the Pharisees requested Jesus in order that he might have dinner with Him. Jesus came into the house of the Pharisee and He reclined at the table.

Verse 37: Then behold! There was a woman who used to be a sinner in the city. And when she knew that Jesus was eating at the house of the Pharisee, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume.

Verse 38: And she set herself behind him at his feet crying she began to wet his feet with the tears, she kept on wiping his feet with the hair of her head, she kept on kissing affectionately to his feet, and kept on anointing them with the perfume.

Verse 39: Now, seeing what the woman was doing to Jesus, the Pharisee who invited Jesus was saying to himself, "If this man were a prophet, He would know who is touching and what kind of woman this is for she is a sinner."

Verse 40: But Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." He said "Teacher, please tell me."

Verse 41: A certain moneylender had two debtors. The one owed five hundred denarii and the other fifty denarii.

Verse 42: They were not able to pay back so the moneylender graciously forgave both. Then which one of them will love the moneylender more?

Verse 43: Simon answered and he said, "I suppose to the one whom he forgave more." And Jesus said to him, "You judged rightly."

Verse 44: And turning to the woman, Jesus said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I came to your house, you did not give me water for my feet but she wet my feet with the tears and wiped with her hair.

Verse 45: You did not give me a kiss but she did not cease kissing my feet since the time I came.

Verse 46: You did not anoint my head with olive oil but she anointed my feet with the perfume.

Verse 47: Therefore, I tell you that her many sins have been forgiven, as is evidenced by the fact that she loved much, but the one who is forgiven little loves little."

Verse 48: And Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins have been forgiven."

Verse 49: The ones reclining at the table began to say to themselves, "Who is this man even he forgives sins?"

Verse 50: But Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you, go in peace."

The Synoptic Gospels

The parallel story with Luke 7:36-50 is seen in the books of Matthew, Mark and John (Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, John 12:1-8). Matthew, Mark, and John told the same story from different perspectives, but I will contend that Luke told a story which is different from the other Gospels so Luke's story is unique. Many scholars, such as Bock¹ and Green,² also agree with this assessment although others, such as Marshall³ and Fitzmyer,⁴ say that the story in all four Gospels is the same.

In my view, there are a number of differences that make Luke's story unique. For example, Matthew, Mark and John say this story happened in Bethany but Luke says the story happened in the house of Simon the Pharisee, which was either in Nain or some unknown city.

¹Darrell Bock, *Luke: 1:1-9:50*, (Ada, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 691.

²Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 305.

³I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Kingstown, Broadway: Paternoster Press, 1978), 305-307.

⁴Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (Broadway, NY: Doubleday Religious Publishing Group, 1995), 685.

Another example is that both Matthew and Mark do not say anything about the woman's hair. John mentions that she anointed Jesus' feet and used her hair to wipe it. Luke, however, has more details. Luke says that the woman stood behind Jesus weeping and began to wet his feet with her tears, wipe them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

Textual Criticism

This textual criticism is based on UBS 4th edition. There are two issues regarding textual criticism in verses 39 and 45. In verse 39, when the woman approached Jesus and anointed him, the Pharisee, Simon, had an assurance that Jesus was not "a" prophet because Jesus allowed the woman to touch Him. The text reads προφήτης (meaning "a prophet") but the variant reads ὁ προφήτης (meaning "The prophet"). As for the external evidence, many major manuscripts such as A B² D L W D Q f in addition to the church fathers from the 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th-10th and 11th-16th centuries (e.g. Amphilochius and Chrysostom), follow the text, rather than the variant. On the other hand, only a few manuscripts support the variant reading such as B* X 205. No church fathers support this reading. So in terms of the external evidence, it is quite clear that the reading of the text should be maintained. As for the internal evidence, we need to know the reason why some scribes added "ὁ" to the word προφήτης. Some scribes wanted to emphasize that Jesus is the prophet whom the prophets in the Old Testament promised to their people. They wanted to insist that Jesus is not merely "A" prophet but "the" prophet who was sent by God to redeem His people. Deut 18:15. John 1:21, 6:14, and 7:40 also has this reflection.⁵ In conclusion, as both the external and internal evidence show, the reading of the text should be maintained.

