

Commentary on Luke chapter 7, by Chuck Smith 7.17.22

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July memory verse: Romans 6:14-16 (NKJV)

¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?

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Let's turn now in our Bibles to Luke's gospel, chapter 7. At this point in Luke's gospel he is going to give us series of events, miracles that transpired in the life of Jesus.

When he ended these sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loves our nation, and he has built us a synagogue ([Luk 7:1-5](#)).

The Roman centurions were special men. They are mentioned several times in the scriptures, and always in a favorable light. They were always, it seems, outstanding men.

This centurion in Capernaum was declared to be a worthy person by the Jewish leaders, who came to Jesus on his behalf. They said that he was worthy for whom He should do this. This is interesting to me, because the Jewish people, even to the present day, and I am certain that it doesn't have it's roots in the New Testament, but to the present day they have awards that they give to worthy people. And it is a phrase that they yet use today. In fact, I've been awarded a worthy person by the Jewish community, whatever that might mean. And I haven't found out yet, but I don't know that I fully want to. But I think it's good, because they were smiling when they awarded me. But it's a title that they still give today for a person who has, and I suppose it is a person outside of the Jewish faith, who has shown kindness and consideration to the Jews would be my estimation of this title. And such was the case with the Roman centurion.

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He has built a synagogue for them, and he loved their nation. And so having this as his credential, the Jewish leaders came and besought Jesus to do the favor for him by healing his servant.

It was unusual for a master to have a close relationship with his servant. The servants in the Roman Empire really had no rights whatsoever. And there was a Roman writer who said that every year a man should take stock of his possessions, and should hold on to that which is still producing and beneficial, and should get rid of that which was no longer productive. And included in that getting rid of that which was no longer productive was a slave who was no longer capable of putting out a day's work. And so when he got to that place, he would just be put out, and left to die. For he had no other recourse. The slave was just a possession of his master, that in the Roman Empire a master could put his slave to death and not face any charges for it. After all, you're just destroying your own property. So for him to have this attitude towards a slave was unusual in itself. And it does show that he is one of those men above the ordinary. He loved this slave very much, and was concerned because he was almost dead.

Then Jesus went with them. And when he was not far from the house, then centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, do not trouble yourself; for I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed ([Luk 7:6-7](#)).

Now the commendation that the Jewish leaders had given to Jesus is, this man is worthy. As he answers or responds when he finds out that Jesus is getting close to his house, sending other friends, he said, "I am not worthy that You should come under my roof." He used a different word for worthy. But then he did say, using the same word for worthy, "neither did I think myself worthy to come to Thee."

In that culture it was unlawful for a Jew to enter the home of a Gentile. He knew for Jesus to come into his house would be putting a strain upon Jesus. When Peter entered the house of Cornelius, he apologized for doing so. He had taken some Jewish friends with him from Joppa. And he apologized for doing so. He said, "You know it isn't lawful for me to assemble with you fellows, to come to this house, but the Lord told me not to ask any questions, so I am here, what do you want?" But he was apologizing for entering into the house of a Gentile, because that was forbidden to the Jew.

So he is saying to Jesus, "I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. I didn't even feel I was worthy to come to You."

It is interesting when we remember when the woman from the area of Sidon came to Jesus concerning her daughter, who she said was vexed with a devil, and Jesus didn't answer. The disciples said, "Lord, do something for her, she is bugging us; she is driving us crazy." And Jesus said, "It isn't right to give the children's bread to the dogs." Now, Jesus was declaring that these benefits that He was bringing were for the Jews. This centurion did not feel worthy to come to Jesus and ask that Jesus would even

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come. And was sort of embarrassed that Jesus was coming. But then he made a remarkable statement. He said, "Just say the word. You don't have to come; I am not worthy that you should come. Just say the word and my servant will be healed. For I understand authority."

