Mary Magdalene: from Despair to Joy

Selected Scriptures

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Shepherd's Community Church

Delivered from Satan

(Luke 8:2; 11:24-26; 1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1:3; 1 John 3:8; Colossians 1:13; Psalm 30:11; John 8:36)

Devoted to Christ

(Luke 8:1-3; 6:7; 23:56; 24:12; John 8:46; 6:66; 19:25; 20:1-21; 10:3; 27; 14:15; Matthew 27:61; 1 Peter 1:8)

The Foolishness of Self-righteousness and the Celebration of Grace

"But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation."
(Psalm 13:5)

Why don't we celebrate grace more? Why aren't we more amazed by the wonderful gifts that are ours as the children of God? Why don't we live with a deep sense of need, coupled with a deep sense of gratitude for how each need has been met by God's grace? Well, the answer is clear. You'll never celebrate grace as much as you should when you think you're more righteous than you actually are.

Grace is the plea of sinners. Mercy is the hope of the wicked. Acceptance is the prayer of those who know that they could never do anything to earn it. But the foolishness of sin makes me righteous in my own eyes.

When I tell my stories, I become more the hero than I ever was. I look wiser in my narratives than I could have been. In my view of my history, my choices were better than what they actually were. Often it isn't my sin that keeps me from coming to God. Sadly, I don't come to him because I don't think I need the grace that can be found only in him.

Here is what all of us must face: sin really does reduce us all to fools, but happily, the story doesn't end there. The One who is the ultimate source of everything that's good, true, trustworthy, right, and wise is also a God of amazing grace.

You don't get freed from your foolishness by education or experience. You don't get wisdom by research and analysis. You get wisdom by means of a relationship with the One who is Wisdom.

The radical claim of the Bible is that wisdom isn't first a book or a system or a set of commands or principles. No, wisdom is a person, and his name is Jesus Christ. When you and I are graced into acceptance with him, we're drawn into a personal relationship with Wisdom, and Wisdom begins a lifelong process of freeing us from the stronghold that the foolishness of sin has on us. We aren't yet completely free, but there will be a day when our every thought, desire, choice, action, and word will be fundamentally wise!

It makes such sense, then, that a repentant man (David) would reflect on his need for wisdom. Sin, in reducing us to fools, causes us to do foolish things, even though we think we're wise. And for this, we need more than information, education, and experience. We need exactly what we find in Christ—grace.

Wisdom is the product of grace; there is simply nowhere else it can be found.

Paul David Trip, *Whiter Than Snow*, 147-184