As for verse 45, the story line is like this: After Jesus told Simon the parable of the two debtors, Jesus began to tell him what he did not do and what the woman did for Jesus. Verse 45 is part of Jesus' teaching. Jesus said to Simon "you did not give me a kiss but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet." (NIV) The word "enter" causes some textual problems. The text reads εἰσῆλθον which means, "I (Jesus) entered." On the other hand, the variant reads εἰσῆλθεν, which means "she (the sinful woman) entered." So how will these two different readings affect the exegesis? Actually, it does not really cause a huge difference, but Omanson suggests that the reason why some scribes

⁵Roger L. Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007), 122.

changed the word is that they wanted to avoid an exaggeration. I will explain this after presenting the external evidence.

Regarding the external evidence, a huge number of the manuscripts support the text reading, including A B D L^c W D Q X f f¹ 28 33 180 205, etc. Some church fathers such as Chrysostom and Ambrose also support this reading. As for the variant, comparing it to the text, a few minor manuscripts support this reading (L* f¹³ 157 1071 1243 vg syr^{p, h, pal}). Even though Amphilochius and Augustine follow the variant reading, when we look at how the readings are so widely accepted, the variant reading is not acceptable. Obviously, the text reading is more widely accepted and also since the earliest reading is from the second century, it is natural to support the text reading.

Going back to the internal evidence, the reason that some scribes chose to use “she entered” is that they wanted to avoid a misreading and an exaggeration of the text. Some people might misunderstand that when Jesus came in, the woman was already there, at Simon’s house, waiting for Jesus and started kissing Him. However, as Luke already explained earlier, it is clear that the woman came after Jesus entered the house.⁶

Exegesis of Luke 7:36-43

Verse 36: Setting

This verse starts with the word Ἡρώτα. The reason that this word is an imperfect form is that this word is naturally used here as background information that sets the scene for the narrative that follows. Here Luke does not use the word “inviting” but “requesting.” The Pharisee initiated to invite Jesus.⁷ Jesus was not only a friend of sinners but also of anyone who welcomed Him; He would be there. The Pharisee spontaneously invited Jesus. On the other hand, we can see an uninvited guest, the woman coming into the Pharisee’s house in verse 37, τις αὐτὸν τῶν Φαρισαίων. According to Marshall, this Greek word order is unusual suggesting that Luke probably wanted to inform his readers that something unusual would happen at this banquet where Jesus was invited by one of the Pharisees.⁸ The reason that the Pharisee invited Jesus for dinner is that Jesus was considered to be a great teacher. However the Pharisee thought more than that. He was greatly interested in Jesus and thought that Jesus might have been a prophet.⁹ The way the

⁶Ibid.

⁷Martin M. Culy, Mikeal Carl Parsons, and Joshua J. Stigall, *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 240.

⁸Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 307.

⁹David Gooding, *According to Luke: A New Exposition of the Third Gospel* (Downers

Pharisee welcomed Jesus was not warm at all because the Pharisee did not give Jesus water, oil, and a kiss but at least the Pharisee knew that Jesus was trustworthy enough in terms of purity.

To sum up, the Pharisee invited Jesus as an honorable and a great teacher and because he was curious if Jesus was really a prophet. His welcoming was sufficient enough since he had a great meal to offer but we cannot say that he welcomed Jesus to his heart with love since he did not show any extra hospitality to him. It is clear that Luke wanted to show the difference between how the Pharisee and how the woman received Jesus' message and invited Jesus. The Pharisee and the teachers of the law rejected both John the Baptist and Jesus because they strongly believed that if they observed temple practice such as sacrifice, their sins would be forgiven. For them, John the Baptist and Jesus could be interesting teachers but not more than that. The Pharisees and the self-righteous people did feel that they did not need the messages of John the Baptist and Jesus.¹⁰ Journalist Philip Yancey explains this well in his book, *The Jesus I Never Knew* saying, "Perhaps prostitutes, tax collectors, and other known sinners responded to Jesus so readily because at some level they knew they were wrong and to them God's forgiveness looked very appealing."¹¹ Also C.S. Lewis says in his book *A Mind Awake: An Anthology of C.S. Lewis*, "Prostitutes are in no danger of finding their present life so satisfactory that they cannot turn to God: the proud, the avaricious, the self-righteous, are in that danger."¹²

Verse 37-38: Anointing of Jesus' Feet by the Sinful Woman

In verse 37, Luke tells us that there was a woman who lived a sinful life in the city, and she came to the Pharisee's house. How could it be possible that a sinner entered the Pharisee's "holy" house? At that time, it was common for religious people to open their doors to the poor so the door was not locked or closed when people were having meals. The woman had no hindrance in entering the Pharisee's house. However once the poor were able to manage to enter houses of religious people, they should remain silent and not get close to the place where people had their dinner.¹³

Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1987), 138.

