

Luke 7:39

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

Analysis

The Pharisee's internal response: 'Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner' (Greek 'ei ē houtos prophētēs, eginōsken an tis kai potapē hē gunē hētis haptetai autou, hoti hamartōlos estin'). The Pharisee's reasoning: true prophets would recognize sinners and avoid defilement. His unspoken conclusion: Jesus is either ignorant or indifferent, disqualifying Him as prophet. The irony—Jesus knows precisely who she is and demonstrates divine authority to forgive sins. The Pharisee's categories (clean/unclean, righteous/sinner) prevented him from seeing redemption and transformation. Reformed theology recognizes that self-righteousness blinds more effectively than notorious sin. The Pharisee's confidence in his own purity prevented him from recognizing his need for the forgiveness the woman sought.

Historical Context

Pharisaic purity laws avoided contact with sinners to maintain ritual cleanness. Touch from 'unclean' person defiled for remainder of day. The Pharisee expected Jesus to recoil from the woman's touch if He were truly a prophet. Prophets like Isaiah received divine knowledge; surely Jesus would know her reputation. The

Pharisee's unstated conclusion—Jesus lacks prophetic insight. Yet Jesus demonstrates superior knowledge—He knows the woman's sin, the Pharisee's thoughts, and has authority to forgive. Early church faced similar accusations—associating with sinners supposedly invalidated Christian claims. Yet gospel power appears precisely in transformation of sinners, not avoidance of them.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does self-righteousness blind us to our own need for grace while making us judgmental of others?
2. What false assumptions do we make about holiness requiring separation from rather than transformation of sinners?
3. Why is Jesus's knowledge of both the woman's sin and the Pharisee's thoughts significant for understanding His authority?

Interlinear Text

ἰδὼν	δὲ	ἡ	Φαρισαῖος	ἡ	καλέσας	αὐτοῦ	εἶπεν
saw	Now	which	when the Pharisee	which	had bidden	him	it he spake
G1492	G1161	G3588	G5330	G3588	G2564	G846	G2036
ἐν	ἐαυτῷ	λέγων,	Οὗτος	εἰ	ἦν	προφήτης	
within	himself	saying	This man	if	he were	a prophet	
G1722	G1438	G3004	G3778	G1487	G2258	G4396	
ἐγίνωσκεν	ἄν	τίς	καὶ	ποταπὴ	ἡ	γυνὴ	ἥτις
would have known	G302	who	and	what manner	which	of woman	this is that
G1097		G5101	G2532	G4217	G3588	G1135	G3748
ἄπτεται	αὐτοῦ	ὅτι	ἁμαρτωλός	ἐστίν			
toucheth	him	for	a sinner	she is			
G680	G846	G3754	G268	G2076			

Additional Cross-References

Luke 7:16 (Resurrection): And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people.

Luke 15:2 (Resurrection): And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.

Isaiah 65:5 (Parallel theme): Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

Mark 7:21 (Parallel theme): For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,