For I also [recognizing that Jesus had authority, I also] am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers ([Luk 7:8](#)),

"I am a man who is under authority, and I have under me soldiers. I understand what authority is about. I submit to an authority, but I also have authority. And I understand how authority works. I also," recognizing now that Jesus had this authority, "I also am a man under authority, having under me men, or men set under authority, having under me men."

And I can say unto one, Go, and he goes; and to another I say, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he will do it. When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and he turned about to the people that were following him, and he said unto them, I say unto you, I have not found so great a faith, no, not in Israel ([Luk 7:8-9](#)).

Among the Jews, to whom He came, He did not see as much faith as this centurion.

So they that were sent, when they got home, found the servant that had been so sick, [nearly dead] was alive and well. So it came to pass the day after ([Luk 7:10-11](#)),

Now this is at Capernaum.

he went into a city called Nain ([Luk 7:11](#));

Nain is about twenty-five miles from Capernaum.

and many of his disciples went with him, and a lot of people. Now when he came near to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man being carried out, and he was the only son of a mother, who was a widow: and many people of the city were with her. And when the [Jesus or the] Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not ([Luk 7:11-13](#)).

The picture could not be more pathetic. A woman who was a widow, following the procession, as her only son is being carried out for burial.

Now, in those days they did not have caskets. They usually carried them in baskets and put them in a sarcophagus. The word *sarcophagus* from the Latin means flesh eater. They have these lime stone sarcophaguses there in Israel. In fact, you can see them just in excavations where they dug for a highway. They uncover them, and they just leave them set there on the sides, and you can find them all over. There is something about the limestone that eats away the flesh very rapidly. In fact, within a month or so,

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and thus, the name *sarcophagus*, the flesh eater. And so they would usually place them in the sarcophagus until the flesh was eaten away, and then they would later bury the bones.

And so he was being carried, probably in a basket, to the place of burial, either a cave, or sarcophagus. And the mother with the crowd, the sad pathetic scene. And they didn't just weep, they wailed. And Jesus had compassion on her. In the Greek there is no word that is more expressive of feeling sympathy than the word used here, translated *compassion*. And it is used many times of Jesus. It's the strongest Greek word that expresses the deepest kind of feeling towards a person. Jesus had compassion on her, and said unto her, "Weep not."

And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And Jesus delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear upon all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God has visited his people ([Luk 7:14-16](#)).

This term, "God has visited His people," if you go back to the first chapter at the birth of John the Baptist when God opened the mouth of Zacharias, his father, he began to prophesy, and some of the first words of that prophesy back there in chapter 1, where, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited His people." And so here the people are declaring, "God has visited His people." The fulfillment of this prophesy of Zacharias.

And this story of him went forth throughout all of Judea ([Luk 7:17](#)),

Now Judea is unto the south sixty-seventy miles. So this story is really spreading concerning this young man who was dead, brought back to life by Jesus.

and throughout all of the regions there around about the Galilee region. And the disciples of John were telling John about all of these things. And John called him two of his disciples and he sent them to Jesus, saying, Are you the one that is to come? or should we look for another? And when the men were come unto him, they said, John the Baptist has sent us unto thee, saying, Are thou he that should come? or should we look for another? ([Luk 7:17-20](#))

Now in John's gospel, he tells us that when John saw the Spirit of God descending upon Jesus, that he knew that He was the Messiah. For the Lord told him that upon whomever you see the Spirit descend, He is the one. And so John, in referring to Jesus, said to his own disciples, "Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." And he pointed men to Jesus Christ.

Now John has been in the dungeon for a while, Herod's prisoner. He does not like confined quarters, for he is a man of the outdoors. He grew up in the wilderness. He

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was a man of the woods, sort of speak. And this confinement, no doubt, was very irritating to him. And I would imagine that John, like the other disciples of Jesus, was anticipating the immediate establishing of the kingdom of God. And he was probably wondering, "How long am I going to sit in this prison?" And the question, "Are you the Messiah?" was not so much a question, as was sort of an urging, "Let's get things going; let's get moving." It could be that the fact that Jesus did not immediately establish the kingdom, overthrow Herod, and the Romans, that John have second thoughts. Whatever be the case, the response of Jesus is quite interesting.