¹⁰Van Til, K. A. 2006. "Three Anointings and One Offering: The Sinful Woman in Luke 7.36-50." *Journal Of Pentecostal Theology* 15, no. 1: 73-82. New Testament Abstracts, EBSCOhost (accessed August 7, 2013).

¹¹Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 152.

¹²C. S. Lewis, *A Mind Awake: An Anthology of C. S. Lewis* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2003), 112.

¹³Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 208-209.

The word ἰδοὺ indicates that the woman's unusual character as a sinner also has a function to get the reader's attention on her.¹⁴ So what kind of unusual character did she have? What kind of job was she involved in? Among scholars there is a debate whether she was a prostitute or not. At that time, people who were considered to be "Sinners" were either to be involved in sinful occupations such as tax collectors, tanners, camel drivers, customs collectors, or in immorality. I agree with the Stein's view that the woman could be a prostitute because of Jesus' announcement of forgiveness over her in 7:47-50. It shows that her sins were not ceremonial matters but immoral ones.¹⁵ However there is no strong evidence that she was a prostitute since Luke did not mention anything about her occupation. I believe that she was a prostitute because of Matthew 21:31. Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you." However it does not really matter whether or not she was a prostitute. The point here is that she was a sinner. One of the significant themes in the Gospel of Luke is God's salvation. It is one of the reasons why Luke uses the word ἁμαρτία a lot compared to Mark and Matthew (e.g. Luke 5:8, 30, 32, 6:32-34, 7:34, 37, 39). Both Mark and Matthew use this word only eleven times¹⁶ while Luke uses it eighteen times. The woman here is described as one of the sinners who accepted Jesus' salvation and forgiveness. This story is one of the significant events showing how salvation came to sinners. Luke wanted to show the difference between how the Pharisee and how the woman received Jesus' message. As I have already mentioned, some interpret this story to mean that her sins were forgiven because she showed great love, but I do not agree with this view. This woman was forgiven even before she entered the Pharisee's house. If we pay attention to the Greek phrase we can see the evidence. In verse 37, Luke writes καὶ ἰδοὺ γυνὴ ἣτις ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἁματωλός (and behold! there was a woman in that town who lived a sinful life (NIV)). Luke does not mean, "Now there was a sinful woman in the city" (NAB) but "And a woman in the city who was a sinner" (NRSV). This translation makes a huge difference on how we look at the woman. The position of the phrase "in the city" (ἐν τῇ πόλει) plays an important role to show that her status as a sinner was a past thing but people in the city thought that the woman was still a sinner. They did not notice her change brought about by the Gospel.¹⁷ Moreover the word ἦν

¹⁴Bock, *Luke*, 695.

¹⁵Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, (Nashville, TN:B&H Publishing Group, 1992), 236.

¹⁶Bock, *Luke*, 695.

¹⁷Kilgallen, JJ 1998, 'Forgiveness of Sins (Luke 7:36-50)', *Novum Testamentum*, 40, 2, pp. 105-116, ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost, (accessed August 7, 2013).

is an imperfect form and it can be translated as “used to be.” She was no longer a sinner even.¹⁸ Also we can see that she was not a sinner anymore from the fact that she brought such expensive perfume to anoint Jesus. Nolland says to that this woman was probably a well-known sinner in the city.¹⁹ Some scholars made a comment that it must have been hard or embarrassing for her to enter such a holy place where only men were eating, and they hated sinners, but I do not agree.²⁰ She did not really care about those people because her sins were forgiven so she had nothing of which to be ashamed. She went to the Pharisee’s house to show how much she appreciated Jesus.

