

**— Chapter 3 —**  
**Grateful Extravagance**  
*Jesus and the Sinful Woman*

***The Big Picture:***

An emotional woman interrupts a dinner to express her love for Jesus. She washes his feet with her tears of gratitude and anoints him with expensive perfume. The host is appalled, feeling her very presence in the room to be inappropriate. Jesus turns the woman's act of worship into an instructive lesson for everyone in the room. Her audacious and extravagant gift made perfect sense in light of what she had been given.

***Discuss:***

“The Pharisee’s very relationship with God became about performing righteous deeds rather than loving God with all their hearts, souls, minds, and strength. The Apostle Paul, once a Pharisee, summed up this kind of thinking: “Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works.”

*Where did the Pharisees go wrong? When are we guilty of crossing that line? How can we determine whether actions are from faith or another motivation?*

“But as with any legalistic system, the proponents of the rules are as liable to fail as those they instruct. Jesus saw right through their pious preaching: “Do not do according to their deeds, for they say things and do not do them.”

*When have your high standards for others come back to haunt you? Have you ever been caught in a net of your own making?*

“Whatever his initial motivation, Simon got more than he bargained for. Jesus moved him right past the surface and into the very heart of the matter. Appearances were not the issue. It was all about the heart...Simon must have inevitably observed the contrast between her lavish, deeply emotional attentions and his own callous disregard. It was an unexpected opportunity for him to see his shallow attempts at holiness and discover his great need for forgiveness.”

*Have you ever been chagrined by observing others with a godly attitude while you have been sporting the opposite? How did it change the way you were acting or thinking?*

“Unfortunately the Pharisees failed to acknowledge this personal failure at holiness...in their self-righteous zeal, they neglected what God wanted most: humility and repentance from sin.”

*What is the appropriate response when we realize that our attitudes have become self-righteous? How should that play out in our relationships with God and others?*

“Remember, Jesus’ parable was about not one but two debtors. They both owed quite a sum...Inability to pay either debt would have landed a person in jail...The Bible never quantifies guilt. You are guilty or innocent. One or the other. In the Bible, there are no shades of guilt.”

*How should knowing we are all equally guilty and in need of grace affect how we view and treat others?*

***Moving Forward:***

1. The Pharisees’ relationship with God was performance-based. How does this fly in the face of the following verses: Romans 2:21-22, Ephesians 2:8-9, and Galatians 3:24-26? What is the only means to having a relationship with God? Look again at Luke 7:50.
2. After coming to God in faith, all too often we sink back into a performance-based mode as we go about our lives as believers. Do you ever think you need to earn God’s blessing? Do you feel guilty when you approach Him, afraid to ask for something in light of how often you fail Him? Feel a need to make promises to somehow convince Him to answer your prayer? Has a performance-based mentality insidiously crept into your relationship with Him?
3. Why is judging others rarely appropriate? See Romans 2:1-4 and Matthew 7:1-6. Are you inclined to rank sin, judging some far more egregious than others? How does the Bible view this? See James 2:10.
4. How should knowing we are all on an equal playing field, guilty and in need of grace, guide you in your treatment and expectations of others?
5. Why are a sense of need and humility so necessary to receiving salvation? John the Baptist, in order to prepare people for Jesus, preached repentance (see Mark 1:4-5). How do you think this prepared his listeners to receive the Savior?
6. That same acknowledgment of need and humility continues to be vital for believers after receiving salvation. See John 15:4-5, 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10, James 4:6-10, and Philippians 4:13. How does acknowledging our helplessness keep us in a right relationship with God? How can it actually become a strength in the end?
7. How does knowing you are saved through grace alone allow you to live “in peace” with God? With others?
8. Simon’s version of religion had to do with checklists and requirements. Jesus said His yoke is easy and His burden is light. God doesn’t want our obligatory righteous acts. He wants our hearts. What are red flags that might indicate we are acting in our own interests rather than in gratitude toward God?