

Luke 7:41

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

Analysis

Jesus tells parable: 'There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty' (Greek 'duo chreopileitai ēsan daneistē tini: ho heis ὄpheilen dēnaria pentakosia, ho de heteros pentēkonta'). The ratio—10:1—represents vast difference in debt magnitude. Both debts are unpayable by debtors' means (hence needing forgiveness), but one owes vastly more. The denarius (dēnarion) was day's wage for laborer; 500 denarii equals nearly two years' wages. Reformed theology applies this to sin—all are debtors unable to pay, but awareness of debt varies. Some recognize enormous guilt; others minimize it. The parable prepares Simon to understand the woman's extravagant devotion.

Historical Context

Debt was common in ancient economy. Creditors could demand repayment, imprison debtors, or sell family members into slavery to recover losses. Jesus's parables frequently use economic imagery familiar to audiences (talents, laborers in vineyard, unjust steward). The 10:1 ratio makes the point clear without being so extreme as to be implausible. For Luke's readers, the parable illustrated a spiritual principle through understandable economic reality.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does recognition of our great debt of sin affect our love for Christ?
2. Why do some Christians love Christ more passionately than others?
3. What prevents us from recognizing the magnitude of our sin debt?

Interlinear Text

δύο	χρεωφειλέται	ἡσαν	δανειστῆ	τινι·	ό	
which had two	debtors	There was	creditor	a certain		G3588
G1417	G5533	G2258	G1157	G5100		
εἷς	ώφειλεν	δηνάρια	πεντακόσια	ό	δὲ	ἔτερος
the one	owed	pence	five hundred	G3588	and	the other
G1520	G3784	G1220	G4001	G1161		G2087
πεντήκοντα						
fifty						
G4004						

Additional Cross-References

Luke 7:47 (Parallel theme): 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.

Romans 5:20 (Parallel theme): Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

Matthew 18:28 (Parallel theme): But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.

Matthew 6:12 (Parallel theme): And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Romans 3:23 (Parallel theme): For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Luke 11:4 (Parallel theme): And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.