In verse 38, we can see how she showed her gratitude to Jesus. The phrase καὶ σταῖσα ὀπίσω παρὰ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ shows that the woman bravely approached Jesus without considering the rule that the poor or an unwelcomed guest could not get close to the people who were eating. Jesus’ sandals were removed before reclining at the table, and his feet were stretched away from the table so she was able to touch them.²¹ The things she did were mentioned vividly. These are ἐξέμασθεν, κατεφίλει, and ἤλειφεν. The words wiping, kissing, and anointing are the imperfect tense. They describe the woman’s actions as spontaneous and continuous.

When she began to wet Jesus’ feet with her tears, Luke uses the word βρέχω. Marshall suggests that this word is used to describe heavy rain.²² Like rain, this woman shed her tears and wet Jesus’ feet. When the woman came to the Pharisee’s house, she did not decide to wet Jesus’ feet with her tears. What she intended was to anoint Jesus with the perfume, but her crying happened spontaneously. When she approached Jesus, she could not control her emotion anymore because she was so much in love with Jesus. She did not need to live a sinful life anymore. Even though people labeled her as a sinner, she did not need to care about these negative labels and words toward her. She was completely forgiven. She was free! The tears that the woman shed were not artificial or fake but came out from the bottom of her heart.

Her unusual actions were also seen when she used her hair to wipe (ἐξέμασθεν) Jesus’ feet. At that time, if a woman untied her hair in public, it meant that she acted like a prostitute to gain favor from men.²³

¹⁸Reid, B. E. 1995. "Do You See This Woman?" Luke 7:36-50 as a Paradigm for Feminist Hermeneutics." *Biblical Research* 40, 37-49. New Testament Abstracts, EBSCOhost (accessed August 7, 2013).

¹⁹John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, Word Books Publisher (Dallas, TX, 1989), 9, 353.

²⁰Bock, *Luke*, 696.

²¹Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 161.

²²Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 308.

²³Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 310.

We can imagine how much this action of the woman made the guests and the “holy” Pharisee surprised and offended. She was kissing (κατεφίλει) Jesus’ feet. This kiss was so intense. The same word κατεφίλει was used in Luke 15:20 when the lost son came back to his father and in Acts 20:37 when the apostle Paul said farewell to his friends in Ephesus. Finally, she was able to accomplish her original purpose for which she came to the Pharisee’s house, anointing (ἡλειφεν) Jesus’ feet with the perfume.

Verse 39: Reaction to the Anointing: Doubt about Jesus

Verse 39 shows how the Pharisee judged and labeled Jesus, implying that He was not a prophet. The Pharisee used the word εἰ that means “if” and the following verbs are in the imperfect tense. The Greek word ἄπτεται shows that the Pharisee judged that Jesus was not a prophet by looking at the woman’s ongoing action.²⁴ For the Pharisee, the woman’s actions became a test to judge Jesus and, in his eyes, Jesus failed.²⁵ The word οὗτος means “this man” and it has derogatory meaning.²⁶ In Jesus’ time, like the present time, there was a custom to label people. It has both positive and negative aspects. For example, Jesus was labeled by people as “Christ,” “King” (Luke 1:35), “prophet” (Luke 7:16, 39), “teacher” (7:40, 8:49) etc. These are positive labels for Jesus but, at the same time, there are bad labels such as “demon possessed” (11:25), “polluter,” “son of man,” etc. Labeling has a strong power if an influential person proclaims that someone is out of his or her social places because of his or her action. Many people, even though they do not know the truth, will follow this influential person’s perspective. This labeling can be a weapon to destroy someone’s life. At that time, the Pharisees were influential people and if they recognized the woman as a sinner, many would follow them. The Pharisee was not only disappointed by Jesus but also looked down on Him. He thought that Jesus should not have accepted her actions.

At that time, “sinners” were people who did not follow traditional ethics. For example, they were men who hired assassins in pursuit of gain, the men who operated the revenue system from the highest to the lowest, and women who earned their money by prostitution or had been prostitutes. They were not allowed to eat with general and religious people. If someone ate with the sinners, it meant that this person accepted their way of life. So the Pharisee who invited Jesus labeled the

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵David L. Tiede, *Luke* (Minneapolis MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 161.

