

# The Woman With Alabaster Box

by David Ravenhill

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of coming to Jesus Christ as a sinner and receiving help from Him, rather than relying on the religious community.*

**Duration:** 44:28

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:6, 1 Peter 2:9

**Topics:** "Jesus", "Identity in Christ", "Worship"

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## Description

David Ravenhill emphasizes the dual identity of believers as both kings and priests, highlighting the importance of intimacy with God alongside exercising authority. He reflects on the story of the woman with the alabaster box, illustrating her desperate need for Jesus and her willingness to give everything in worship. This woman, often seen as a sinner, embodies the Gospel's transformative power, demonstrating that true worship comes from humility, brokenness, and extravagant love. Ravenhill urges the congregation to recognize their value in God's eyes, regardless of their past, and to approach Jesus with sincerity and a heart ready to serve.

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## Transcript

Well, praise the Lord. I want you to know some even better news. You are kings and priests, not either or.

That's what my Bible says anyway. He's made us to be kings and priests. We are a royal priesthood.

There is no such thing as in the natural as royalty and the priesthood, but in God's eyes, royalty and priesthood go together. We are royal kings, priests, kings of priests, right from the very beginning. God put in the Garden of Eden man to have intimacy with him.

That's the highest function of a priest. Before the outer court, the ministry is to the Lord. God coming down in the cool of the day, man and God having access and communion, fellowship, that's the priestly function.

But then he was to rule and reign, subdue the earth, take dominion, that's the job of the king. And we have a twofold function, not just to reign, but to have fellowship and communion with him and also to reign. Paul says, would indeed that you were kings that we might reign with you.

And he wants us to know what it is to use the authority that God has placed in us to subdue and take dominion, but we can't substitute the presence of God and that intimacy with God either. So those of you who thought you were just a king, you're a priest. Those of you who thought you were just a priest, you're

a king.

Kings and priests. Amen. That's not my message.

Could be, but it won't be. I've been asked this morning if I would minister on a specific portion of Scripture. And I am not in the habit of taking requests.

I don't like it when somebody asks me to preach on something. And this was not a request that was given by Brother Ryan. This is a request that I've carried around in my Bible for a long time.

It was given to me by a very close personal friend, good friend, a friend who was a wonderful teacher, great preacher. And I've looked at this request from time to time, opened it up and read it and done nothing about it. Left it there in my Bible, carried around year after year after year and failed really to respond to that.

My friend is now in glory. And I have not taken seriously this request until recently. The request is found in the Gospel of Matthew.

The friend, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ. And the request is this, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in all the world, I want you to talk about this woman. Interesting request, isn't it? Jesus could have said, listen, wherever the gospel is proclaimed, tell them about my mother.

We have one branch of Christendom, if you like, that have venerated Mary. But Jesus never said that. He didn't say go into all the world and preach the gospel.

And by the way, make sure you mention my mother, how wonderful she was. And I don't, in saying that, want to belittle in any way the ministry of Mary, because obviously she had a wonderful role and was a tremendous woman of God. But He chose a particular woman.

A woman that had a major impact on His life. And I think of all the things that happened in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, the various things that He could have singled out. He could have said, you know, I had 12 disciples and out of the 12 were three guys that, you know, were especially close to me.

And out of the three, there was one by the name of John that sort of wormed his way into my heart. He was always there, always available, just had a real love relationship. And, you know, wherever the gospel is proclaimed, tell them about John.

He could have said wherever the gospel is proclaimed, you know, tell them about some other situation or circumstance that he was in. But he said, no, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in all the world as a witness, I want you to build a memorial to this particular woman. You know the story.

It's the story of the woman that came with the alabaster box and how she broke that box and ministered in such a wonderful way to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have your Bibles, let's turn to the account we have in Luke's Gospel, Luke chapter 7, beginning in verse 37. We find this woman in the house of Simon the leper.

Simon was putting on a party, a dinner, a celebration. We don't know why. There's the possibility, of course, that he was healed by Jesus and wanted to commemorate the occasion and celebrate and give thanks and honor to the one that was responsible for his healing.

After all, he's called Simon the leper. You don't go into a leper's house without coming out contaminated, unclean, having to go and purify yourself. So all we can imagine is that Simon had already been healed.

Maybe he was one of the ten. Maybe he was the one that turned back and worshipped the Lord. I don't know.