In that very same hour he cured many of their infirmities and of their plagues, and of the evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. And Jesus answering said unto him, Go your way, and tell John the things which you have seen and heard; how the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me ([Luk 7:21-23](#)).

Now Jesus said to His disciples, "Believe Me, or else believe Me for My works' sake." Again He said, "The works that I do, they do testify of Me." Jesus pointed to His works as a testimony to His identity who He was. "My works bear witness, they do testify of Me. And if you don't believe Me," He said, "believe Me for My works' sake." So He called upon His works as the witness as to His authority and to His identity. And they form a very strong witness as to His identity and His authority. Because no man can do these things, except the Lord be with him.

The works that He was doing were the works that were prophesied of the kingdom age. And, of course, that's what John was concerned about, the kingdom. "Are you the One? Why haven't You set up the kingdom? Are You the One, or shall we look for another?" And the works that He was doing were works that were the fulfillment of the kingdom age. Where the lame would leap as the deer, the blind would behold the glory of the Lord, and the dumb would sing praises unto Him. And unto the poor the gospel would be preached.

He just said, "Go back and tell John." He knew that John knew the scriptures. He knew the scriptures well enough that when they come back and tell John the things that they saw, the things that they heard, that John would know the scriptures well enough to know, that, yes, He was indeed the promised one.

So when the messengers from John departed, Jesus began to speak to the people concerning John, and he said, What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaking in the wind? ([Luk 7:24](#))

Now the area where John was baptizing, the Jordan River, was surrounded by these reeds. They were a very, very common sight. And obviously they didn't go down to the Jordan River just to see reeds blowing in the wind. "What did you go out to see, reeds blowing in the wind?" No!

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What did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? ([Luk 7:25](#))

That is, a man who was robed in beautiful robes. And then in a bit of satire, Jesus said:

Behold, they which are gorgeously appareled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts ([Luk 7:25](#)).

They're not in the kings' dungeons.

But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say unto you, much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist ([Luk 7:26-28](#)):

And so Jesus puts John at the top of the list of those prophets that had been sent by God to the Jewish people. Of all of the men born of women, not a greater than John the Baptist. But then an extremely remarkable statement.

but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he ([Luk 7:28](#)).

The privileges that you have as a child of God living in this age are superior to the highest position under the old dispensation, where God related to man in a legal way, through the law. Now those who related to God from that legalistic background, the greatest of all was John the Baptist. And yet, he who is least in the kingdom of God has greater privileges, a deeper relationship with God through the Holy Spirit, than the highest of that prior dispensation. For we have not a legal, but a loving relationship with God.

And all the people that heard Him, and the publicans [that is, the tax collectors], justified God ([Luk 7:29](#)),

They declared, "Yes, that 's right."

because they had been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, because they were not baptized by him ([Luk 7:29-30](#)).

Jesus used this later on when they were asking Him a bunch of questions that He didn't want to answer at that moment. He said, "I'll ask you a question. If you answer My question, I'll answer yours. John's baptism, was it of God, or was it of man?" And they knew that if they said it was of man, then all the people would turn against them, because they all believed John was a prophet. But if they said it's of God, then Jesus would say, "Then why weren't you baptized by John?" So they said, "Well, we can't answer You that question." Jesus said, "Well, I don't answer you yours either."

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But He used this. Here was the division, it was marked, the opinions concerning John. He was officially rejected by the religious leaders, but widely accepted by the people.

And so the Lord said, What shall I liken this generation to? What are they like? They are like children who sit in the marketplace, and calling to each other, they say, We've played our pipes, and you have not danced; and we've mourned with you, but you've not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and you say, He has a devil. But the Son of man is come eating and drinking; and you say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of the tax collectors and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all of her children ([Luk 7:31-35](#)).

