
Extravagant
Love
Derek Prince

Extravagant Love

God’s Love is Vast, Boundless, Extravagant!
How Shall We Measure It?
How Shall We Respond?

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Introduction

Extravagant Love. It will bring you into a new dimension in appreciating God and in responding to Him. Does the word “extravagant” surprise you? It is appropriate because this refers, first and foremost, to the love of God.

The very nature of God is love. God is so much bigger and greater than we can imagine, and this is true of His love as well. Our human love is often so petty, stingy and self-centred, but God’s love is vast; it is boundless; it is extravagant!

This is a prayer Paul prayed for God’s people in Ephesians 3:14-19:

> *For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

The central theme of Paul’s prayer for us is that we may know God’s love. But we cannot make room for Christ to dwell in our hearts until we are strengthened with power by the Spirit. And he prays that we may be established in His love and that we may be able to grasp how wide, how long, how high and how deep it is. Then Paul concludes by saying, “to know this love that surpasses knowledge . . .” This is a paradox. How can we know love that passes knowledge? I believe there is an answer: that we do not know it with our intellect, but through the revelation of Scripture and of the Holy Spirit. It is a revelation that comes to our spirit rather than to our minds.

The purpose of this book is to share various passages of Scripture that provide us with standards by which to measure God’s love.

1

The Treasure in the Field

The first such passage is a parable of Jesus that is found in Matthew 13:44. It is the parable of the treasure hidden in the field.

A parable is a simple story about familiar, material, earthly things – the things in Jesus' parables were familiar to all His hearers. But the purpose of a parable is to reveal unseen, eternal and spiritual things. The familiar scene and the familiar story then becomes a mirror that reflects the unseen, unfamiliar, spiritual things.

Jesus proceeds in the method of a good teacher, moving from the known to the unknown. He starts with things with which His hearers are familiar and leads them on to that with which they are not familiar. As we read a parable, we need to ask ourselves: what are the spiritual things that correspond to the material things in the parable? Let us look at the parable and then I will give you my interpretation of it.

> *The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.*

That is very simple. What are the spiritual realities that this simple story reveals to us? This is my personal interpretation, which is in line with the principles of Scripture. Not suggesting that there aren't any other interpretations, but this is mine.

The man who found the treasure is Jesus. The field is the world. This is stated in Matthew 13:38 in another parable. It is a principle that runs all through the seven parables that are found in Matthew 13. What about the treasure? It is God's people in this world. In short, the man is Jesus, the field is the world, the treasure is God's people in this world.

When the man discovered that there was a treasure in the field, he did something very wise. He did not immediately tell everybody about the treasure. In fact, it says he hid it. He knew that if people discovered that there was a treasure in the field there would be a lot of competition. He hid it and decided to buy the whole field. Bear in mind that he really did not want the field. All he wanted was the treasure in the field, but he was realistic enough to know that in order to get the treasure, he had to pay the price for the field. The price of the

field for that man was very high. It cost him all he had. But he did it with joy because he knew the value of what he was getting in the treasure.

Can you picture the surprise of the local residents? “Whatever did that man want that field for? It’s not really good for anything. It doesn’t have any real estate value. It’s not good for crops. All it produces is thorns and thistles. Why did he pay a sum like that for a field such as that?”

You see, they did not know about the treasure. The only person who knew about the treasure was Jesus. So He paid the price for the whole world in order to obtain for Himself the treasure that is in the field. The treasure is God’s people.

Let us look at another very familiar verse of the New Testament:

> *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son* [Jesus], *that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16*

So, God loved the world and He gave the life of His Son to redeem the world. But what God receives out of the world is the whoever. “Whoever believes in Him shall not perish.” That total company of whoever’s is the treasure in the field that Jesus died to purchase. He redeemed the world for the sake of the whoever.

In Titus 2:14 we find the same truth presented again. It is speaking here about Jesus Christ:

> . . . *who gave himself for us to redeem us* [buy us back] *from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

That is the treasure, a people that are His very own who have been redeemed from the world; redeemed from wickedness, purified, and made zealous to do what is good. And the price was Himself – all He had, all He was. He laid down His life. He gave Himself to buy that field for the sake of the treasure, His redeemed people.

There is one further thought about this treasure in the field. Jesus has bought the field, but He leaves it to His servants, the ministers of the Gospel, to recover the treasure. There is a lot of work involved in that. You must find where the treasure is, you must dig it up and you must take it out of the earth. It has lain there a long time and it is rusty, dirty, mildewed, and corroded and it needs a lot of cleaning up.