But he's gathered together some friends and obviously Jesus and his disciples are invited. This is a private home. It's a private party.

And this woman is not on the guest list. This woman is not wanted. She's not invited.

And so we have to ask ourselves, how come she is there? What caused her to be there? How many of you have ever crashed a party? Not too many, I'm sure. You don't drive down the road and see a lot of cars outside a private home and just sort of brazenly walk in and sit down and sort of, you know, pick up a knife and fork and start eating. Now granted, if it's in a public hall and there's a vast crowd of people, you may be, you know, nosy enough to say, I wonder what's going on.

I didn't know there was some big, you know, thing going on in town here at the town hall. I think I'll go and sneak a look. And that sort of environment, you know, you would maybe feel a little self-conscious, but nevertheless you would allow your curiosity to take you in there just to find out what's going on.

But not into a private home. And here is a woman again that breaks in, if you like, to a private home. We have to ask ourselves, at least I do, I love to sort of speculate a little bit.

Speculation based on the Word of God. What caused her to be there? Something obviously preceded this particular event. She didn't just sort of wander in off the street without knowing Jesus was there any more than you would wander into anybody's home.

She knew that he was there and she was desperate to meet him. And so something led up to this. It could have been that maybe one day she was there in the marketplace, listening for the first time to a man preaching the Word of God in a way that she'd never heard it before.

She heard about God being referred to as Father. She'd never heard God being referred to as Father before. She heard about God being a compassionate God, a kind God, a merciful God, a God that is able to deliver, a God that is able to cleanse.

All she'd heard about is condemnation and judgment, commandments, rules and rituals. She'd never heard about relationship before. She'd never heard about the grace of God before.

And maybe as she stood there listening she thought, is this really possible that the God that I've been told about ever since I was a little girl is a God of compassion, a God of mercy, a God of kindness, a God that can heal and restore? Because you see this woman was a woman of the world. Most expositors tell us that she was a prostitute selling her body on the street. And here now she's hearing about a God that's able to cleanse even the vilest sinner.

Maybe she heard Jesus as he was berating the scribes and the Pharisees and of course he loved to do that. There was nothing that sort of irked Jesus more than the religious community. And maybe one day as he began his minister's conference, his pastor's conference, he began as the word tells us with these words, prostitutes and tax gatherers will make it into the kingdom of God before you guys.

Jesus was seeker sensitive as you can tell. He didn't want to upset people so he put it mildly. No, not exactly.

You know you don't begin a pastor's conference that way. But that's the way Jesus did it. There they were dressed up in their clerical robes, you know, with all the phylacteries dangling there like a bunch of fly fishermen with the, you know, corks on the top of the caps.

And Jesus said, you know, prostitutes are going to make it into the kingdom of God before you guys. That's just not what you do, you know. And maybe when she heard that she thought, you know, is he saying that in jest or is he saying that in truth? Does he really mean that? I a chance that a prostitute like me could honestly be a part of God's kingdom.

If so, I need to find out more. Maybe that's what brought her there. Or maybe she shared a room, maybe a small room with another girl, both of them involved in selling their bodies on the streets.

Maybe she comes home one day and there is her friend, her roommate, packing her bags. And as soon as she walks through the door, she senses the atmosphere is changed. It's not the usual sort of heaviness.

There's a joy. She notices her roommate with a beautiful smile on her face, maybe singing. And her roommate says, oh, I'm so glad you're home.

I've got to tell you what's happened to me. And she said, I can see what's happened. I mean, what has happened to you? And she said, oh, this was the most amazing day of my life, but one of the most tragic in one sense.

And yet on the other hand, one of the most triumphant days of my life. It all began, she said, when I was with one of our clients. And in the early hours of the morning, there was a knock on the door.

And before we could even open the door, the doors burst open and there were some scribes and religious people. And they said to the guy, get out of here. And they grabbed me.

There I was, half naked. I just had time to grab a blanket and cover myself. And I was dragged down the street.

I'd never felt such humiliation before in all my life. I didn't know if I was going to make it. All I could hear was the words, we're going to stone her.

We've caught her this time. This is the end. And I was convinced, she said, that it was the end.

And what seemed like eternity, she said, they took me down there again into the marketplace and they dumped me at the feet of a man I'd never heard of before. They referred to him as Jesus, Rabbi. And they said to him, Rabbi, we caught this woman in the very act of adultery.