²⁶Francois Bovon and Helmut Koester, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1-9:50*, trans. Christine M. Thomas, New. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), 295.

woman as a sinner who deserved a terrible life and Jesus also joined her. However the fact that Jesus ate with the sinners does not mean that He accepted their way of life, but He knows that this is a great way to show how much He loved them. Jesus ate with them and became their friend in order that the sinners might be saved (5:31, 32; 15:1, 2; 18:14).²⁷ The Pharisee failed to see this very fact that Jesus came to save sinners. As I have already mentioned, there is a textual issue. Some scribes used the word “the prophet” (ὁ προφήτης) instead of using “a prophet” (προφήτης) because the scribes wanted to emphasize that the Pharisee’s view on Jesus was totally wrong and Jesus was a true prophet like Moses whom the Old Testament promised. Needless to say, even though the scribes use “a prophet”, the following verses confirm who Jesus really was. The Pharisee concluded too quickly that Jesus was not a prophet because He did not know what sort of woman was touching Him.

There is a famous saying, “Seeing is believing.” Many people see a person’s behavior, actions, and speaking and believe that this person is a sinner. This person must live a sinful life. This person does not know how to act as a Christian. However do these people really see the truth? Do they see his or her life story? Do they look into his or her heart? We should not be deceived by this famous saying. Otherwise we might make the same mistake the Pharisee did.

Verse 40-43: Jesus’ Reply: A Parable on Forgiveness and Love

In verse 40-43, we can see how Jesus responded to the Pharisee’s unspoken complaint by telling the parable about “the two debtors.” The Pharisee complained in his mind so nobody but Jesus heard what he said. The phrase ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰπὲν πρὸς αὐτόν is notable. The word ἀποκριθεὶς looks like it is redundant. Luke could simply say “Jesus said” or “Jesus answered.” Why did he need to use two words “said” and “answering?” “This usage is most typically found in contexts where there is a change in the direction of the conversation initiated by the new speaker, or the new speaker is about to make an authoritative pronouncement.”²⁸ In verse 39, “Simon said in his mind saying,” εἰπενπέν ἑαυτῷ λέγων. There is also a redundancy here. Luke could simply write “Simon said” but Luke did not. But Luke’s intention is to put the two phrases ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰπὲν πρὸς αὐτόν and εἰπεν ἑαυτῷ λέγων as a parallel. It seems like in verse 39, the Pharisee took the initiative by judging that Jesus was not a prophet. In verse 40, however,

²⁷J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Jesus’ Audience* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1972), 61–63.

²⁸Culy, Parsons, and Stigall, *Luke*, 20.

Jesus immediately took back the initiative from the Pharisee answering his challenge by telling a parable.²⁹

The phrase ἔχω σοί τι εἰπεῖν is a phrase that teachers used with their students to get their attention.³⁰ Jesus also mentioned the name of the Pharisee, Simon, which was a common name in the New Testament. Simon answered Jesus saying διδάσκαλε. The word διδάσκαλον is the title used for Jesus by the crowd (8:49, 9:38, 12:13, 21:7), the religious, the social authorities (10:25, 11:45, 18:18, etc.), or even by Jesus Himself (22:11). So this word was not used in a hostile sense but Bock suggests that if this word is used by someone who doubted Jesus' status or his authority, it could show a tension because in many cases, "The teacher" is used by those who were not Jesus' disciples. The person (Simon) who called Jesus "teacher" did not feel comfortable since he was so disappointed by Jesus' acceptance of the woman.³¹

Jesus told Simon "The parable of two debtors." Whenever the parable is interpreted, one must know the nature of the parable. This parable is a true parable and the hearer, the Pharisee Simon, immediately got Jesus' point. Jesus said that there was a certain moneylender who had two debtors. The one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. δηνάριον (one denarius) is a soldier's or laborer's daily wage, so five hundred denarii indicates one and half year's wage and fifty denarii, two months' wage.³² Jesus continued. Both of the debtors could not pay back their debt so the moneylender cancelled their debt. This very act of the moneylender is unusual. The context where Jesus was speaking was Jewish so one can assume that the two debtors were also Jews. At that time, if a debtor could not pay back money to a moneylender, he would be forgiven in the seventh year (Deut 15) because of the law. At the same time, however, he could also have been thrown into a prison until the seventh year. So, we can see how merciful the moneylender was.³³ I compared several English translations of verse 42. Most English translations simply say, "The moneylender forgave them both." This translation does not really follow the Greek translation. The word "forgive" in Greek is χαρίζομαι. In details, it means "freely forgive." This Greek word was a common business term for remitting debt at that time.³⁴ NASB translates "The moneylender graciously forgave them both." Also, KJV translates in this way, "the moneylender frankly forgave them both." Even though there was no description for "graciously" in the

²⁹Ibid., 278.