Jesus is not doing the cleaning up Himself. He has His servants in this world to

find His treasure and dig it out with hard labour. Believe me, bringing people to the Lord and preaching the Gospel to them is hard work. It is just as hard as digging a treasure out of a field. But this is left to the ministers of the Gospel. I am one of many whom God has in this world. The purpose of my ministry is to get that treasure out of the field, clean it up and make it fit for the Lord.

This is what Paul says about his own ministry in Colossians 1:28-29:

> *We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.*

The person we proclaim is Jesus. The whole purpose of my ministry is to proclaim the person of Jesus. Paul, too, was not content with leaving any of God's people below the level of their potential. He worked hard.

Look at all the words that denote activity in these verses: "I labour, struggling, . . . his energy, . . . powerfully works in me." What is the whole purpose and direction of all that activity? To get that treasure out of the field, get it cleaned up, and make it fit to present to the Lord who died and bought the field with His own life.

How do we do that? Paul says, "We admonish, we teach, our aim is to present everybody just as good as he or she can be in Christ." But I want to remind you of the price that was paid for the field and for the treasure that is in the field. The price was all He had. He held nothing back. His love was extravagant. He did it with joy because He had such love for the treasure.

2

The Pearl of Great Value

Everything about God is greater and grander than we can comprehend, but this is particularly true of His love. The very nature of God is love. The word chosen to describe this love is “extravagant” a rather unusual and non-religious word, to get away from stereotypes. God’s love truly is extravagant.

Our human love is often so petty, stingy, and self-centred. But God’s love is not like that at all. It is vast, boundless and extravagant. Remember the prayer that Paul prayed for all of us in Ephesians 3:14-19:

> *For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*

To comprehend what God has for us, we must first be strengthened by His Spirit. Something must be created in us as a receptacle for what He wants to put into us. Paul goes on to explain what that is:

> *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

God wants to put the fullness of His love into this vessel that He creates in us by His Holy Spirit. He wants us to know all the dimensions of His love – how wide, how long, how high, and how deep it is. He wants us to know a love that passes knowledge. God’s love cannot be known by the intellect, but it can be apprehended through the revelation of the Scripture and of the Holy Spirit.

The parable of the *Treasure in the Field* was used as a standard by which to measure God’s love. It is emphasised all through this book that *it cost Him all He had*.

We will now focus on the parable that immediately follows: *the Pearl of Great Value*. The first parable, *the Treasure in the Field*, reveals the measure of Christ’s love for His people collectively. But the parable of the Pearl of Great Value

reveals the measure of Christ's love for each human soul individually. It is very important for each of us to appreciate how God loves us as an individual, not just as part of a group.
Matthew 13:45-46:

> *Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.*

In line with the previous parable, the merchant is Jesus. He was not just a tourist nor a window-shopper but a person who really knew the value of that for which He was looking. When He found this one pearl, He realised that it would be a good bargain to sell all He had just to buy that one pearl. How many of us would do that? How many of us would see a stone so precious that we would part with everything we had just to own that one precious jewel? That is the love of Jesus. It is extravagant.

The cost of the pearl is the same as the cost of the field: all He had. In the next section we are going to analyse just what it meant for Jesus to give all He had.

What does a pearl suggest? One thing it suggests in Scripture is suffering. It is interesting that all the gateways to the New Jerusalem are made of pearls. That tells us there is no way into the New Jerusalem except the way of suffering. There is no other gateway. A pearl is caused by some kind of irritation within the oyster. It is really the product of something going wrong inside the oyster.

In the process of making that pearl marketable, many things must be done. It has to be raised from the depths of the sea, removed from the oyster and it has to be subjected to various processes. It is rather like the treasure in the field. It takes a lot of work to make it ready. Jesus bought the field, but He leaves it to His servants to prepare the treasure for Him and, likewise, to make the pearl ready for Him. But finally there comes forth that smooth, beautiful, gleaming pearl.

Picture Jesus holding just one pearl in His hand, looking down at it with inexpressible love. This is something very personal and very individual. It is not something collective, or meant for a group. It is Jesus with just one pearl in the palm of His hand, speaking to that pearl, saying, "It was for you I paid that price. I gave all I had."

Go one step further, and this is so important. Say to yourself, "I was that pearl. I am that pearl. If there had been nobody else to be redeemed, Jesus would have died just for me." You need to see that. So many of us struggle with a sense of

unworthiness, inadequacy and rejection. We wonder whether we are really wanted. It is so important to see that each of us is a pearl for which Jesus gave all He had.

Here are four simple but very important facts about God's love.

God's love is individual.
God's love is everlasting.
God's love precedes time.
God's love is irresistible.

Let us look at some Scriptures that illustrate those four points.

God's Love is Both Individual and Everlasting

> *The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee* [individually and personally] *with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Jeremiah 31:3* KJV

God's love is of old. It is individual and it is everlasting. It is out of His love that He draws us to Himself.

God's Love Precedes Time

> *For he* [God] *chose us in him* [Christ] *before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ . . .*
> *Ephesians 1:4-5*

There are two possible ways of punctuating that verse: ". . . to be holy and blameless in his sight in love . . ."; or ". . . to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us . . ." But, whichever you use, the fact remains that God's love precedes time. Before the creation of the world God loved us, He chose us and He predestined us. He arranged the course of His life so that we would encounter Him and encounter His love.

God's Love is Irresistible

There is a very simple statement in the Song of Solomon 8:6 which says, "love is as strong as death . . ." Death is irresistible. When death comes, nobody can turn it away. Nobody can say, "I'm not ready. I won't accept you." No man has power to resist death. Solomon says, "love is as strong as death." The New Testament takes us one step further. When Jesus died and rose from the dead, He

proved that love is stronger than death. The most irresistible, negative force in the universe was conquered by the most irresistible positive force in the universe – the love of God. There is an old English song that was sung many years ago called “Love Will Find a Way” and it says this:

> Over the mountains
> Under the fountains
> Love will find a way . . .

Love always gets to its objectives – it is irresistible. It accepts no barriers. It will go through anything, over anything, under anything; but it will get where it wants. That is like the love of God.

Think about that. God’s love is individual, everlasting, it precedes time, it is irresistible. Then picture yourself again, as the pearl in the hand of Jesus. Say to yourself, “His love for me is individual and everlasting. It precedes time. It is irresistible.” Then remember what it cost Him – all He had. Stop to say thank you.

3

Jesus Paid the Full Price

We have looked at two parables that give us a standard by which to measure what it cost Jesus to redeem us: the parable of The Treasure in the Field and the parable of the Pearl of Great Price. In each case, the purchaser had to sell all that he had to make the purchase. It cost him everything. This was true of Jesus. To redeem us cost Him everything.

Exactly just what did it mean for Jesus to give His life on our behalf? First, we need to see that the price of redemption was the blood of Jesus. 1 Peter 1:18-19:

> *. . . Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.* NASB

It was only by the blood of Christ that we could be redeemed from our sins, our foolishness and our darkness. Why did it have to be the blood? The Old Testament gives a clear answer. The life, or soul, of all flesh is in the blood. If a living creature has a soul and has blood, then the life, or soul, of that creature is in its blood. This is stated in Leviticus 17:11, where Moses is given laws for how to live according to the principles of God. God said this and it is very prophetic:

> *'For the life* [or soul] *of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life* [or soul] *that makes atonement.'* NASB

The blood atonement was true, of course, in the Old Covenant in the types and shadows, but it was really prophetic of the blood of Jesus given on the altar of the cross to make full and final atonement for our souls.

Bear in mind that the Hebrew word that is translated "life" is the Hebrew word for "soul." The soul of all flesh is in the blood of that creature. Isaiah prophetically predicted that Jesus would give His life blood and thus give His soul for us as atonement on the altar of the cross. Speaking prophetically about Jesus in that great preview of the atonement, Isaiah says:

> *. . . He hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession*

for the transgressors.
Isaiah 53:12 KJV

Notice four statements about what Jesus did: He poured out His soul unto death, He was numbered with the transgressors (He was crucified between the thieves), He bore the sin of many (actually, the sin of the whole world), and He made intercession for the transgressors. Before He died on the cross He prayed, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do." Every one of those statements was exactly fulfilled in Jesus. But we want to focus on the first statement in verse 12, ". . . he hath poured out his soul unto death . . ." He has poured out His life.

We need to look at a passage in Leviticus to get a clearer prediction of exactly what was to take place. The most important day in the religious year of the Jewish people was the Day of Atonement, known today as Yom Kippur. On that day alone, the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies with the blood of the sacrifices that covered the sins of Israel for one more year. This is how Moses describes it:

> *Moreover, he* [the High Priest] *shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; also in front of the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times. Leviticus 16:14* NASB

It was the blood alone that could propitiate the sins of God's people. And the blood had to be brought right into the presence of Almighty God in the Holy of Holies. Notice particularly that it was sprinkled seven times. This was no accident. Seven is the number that indicates the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the number of completeness or perfection. Seven indicates a perfect work that has been done. This was exactly fulfilled in the way that Jesus shed His blood. His blood was sprinkled precisely seven times before the sacrifice was complete.

We find the exact fulfillment of those Old Testament prophecies and types as we look at the historical record of the Gospels. The blood of Jesus was sprinkled seven times, in seven different ways.

The first sprinkling (or shedding) of His blood took place in the Garden of Gethsemane as He wrestled in agony to make Himself available to God for this last great sacrifice.

> *And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.*
> *Luke 22:44*

His blood began to come out of His body in His sweat. This was the expression of His agony and His wrestling. This was the first shedding.

The second shedding of His blood took place when He was in the house of the High Priest, when He was being questioned and mistreated.

> *Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him. Matthew 26:67* NASB

The word translated, "beat Him with their fists," can also mean "to beat with rods." That is probably more accurate because this was prophesied in the Old Testament in Micah 5:1, where it says: "They will strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod". But, however it happened, he was beaten with fists or with rods and the blood came out of His face (probably out of His nose, among other places).

The third shedding of blood is recorded in Matthew 27:26:

> *Then* [Pilate] *released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.*

This, too, was predicted in the Old Testament, where the Lord is speaking in person and says:

> *I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard;*
> *I did not hide my face*
> *from mocking and spitting. Isaiah 50:6*

It is important to notice that the Lord offered His back. He was not compelled, but He gave Himself as a sacrifice. He was flogged with a Roman scourge which was made of many thongs, each one studded with bone or metal. When it fell across a man's back it literally ploughed his back and ripped up the flesh, exposing the sinews and even the bones. That was the third shedding of blood.

The fourth shedding of blood is not actually stated in so many words in the new covenant, but if we go back to Isaiah 50:6, we read:

> *I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard . . .*

They took the beard of Jesus and pulled it out in tufts and handfuls, thus also shedding His blood.

The fifth shedding of blood was the crown of thorns.

They [Roman soldiers] *stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then wove a crown of thorns and set it on his head. Matthew 27:28-29*

They did not just set it on His head. Those brutal soldiers, having woven those sharp thorns (which you can still see everywhere in the land of Israel today), pressed it down on His head and they beat Him on His head. This pressed those sharp thorns into His scalp: the fifth shedding of blood.

The sixth shedding of blood was the actual crucifixion in Matthew 27:35:

When they had crucified him, they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

His hands and His feet were pierced with nails. This, too, was predicted in the Old Testament. Psalm 22:16 says, "... they have pierced my hands and my feet." And in verse 18, "They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."

There remains the seventh and final shedding of blood which took place after Jesus had actually died. A Roman soldier was sent to make sure that the three persons on the crosses were dead. He killed the first two, but when he came to Jesus he saw that He was already dead.

Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.
John 19:34

In that sevenfold shedding, His body was emptied of blood. He literally poured out His soul to death. He shed His blood seven times.

1. His sweat became blood.
2. They struck Him in the face with fists and rods.
3. They flogged Him with a Roman scourge.
4. His beard was pulled out.
5. Thorns were pressed into His scalp.
6. His hands and His feet were pierced with nails.
7. His side was pierced with a spear.

As you read that list, remember that it is the measure of His love. That is the price that He paid. It literally cost Him all that He had. He did not simply give up His glory, His throne and His majesty as God. He did not simply give up His few earthly possessions as a man on earth. He gave up Himself. It was His own life. He poured it out in His blood as the redemptive price. Think about that and realise that is the measure of God's love. To say the least, it is extravagant.

4
The Total Inheritance

We will now consider what we receive in Christ through redemption: our limitless inheritance. Not only was God extravagant in the price He paid to redeem us, but He is equally extravagant in all that He gives us in Christ.

In Romans 8:15-17, Paul is writing to Christians about what is available to us through our faith in Christ.

> *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him* [the Holy Spirit] *we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

The word, Abba, is Aramaic or Hebrew and corresponds to the English word "Daddy." So we see here a relationship of intimacy with God the Father whereby we address Him as Abba, as "Daddy"; the Spirit of God Himself giving us this assurance and this confidence.

Now, the Bible tells us that we are God's children but the Spirit of God reinforces that truth personally to each one of our hearts. We are God's children. In line with the normal procedure in the human race, when we become children, we become heirs. We are here made heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. Of course, there is one condition stated: if we are willing to share His sufferings. That is one of the conditions of being a co-heir with Him. If we share the inheritance, we also share the sufferings. Remember that the pearl is the product of suffering.