And the law says, Moses says, we are commanded to stone this sort of situation. You agree with the law or do you disagree? Are you opposed to the law of Moses? Are you in agreement with the law of Moses? Master, we want an answer. Yes or no? Jesus said, yes.

I believe in the law of Moses. So we're supposed to stone her, is that all right? No. He says, let the one without sin cast the first stone.

And she said, all of a sudden it became very quiet. And I could hear, she said, the shuffling of feet. I didn't even look up.

And she said, after a few minutes, I heard a voice. And he said to me, woman, where are your accusers? And I looked around and there were none. And I said, Lord, they're on her.

And he said, neither do I condemn you. Go your way and sin no more. And she said, I can't fully explain it.

But she said, when I looked at him, all of a sudden it was like taking a shower. All of a sudden I felt clean for the very first time in my life. I can't, honestly, I can't explain it.

All I know is that beholding I was changed. And I know that I'm a new creature right now. I know that something has happened.

My chains fell off. My heart is free. And I have no intention of going back to that sort of lifestyle.

He said, sin no more. That's why I'm packing my bags. I'm sorry, I'm out of here.

I'm leaving. I'm going back to my friends and family. I'm through with this sort of lifestyle.

And maybe this lady says, you know, if he can do that for you, he can do that for me. Where is he? I've got to meet him. And she said, well, all I heard is he was going to Simon's house.

She said, I know Simon. I know his house. Now I don't know if that's the background or not, but that's a potential background based on the Word of God.

This woman obviously knew something. Something drew her to this house, again, unannounced, unwanted. And so we find her here in this story.

This is the longest account that we have from verse 37 down. And I want us to sort of meditate on it together. Because obviously she had such a profound impact on the life of Jesus.

You see, I personally believe that she is the embodiment of the Gospel. In other words, Jesus says, wherever the Gospel is proclaimed, I want you to place alongside the Gospel the life of this woman, because she is the Gospel in flesh, so to speak. This is the power of the Gospel.

This is what the Gospel looks like when it has really taken root in the heart of an individual's life. And so this really is a reflection. So make sure wherever the Gospel is proclaimed, Africa, India, China, America, wherever it is, tell them about this woman.

You see, for most of my ministry, I neglected this request. Or I looked at it occasionally, but I didn't think it was that important. Till I realized, listen, I was directly disobeying a command of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I preached in different countries around the world, and I failed to respond to this request. Wherever you preach the Gospel, tell them this story. So I have begun at least to make amends, and try and look into this story, and that's what we want to do together.

First thing about this woman is she came as a sinner. Verse 37, behold, there was a woman in the city who was a sinner. She came as a sinner.

That's the way we come to the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't come, again, masking our problems. We don't come trying to cover up our problems.

We don't come trying to pretend we're something we're not. The Bible says that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. And she comes again as a sinner.

Billy Graham has immortalized that old song, Just As I Am, without one plea. Not trying to pretend she's something else, but just as I am. She was a sinner.

Everybody knew she was a sinner. There was no use trying to cover that situation. She's totally honest and transparent.

We talked a little bit about that last night. And you and I, if we're ever going to know Jesus Christ, if we're ever going to be impacted with the Gospel, the Good News, we come as a sinner. The blood of Jesus Christ, as I said last night, does not cleanse from hang-ups.

It does not cleanse from problems. It cleanses only from sin. And it's when you and I are willing to acknowledge I've got sin in my life, not a hang-up, not a problem, not some failure, not some weakness, but we face it as the Bible declares it to be, as a sin, then God can meet our needs.

It's the sick that need a physician, unless I'm prepared to say I've got sickness, the sickness of sin in my life that's destroying my life. Only then can the great physician heal me. And so she comes again as a sinner.

The second thing, she came to the only one that could help her. She comes to the Lord Jesus Christ. She doesn't go to the church, if you like, or the equivalent.

She doesn't go to the synagogue. The synagogue can't change you. The church can't change you.

Nobody else can change you. Only Jesus Christ can change you. I am come that you might have life.

There is no other life source other than that which is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not even the Scriptures, as good as they are, as wonderful as they are. Jesus had to say to the religious community, you search the Scriptures for in them you think you have eternal life, but you will not come to me that you may have life.

They memorized them again. They had them there displayed for everybody to see. But they were not born again.

