

Luke 7:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

The woman's actions: 'And stood at his feet behind him weeping' (Greek 'kai stasa para tous podas autou opisō klaiousa'). Her position—standing behind at His feet—shows humility and reverence. The weeping (klaiousa—sobbing, lamenting) evidences deep contrition. Her tears 'began to wash his feet' (Greek 'ērxato brēchein tous podas autou tois dakrusin')—copious tears requiring wiping. She 'wiped them with the hairs of her head' (Greek 'tais thrixin tēs kephalēs autēs exemassen')—letting down hair in public (shameful for women) demonstrates desperation trumping propriety. She 'kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment' (Greek 'katefilei tous podas autou kai ēleiphen tō murō'). The continuous action (imperfect tenses—kept kissing, kept anointing) shows prolonged worship. Reformed theology recognizes this as genuine repentance's fruit—broken contrition, self-humbling, costly devotion. True conversion produces dramatic transformation.

Historical Context

Foot-washing was servant's task—Jewish servants generally exempt, left to Gentile slaves. Hosts provided foot-washing for guests; the Pharisee's omission (Luke 7:44) showed disrespect to Jesus. The woman assumed servant's role, then exceeded it with tears, hair, kisses, perfume. Her extravagant devotion contrasted with host's

minimal courtesy. Early church adopted foot-washing as humility symbol (John 13:1-17, 1 Timothy 5:10). The woman's action demonstrated love proportional to forgiveness received. Great sinners forgiven become great lovers of Christ.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the woman's extravagant devotion illustrate that great forgiveness produces great love?
2. What would our lives look like if our worship matched our gratitude for forgiveness received?
3. Why do 'respectable' people often worship less passionately than forgiven 'great sinners'?

Interlinear Text

καὶ στᾶσα παρὰ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ ὡπίσω κλαίουσα
And stood at G3588 feet his behind him weeping
G2532 G2476 G3844 G4228 G846 G3694 G2799

ἥρξατο βρέχειν τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ τοῖς δάκρυσιν καὶ
and began to wash G3588 feet his with tears And
G756 G1026 G4228 G846 G3588 G1144 G2532

ταῖς θριξὶν τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ ἐξέμασσεν καὶ
G3588 them with the hairs G3588 head his did wipe And
G2359 G2776 G846 G1591 G2532

κατεφίλει τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἥλειφεν τῷ
kissed G3588 feet his And anointed G3588
G2705 G4228 G846 G2532 G218

μύρῳ
them with the ointment
G3464

Additional Cross-References

Ecclesiastes 9:8 (Parallel theme): Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.

Jeremiah 31:9 (Parallel theme): They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn.

Genesis 18:4 (Parallel theme): Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: