

Weekly Encouragement

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Incorporated non-profit in New Jersey, USA

Forgiveness and Love

By Rev. Peter Eng

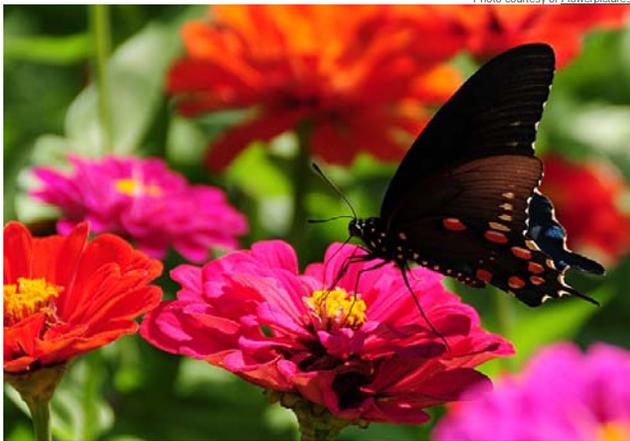


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"Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." (Luke 7:47)

She has money. Money from prostitution.

She is not driven to prostitution by hunger, but by greed. Since she cannot find a good man to marry her and provide for her, she will use many men to do the same job. She is thrilled to see that her computation is right. While her homebound friends suffer want from poor husbands, she is doing well. She can live with the social taboo. Money is adequate reward.

But the darkness begins when a highly respected politician comes to enjoy her service. It is a rush to be paid so much and to hold the power to expose him. Yet this is disappointing at the same time. She respected him for the public work he is doing. She even thought him upright when he condemned immoral trades like hers. But now

he is only one of them. Somehow, she has enabled him to move to the dark side.

Her own darkness deepens when religious people begin to use her services. They know she is immoral because they use her so. There is no hope for her as she saw their hypocrisy; their public condemnation and private indulgence. Darkness is stronger than light, she concludes.

"But he is different!" her friends insist. So she goes half-heartedly to listen to this simpleton preacher from the sticks. Jesus spoke, and the darkness lifted. He is indeed different. Jesus speaks of God's love for her. He does not tirade against sin to show his own holiness. Instead he teaches forgiveness of sin. He tells of a new life, of a righteousness so profound and unattainable yet so freely given to all who will receive it from God. Yes, she wants this righteousness. More to her than her stash of coins, fine clothes and beautiful [coiffure](#).

Now all she wants is forgiveness from Jesus.

Her soul once dead, now rises even as Jesus speaks. The darkness lifts and a pure love now floods her soul. This is a cleansing love. It is not the lust for money in her own heart, not the need for men, not men's lust for her, not a love that ends with self. Her love for Jesus is a redeeming love. Light, love and life.

She knows that in Jesus, she is redeemed from her deepest needs of love, insecurity, and utter disappointment with society.

When Jesus is done speaking the religious types invite Jesus to their homes. She follows

behind as Jesus proceeds to the house of Simon the Pharisee. She is not invited. And she knows she is not welcomed. But she has an idea. The very expensive perfume she bought on her way to hear Jesus is the perfect way to tell Jesus how he has removed the stench from her life. She just has to figure out a way to do this.

She slips into the house, and easily, as there are many people milling around. She spots Jesus reclining at a table. But now that she is so close to him, she feels totally unworthy to anoint his head. She will anoint his feet instead. She falls to her knees and crawls towards Jesus with tears streaming down her face.

She can barely see with her tears streaming down to Jesus' feet. But she is grateful that Jesus does not kick her away. She kisses his feet and pours out the perfume. Her fresh coiffure must give way to her love for Jesus as she wipes his feet. Jesus is more important than all she has or even life itself. There is only Jesus. There is only light, love and this new life combined into an inexplicable redemption. Nobody in the crowd matters. This glimpse of heaven is reality. Whereas she knew no light, now she knows no darkness.

The [sanctimonious](#) rail at her, then at Jesus. She has no words to speak, only love for Jesus who forgives her. The biting remarks against her are nothing, but how they are attacking Jesus on account of her action. Has she done wrong?

Jesus quickly banishes this anxiety when he turns to her and assures her, "Your sins are forgiven." Those words spoken to her directly seals the forgiveness she is clinging onto as a fragile thing. Others debate Jesus, but she would have his forgiveness instead. And when he pronounces, "Go in peace" it imparts a peace she never knew. That forgiveness she is afraid she will lose is now secure. Her peace surpasses understanding, and yet, having it, she now understands.

Come to Jesus.

He reserves his reprimand only to the self-righteous. To every sinner of every stripe, he holds out his love pierced hands. "Do you see my love for you?" Jesus calls out. "Do you see my suffering and death for your forgiveness?"

Today, Jesus calls out to all who would have light, love and life, even as he did to this woman. Lay every sin at Jesus' feet and experience the new life of one who is forever redeemed from the darkness. There is only one spiritual reality that matters.

You cannot be chained to your past. You cannot be enslaved by what others think of you. Fix your eyes on Jesus. You too will find that nothing else matters.

Spurgeon rightly observes, "There is no remembrance of our follies, he does not cherish illthoughts of us, but he pardons and loves as well after the offence as before it."

When we see the extent of our sin and the magnitude of God's forgiveness, we respond in love.

Note: The ESV is used unless indicated otherwise.

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Rev. Peter Eng is an ordained minister from the Reformed Tradition, but he is truly global in perspective. He served the Lord in various capacities starting from his teenage years in the 70s. His undergrad studies were done in Singapore, his grad studies in the USA, and post-grad studies in the United Kingdom, with additional post-grad research in Germany.