In fact, Jesus said you're your father the devil. That's tough on the religious crowd, isn't it? After you've memorized, you know, two or three thousand Scriptures and then the Scripture himself, the Word of God says, you know, you're the father, you're of your father the devil. But again, she comes to the only one that can help her.

Jesus Christ is the only one that can change you this morning. I assume that most of you, 99% of you are born again, but there may be somebody here you've been invited by a friend. Maybe you've been raised in church and yet you've never accepted Christ as your Savior.

That was my case. I was raised in a Christian home, went to church every day of my life virtually, but I wasn't saved until I was 18 years of age. Oh, knew all the songs, when to stand, when to sit, all the

terminology and so on, but there was not that impartation of life by the Spirit of God till I was 18, till I acknowledged I was a sinner.

And so again, she comes to the only one that can help her. She doesn't go to the religious community. The religious community is some of the cruelest people on the face of the earth, isn't that right? You know, Jesus reserved some of his greatest criticism, if you like, for the religious community.

Go learn what this means. I desire compassion and not sacrifice. You guys are so callous, you're so hardened.

The reason he gave the story about the prodigal was really the central player of that story wasn't the son that drifted off and went into a far country, it was really the older brother that he was trying to emphasize. Because there was a crowd there, a religious crowd, that were despising the fact that he was sitting down and ministering to the lost. And they were all upset.

If this man is a holy man, if this man really is the Son of God, how can he even begin to associate with people like those? And they were disturbed. And so Jesus told the story, but the real central player was the older brother, who didn't have any compassion for his brother who was lost. And when his brother came back, he had that holier-than-thou attitude.

You know, this son of yours, not this brother of mine, I've never done this and I've never done that. That's a religious community. You know, we measure our spirituality by what we do.

I tithe, I fast, I pray, I, I, I, I, I. And so some of the stories we have in the Word of God again deal around the religious community, the priest and the Levite walking along the road. Here is a man just about bludgeoned to death, bleeding and bloody, and the priest looks at him and passes by, and the Levite looks at him and passes by, and it's the good Samaritan that finally goes over and pours in the oil and the wine, takes him to the local motel and pays his tab and says, listen, when I'm back in the area, if there's any more of a bill, I'll take care of the whole thing. The non-religious person that had the compassion and the mercy, the religious person that couldn't care less.

Tragic, isn't it, when the house of God becomes so callous that we've lost our love for the lost. We don't want to associate with them, we're afraid of getting contaminated, if you like, and we become exclusive. And then we've become to pride ourselves, and I'm better than everybody else.

Again, like the Pharisee who goes into the house of God, and once again, I, I, I, you know, I tithe, I fast, I, you know, and then the sinner that comes in, God be merciful to me, a sinner, beats upon his chest. The Bible says he went down to his house justified, God didn't even answer the prayer, the religious person. And we need to know what it is to be moved with compassion for the prostitutes, and the people that Jesus Christ came to redeem.

Again, he came to minister life to the sick. He was God's physician, going around, doing good, healing all who oppressed the devil, because God was working with him. And so again, she comes to the only one that can help her.

I received an email a year or so ago now, one of these, what I call junk emails, you know, everybody sends them, and you get three or four of the same ones within a week, you know, everybody thinks you need it. And most of the time I just delete them, I don't have time to wade through them all, but this particular one, I guess I had some time on my hands, and I clicked on and started reading. It was a story

of a minister who stood up in the pulpit on a Sunday morning, he took out of his wallet a brand new crisp \$20 bill, and he held it up, and he said, I'm going to be giving this away, who wants it? Of course, the number of hands went up, and then he took that \$20 bill, and he wadded it up in his hand, and little ball, and held it up again, he said, who wants it now? Sure enough, the same amount of hands.

Then he took that \$20 bill, he spat on it, put it on the ground, and he, you know, dug his foot into it a little bit, and picked it up again, who wants it now? Same number of hands. Then he tore it, wadded it up again, held it up, who wants it now? Same number of hands. He says, isn't it amazing? Just because it's been torn and defiled, it still has its same value, hasn't lost its value.

He says, that's the way God sees a lost world. The enemies had his heyday, taken lives, put them under his foot, so to speak, torn them, and bruised them, broken them, defiled them, but in the eyes of God, they still have value. This is a woman, again, that if you like, represents that dollar bill, crushed, broken, and yet in the eyes of God, still has value.