³⁰Bovon and Koester, *Luke 1*, 295.

³¹Bock, *Luke*, 698.

³²Ibid.

³³Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 209.

³⁴Bock, *Luke*, 699.

Greek text, I prefer the NASB version that adds the word “graciously.” It describes well how special and unusual the moneylender’s act was because grace is given to those who do not deserve it. I do not support the KJV translation since it was not easy for the moneylender to forgive the debt. “Graciously” more accurately describes the moneylender’s heart.

Briscoe found four points in this parable: we all are sinners in God’s debt; we all are responsible for our debt; it is not easy for the moneylender (God) to forgive because he needed to take all the responsibilities; we all need to receive forgiveness by faith.³⁵ Although some self-righteous people think that their sins are not as bad as some terrible sinners who are around them, everyone is equally a sinner in God’s eyes. Jesus told Simon that the one debtor owed fifty denarii but the other one five hundred. The self-righteous think that their debt is only fifty but in God’s eyes there is no difference between these two debtors since both of them could not pay him back. Therefore what matters most here is that the woman knew that she was the one who owed five hundred denarii and she knew how gracious the moneylender was, who could cancel all her debt. She admitted her sins but Simon did not. She faced the reality that she could not pay God back, but Simon did not. Jesus said to Simon, “Which of them will love him (the moneylender) more?” The word “will love” in Greek is ἀγαπήσει. It is in the future tense. The tense indicates that the debtor will love the moneylender more after the announcement of forgiveness. It did not happen before the announcement. It shows us that the woman (described as one of the debtors in the parable) was also forgiven before she came to the Pharisee’s house. The love of the debtor towards the moneylender involves gratitude. Marshall says that love is the way in which gratitude is expressed. The woman’s action shows great love towards Jesus, but this love is based on her gratitude that Jesus had forgiven all her sins. Her expression of her great love had this clear reason.³⁶

In verse 42, Jesus asked the Pharisee which debtor will love the moneylender more. Nolland paraphrases Jesus’ question in this way, “Don’t you recognize in this woman’s behavior the love of one who has been forgiven much?”³⁷ Parables are told to let the hearer reflect on themselves and their actions and respond to the point that is made in the parable. Simon should have responded to Jesus’ parable. In verse 43, Simon replied to Jesus, saying “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.” (NIV) The phrase “I suppose” in Greek is ὑπολαμβάνω.

³⁵D. Stuart Briscoe, *Patterns for Power* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publications, 1979), 12–17.

³⁶Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 311.

³⁷Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 359.

One question comes up here. Jesus' parable was easy to comprehend. His point was obvious to everyone who heard the story of the two-debtors, but why did Simon answer, "I suppose . . . ?" The Greek word suggests, "To regard something as presumably true, but without particular certainty."³⁸ The most natural conclusion is that Simon knew the right answer but he pretended that he had no confidence in his answer because a trap caught him. Simon totally got Jesus' point. Notice Jesus' indirect accusation, "Don't you recognize in this woman's behavior the love of one who has been forgiven much?" Jesus accused him of having a self-righteous attitude and a lack of gratitude and love. The Pharisees did not want to admit it. Bock suggests that Simon was also careful to answer Jesus' question because Jesus' response towards his unspoken complaint was quick and sharp. He did not want to be trapped again.³⁹

In Part I of this article, the relationship of the Lukan passage to the same passages in the other Synoptic Gospels, a translation of the passage and a textual criticism have been presented in addition to the exegesis of 7:36-43. Part II will present the remainder of my exegesis from 7:44-50, conclusions and applications.

³⁸Culy, Parsons, and Stigall, *Luke*, 247.

³⁹Bock, *Luke*, 700.