In other words, "What do you want? You are in a position that nothing satisfies you. John came living a simple life, and you say he has a devil. I came mixing with people, eating with the publicans and all, and you say, 'Hey, He is a winebibber; He is a gluttonous man.' What do you want?"

One of the Pharisees desired that he would eat with him. And Jesus went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat [that is to eat dinner]. And, behold, there was a woman in the city, which was a sinner, and when she knew that Jesus was sitting in the Pharisee's house for dinner, she brought an alabaster box of ointment, and she stood at his feet behind him weeping, and she began to wash his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and she kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment. Now when the Pharisees which had bidden him saw it, within himself he thought, If this man were a prophet, and if he had known what kind of a woman this is that is touching him: [He wouldn't allow her to do that] because she is a terrible sinner. And Jesus said unto him, Simon, I have something to ask you. He said, Go head and ask it, Lord. And Jesus said, There was a certain creditor who had two debtors: the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he completely forgave both their debts. Tell me therefore, which of them loves him the more? And Simon answered and said, Oh, I suppose that he, whom he forgave the most. And Jesus said unto him, That's right. And He turned to the woman, and he said unto Simon, You see this woman? I entered into your house, and you gave me no water for my feet. But she has washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. You did not give me a kiss: but this woman since the time I came in has not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil you did not anoint: but this woman has anointed my feet with ointment. 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 ([Luk 7:36-47](#)).

Simon was a rude host. And in that culture, hospitality was something that was treasured highly. When you invited guests to your home, they would leave their sandals at the door, but immediately there would be a servant there with a towel and with a basin of water, and the host would provide that servant to wash your feet in order that you might come into the house to dine. Of course, they wore open sandals; they had dirt pathways that they walked on, and it was just a common, accepted courtesy that the guests that were invited would have their feet washed by the servant when they entered

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the door of the house. And then it was customary to greet your friends with a kiss. Usually it was a kiss on each cheek. This was just common. And, in fact, in some of those areas it is still practiced today. Italy, the men in the church when they come up and greet you, kiss you on both cheeks. And it's a sort of a beautiful, loving thing. But it was common in that culture. And then also it was common to anoint with oil. To pour oil on the head of the guest. Which was a symbol of the joy that you'd hoped to share together that evening. And they would then serve you your first cup of coffee, no sugar, strong Turkish type coffee, bitter. The idea being that you are washing away now all of the bitter experiences that you've had. The second cup they offer you is very sweet. Symbolic of that sweet time that we can now share together, that all of the bitterness was taken away.

And here is Simon the Pharisee sitting there in his pompous, self-righteous attitudes and all, and, "If He were really a prophet, He wouldn't allow this to go on. He'd know what kind of a woman she was. And He wouldn't allow her to touch Him." You see, Simon wouldn't touch that woman. Because if you touched her, you'd be considered unclean; she was a sinner. "Don't let that woman touch me."

I am glad that Jesus is touchable, even by sinners. I appreciate that so much. I can reach out and touch the Lord, no matter how badly I feel. He is always within reach.

And so Jesus gave to Simon this little parable about the fellow who had two debtors. One owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty pence. He forgave both their debts. Which one loves him the more? The one forgiven the most. And so Jesus said, "Yes, that's right. And this woman, because her sins are many and are forgiven, loves Me the most."

And so He said to the woman, and I am sure this is just to get Simon's goat,

He said to the woman, Your sins are forgiven ([Luk 7:48](#)).

And it had the reaction, I am sure, He was expecting.

And they that were sitting at dinner with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee ([Luk 7:49-50](#));

Oh, oh, isn't this interesting. Jesus is bringing to men a whole new relationship to God. A relationship that is based on faith, and salvation through faith. And here this woman's faith puts her a step ahead, and already into that new dispensation of God's grace.

Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace ([Luk 7:50](#)).

Always the result for having our sins forgiven.