He came to seek and save the lost, not the righteous, not the religious community, but the lost, and so she comes again to the only one that could help her. The third thing about this woman is, she came prepared to give everything. She came prepared to give everything that she had.

You see, I think if we honestly understand the gospel, that's really what it's all about. The Bible says, where your heart is, there will your treasure be also. This woman brings with her the thing of greatest value, an alabaster box of spikenard, very beautiful, powerful, pungent perfume.

It could be that initially, I don't know, I'm speculating again, possibly she thought, you know, there's no way I'm gonna get into this house. You know, there's a gate roundabout, there's men at the gate, there's no way I can get in, but I'm so desperate, how am I gonna get in there? And at the last minute, maybe she takes that alabaster box, puts it under a garment, thinking that when she gets to the door of the house, there's gonna be a guard there, maybe a checklist, are you on the list, what's your name, you're not on here, you can't come in, this is a private party, get out of here. And she thinks, you know, there's one way I can get in, money always speaks.

And she takes that thing out, and she says, listen, if you'll let me in, I'll give you this. That may or may not be the case, but she brought with her an alabaster box. And the Bible says, not in this account, but in the other accounts, you can look it up, that it was worth over 300 denarii.

A denarii was the copper coin of its day, it was the average wage, and there was over 300 denarii worth of perfume that she carried with her. We know, of course, there are 365 days in a year, we know that if you remove the Sabbaths, you have a little over 300 days. If you remove the feast days, and some of their celebrations were a week long, there are also high days and holy days.

So if you remove all those other days, and you have under 300 days of work, this was worth over 300 days of work. In other words, she brought with her a year's salary. Now we could argue about what an average salary is, and we could start on a front row with some of these young people, and they could say, well, you know, I only make about six thousand, you know, we can maybe work it up here to a hundred thousand or more, I don't know.

So the best way to do it, to settle the argument, is just take your salary for the year. Forget about the person on the left or the right of you, take your salary. I mean, that is extravagant giving, isn't it? She's not

just bringing her time, she is bringing everything that she has.

A year's salary, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, hundred thousand dollars. Extravagant, lavish. You see, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The old hymn writer says, where the whole realm of nature mine, there were a present, an offering far too small. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. You see, I think we need a fresh revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

All his beauty, all his glory, all his majesty. We say, Lord, if I could give you more, I would. If I had a thousand alabaster boxes.

Oh, the hymn writer puts it a little different. Oh, you know, over a thousand tongues to sing, my great Redeemer's praise. Lord, one isn't enough, two is enough.

Lord, if I had a thousand, I just raise one great chorus, one great anthem of worship and praise to you. And so she comes again to give everything that she has. You see, this is what I believe impressed Jesus so much, this extravagant giving.

Oh, he had other gifts. The wise men came with their gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, but he was too young. Nicodemus came with a hundred pounds of ointment, but he was already dead.

It's easy to give after you die, isn't it? You know, if I was Bill Gates and I'm on my deathbed, I could easily make out my will to the Red Cross and, you know, make, get my name in CNN or on the headline news. And so after all I'm dead, you know, it doesn't matter really what happens to my money. But when you give everything you have while you're living, that's a whole different story.

If Bill Gates wrote a check for four million or four billion, I should say four million, be nothing to him, four billion dollars tomorrow, I'd be impressed with a guy. I'm going to start all over again. I'm going to give away my entire fortune to missions, to building hospitals, orphanages around the world.

Then I'd be impressed with, with old Bill. You know, if he'd mortgage that, I think his house is bigger than your new building, you know, incredible place that he built up there. You see, this woman gave the very best that she had.

The next thing about this woman is she came in humility. It stares there, verse 38, and standing behind him at his feet. Standing behind him.

You see, she doesn't come to sort of take over. She doesn't come wanting the limelight, wanting the spotlight, wanting all the attention. She doesn't come wanting to be the center of all that is going on.

Oh, just a minute, I want to make an announcement. Listen to everybody, you know, and sort of, I'm about to give my year salary. Everybody pay attention now, you know.

I'm glad you're here because I just, I want you to see that this, you know, this check right now, you know, is made out for \$40,000 and I just want everybody to be a part of this, you know. No. Oh, you see, you know, if we got a little bit of attention from it, we may give sacrificially.

But no, she comes and she stands behind him. Jesus said, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I'm what? I'm meek and lowly, humble.

The Bible says, he's shown the old man what is good. What does the Lord require thee to do? Justly love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God. God resists the proud.

He gives grace to the humble. This woman needs all the grace of God she can get. And she comes again somehow with an understanding of humility.

She's not there to eclipse again the majesty and the glory and the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. She's there standing behind him. That's what impresses Jesus.

The ability to remain unrecognized, not to get your name in lights, not to make a great name for yourself, but to magnify and exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. Like John, he must increase and I must decrease. No wonder Jesus was impressed.

You see, when we take over the spotlight, then he's not seen. Isaiah says, in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. And Uzziah had to die before Isaiah saw the Lord.

Why? Because Uzziah was so full of himself at that particular time. You know, not only a great king and God had blessed him, but then he became strong and self-sufficient, self-reliant. He thought, you know, I can go into the house of God and I can offer the sacrifices and I can, you know, I, you know, I'm invincible.

Nobody can stop me. I've got all this power and God smote him and he became a leper till the day of his death. But in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord.

And I believe in the year of our death, the beauty and the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ will be seen. But he can't be seen sometimes because we're so much alive and we're wanting to be the center of everything. We want to make sure that our name is recognized and we are seen and so on.

And not this woman again. She comes in humility. The next thing about her, she comes in brokenness.

It says that she came weeping, in verse 38. Weeping, I believe, because of her past. She comes in repentance, remorse, regret.

The Bible says, in his light we will see light. I can't imagine what that must have been like. Here she is in the presence of an absolutely holy God.

Remember Peter, he says, Lord depart from me. I'm an unclean man. I mean, somehow at that moment he saw the absolute purity of the Son of God and he saw his own defilement.

Again, like Isaiah. I saw the Lord high and lifted up and then I realized my own uncleanness. Lord, I am unclean.

I'm a man of unclean lips. I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. Lord, I can't, you know, I can't tolerate the contrast.

And I believe there she is. She's just weeping. God, I'm so sorry for all that I've done.

This body that was designed to be your temple has been defiled over and over and over and over again. I believe as she was washing his feet, he was washing her heart. I'm convinced that as the tears flowed, there was something that was going on and suddenly those tears changed and they were tears now of joy.

And there was a transformation. The more she wept, the more sense of cleansing and wholeness began to take place. Amazing, isn't it, what God can do? I remember listening to Jack Hayford many, many years ago.

He took that verse in Hebrews where it talks about our conscience sprinkled, our mind sprinkled clean from an evil conscience. And then he says, and our bodies washed with pure water. And he says, you know, some of you need your body washed.

He says, you've used that body for sexual impurity. And even though you're married now, you still have problems and hang-ups because of the fact that you gave away your virginity or whatever it was years and years ago. And there's still that sense of condemnation and failure.

And he says, you know, the blood of Jesus Christ cannot only cleanse your conscience, but it can wash your body. And Paul said to the Corinthians, he says, I am going to present you as a chaste virgin. What a transformation.

Oh, they were effeminate, they were homosexuals, they were adulterers, they were involved in every vice possible. Such were some of you, but you're what? You're washed. Your body, that body that was defiled is now being washed.

You see, I think there was a washing taking place. As she washed his feet, he was washing the heart of this woman. So here she is in brokenness.

The Bible says a broken and a contrite heart, God cannot despise. Something about tears, genuine tears, or not sort of crocodile tears as we call them, but genuine brokenness, a broken heart, God cannot despise. This woman again comes with her tears.

And maybe not only her natural tears, at least tears that were shed that particular moment, but maybe she brought some other tears with her. That may sound strange to you, but they have discovered now in many, many graves that they've excavated over in Israel, different places. They've discovered these bottles buried along with the body.

Of course, the body's now just bones. But here in these tombs, they've unearthed these bottles. And as they've analyzed the contents of those bottles, they've discovered that even though the contents as long, long ago evaporated, there's just a saline solution that's left.

And archaeologists tell us that these bottles are tear bottles. The psalmist talks about them, he says, all my tears are stored up in your bottles. You see, 2,000 years ago, you could not go down to your local store and buy yourself a little diary and journal as a lot of ladies do.

I guess men don't do it quite as much, but the ladies do it. My wife's kept diaries for years, and not on a daily basis, but as God gives us stuff, and we've got reams of them somewhere. But you couldn't do that 2,000 years ago, because there was no such thing as paper.

And there were only certain people that were, again, capable of good writing and so on. But what you had in place of that, you had a tear bottle. And that tear bottle was a bottle that came up to a, you know, sort of a, the top of it would be sort of cup-shaped that would fit around your eye, at least a, you know, lip that would go under your eye, and then came down to a sort of a bulbous bottom.

And it would be your means of keeping a record of your life, your emotional life, the highs and the lows. And what would happen is something like this, maybe this woman, you know, was going with a young man, and she was so in love, anticipating the day when he was going to pop the question, as we would say, and you know, one night she takes that tear bottle, maybe she's being given it for her 18th birthday or something. And she takes it, and she's just so in love with this man, she just sheds a few tears, she wants to remember this particular night.

Maybe a few months after that, he asks her to be his wife, and she goes home that night, just overcome with joy, and takes that bottle, sheds a few tears. A little while later, they're married, and maybe a few days after the marriage, her husband has to go back to work, and there she is, just overcome now again with joy. The rest of her life, she's dreaming of having a family, being with this wonderful man, and she takes that bottle again, sheds a few tears.

A few months go by, and she finds that she's pregnant, always wanted to have a little baby, always longed to hold a little child to her breast, and takes that bottle, and she's anticipating again the day when that baby is going to be born, and she's already thinking of names, and beginning to embroider some things, and you know, she takes that bottle, and sheds a few tears. Nine months later, the baby's born, again a few nights later, takes that bottle, here's an account of all the joys in her life, and then maybe the baby's six or eight months old, maybe three or four years old, comes home one day, and the baby has a fever. It isn't too many days later, the baby's dead.

She takes that bottle, now she fills it with tears of regret, pain, heartache. Maybe a few months after that, she comes home to find that her husband's left her for another woman. Maybe that's why she turned to prostitution.

She takes that bottle again, and she shed some tears, and then there's night after night, where she's out really looking for love, only to find out that she's been abused, and she comes home, takes that bottle, weeps herself to sleep, and gathers a few more tears, and here is a record of her life, all the mountains and the valleys, all combined, and maybe that was another bottle that she took with her, along with that alabaster box, and there as she's weeping, she takes that bottle, and she pours it out on his feet. Aren't you glad you can do that? Casting all of our care upon you, for He cares for us, and He knows your past. He knows what you've been through.

He knows the valleys. He knows the mountain peaks. He knows the disappointments, but He's here to give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning.

He's here to give us that wonderful exchange life, where we can give Him again the ashes, those things that just never seemingly materialized, they've been destroyed, those dreams that we had, those hopes that we had, those goals that we've had, and yet today it just seems to be nothing, just a pile of ashes. He says, listen, let me take those ashes, and give you something of value, and we can take that tear bottle, and you may not have a literal tear bottle this morning, I guess nobody does, but you nevertheless have a history of disappointments, of hurts, betrayals, things that didn't work out the way you thought they would. If only I'd have gone left instead of turn right, if only I'd have gone to college, if only I'd have married this person instead of that person, whatever it may be, you know, all the things the enemy bombards you with, you know, you could have had a life like this, instead it's turned out this way, and you can bring all of that, and just pour it out.

And I think she poured it all out, all the disappointments, all the pain. See, Jesus Christ didn't just come to cleanse from sin. Spirit of the Lord is upon me, He said, to open prison doors, to set captives free, those that are downcast, crushed in spirit, means to be broken in pieces.

How many of you know, you can be born again of the Spirit of God, and yet be shattered on the inside, a broken vessel, and only God can put Humpty Dumpty back together again, and He does, and He can. He restoreth my soul, He wants to restore you, but we've got to come, we've got to pour it out of His feet, and say, Lord, I'm casting this thing, I've carried it for so long, the weight of this thing, I can't take it any longer, Lord, I can't live another day. Lord, I'm gonna take this thing, and I'm gonna pour it out, get rid of it once and for all, casting all my cares upon Him, because He cares, and I see her here, washing His feet, just pouring out His life.

The next thing is, number six, she came willing to serve. You see, the Bible says she was washing His feet. Foot washing, of course, was common in that day, it was an everyday occurrence, or I've been in foot washing services, they're very meaningful, wonderful, but you know, nothing like the New Testament.

These days, you know, most of us have at least had a shower or bath the night before, or that morning, and you know, we do it sort of in a traditional sense. It's still very humbling. I remember the very first one I was ever in, Lauren.

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