It is important to understand what it means to be co-heirs. It does not mean that we each get a little fraction of the total inheritance. It means that Jesus, as the first Son, has the whole inheritance and we share the whole inheritance with Him. Each one of us has a right to the entire inheritance, which is the inheritance of Jesus. The law of God's kingdom is sharing. We do not each grab our portion, but we all share together all that God the Father has and all that Christ the Son has.

Here is what Jesus says about this inheritance and how we can know about it. In John 16:13-15, speaking about the coming of the Holy Spirit, He says:

> *But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.*

> [We could not grasp this without the Holy Spirit.] . . . *He will bring glory to me* [Jesus] *by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine.*

All that belongs to the Father belongs to the Son, and the Holy Spirit will reveal to us all that it is. Remember, it is the Holy Spirit who is the administrator of the inheritance. If we are not in a good relationship with the Holy Spirit and walk in fellowship with the Him, then we can be, in theory, children of a king – but live like paupers and beggars because we are not entering into our inheritance. The inheritance is all that God the Father has and all that God the Son has. They share together and we share with them. That is the fullness of what God has bestowed upon us in Christ. He is not stingy. He is not petty. He is not legalistic. He is extravagant.

Look at another Scripture which speaks about the extent of our inheritance.

> *He who did not spare His own Son* [Jesus], *but delivered Him up for us all* [that's the price that God paid], *how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Romans 8:32* *NASB*

Consider the implication of those words. When we receive Christ, God freely gives us all things. Apart from Him we receive nothing. What a tremendous emphasis there is on the scope of the inheritance and on its absolute freedom. We cannot earn it. We receive it as a free gift and it includes all things. We are heirs of the total inheritance; all that God the Father has and all that God the Son has, when we receive Christ.

In 1 Corinthians Paul tries to show those believers how rich they are. And he somewhat rebukes them because they have been acting as though they were poor. They have been mean and petty and jealous to one another. He says, in effect, "You people don't realise what you've got."

> *So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God. 1 Corinthians 3:21-23* *NASB*

That is a tremendous, breathtaking statement, isn't it? He says, in effect, "All things belong to you. Stop acting in a petty little way. And don't get hung up with preachers, either. Stop being so small-minded. Everything is yours."

Remember, it is freely given to us; we cannot earn it. But it is important that we ask the Holy Spirit to enlarge our faith and understanding. The Holy Spirit is the

administrator, and unless He speaks to us and guides us into the truth, these will just be words, they will not be reality. It is the Holy Spirit who makes the promises a reality.

Finally, we will look at two different translations of 1 John 4:16:

> *And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.* *NASB*
> *And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.*

Notice the opening phrase, "We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us . . ." The alternative translation: "So we know and rely on the love God has for us . . ." There are two aspects. One is knowing the love God has for you. The other is believing the love God has for you. Or in the alternative translation, relying on the love God has for you.

Many Christians hear Scriptures in church about the love of God. They may entertain them or even believe them, but they do not become real until we rely on them. We must take it seriously that God loves us and that He gave the highest price the universe has to offer to redeem us. And, having redeemed us, that He has made the whole inheritance ours. We must begin to act on that truth and rely on it. We must stop being mean, petty and stingy with other people (and with ourselves) and learn to be like God – extravagant.

5
Returning

Extravagant Love

We have seen that the love of God for humanity can be measured by certain objective standards. First, it can be measured by the price that God and Jesus paid. That price is stated in those two parables: it was all He had. He gave His life blood. He poured out His soul, or His life, unto death in a sevenfold shedding of His blood.

Second, God's love for us can be measured by the inheritance He gives us in Christ. We are co-heirs with Christ and heirs of God. The entire inheritance of God the Father and God the Son becomes ours together with Jesus Christ. The tremendous scope of God's love can be measured by the price He paid and the inheritance He offers.

We now want to deal with the other side of the coin: how should we respond to God's extravagant love? Quite simply, we should be extravagant, also. To illustrate, let us look at the account of what one woman did for Jesus about a week before His death.

> *While he* [Jesus] *was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly."Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."*
> *Mark 14:3-9*

Jesus ends with a tremendous statement: ". . . what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." Let us look at part of a parallel account in John 12:3-6. This identifies the woman and brings out some other aspects of what took place.

> *Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.*

Consider three important elements in this story: first, what Mary did; second, what Jesus said; and third, how the critics reacted.

What Mary Did

First, look at what Mary did. She was extravagant. She poured out ointment worth more than a year's wages. By contemporary standards in the United States, that would be $47,000 or more. She poured out one pint of ointment worth $47,000 which was held in a beautiful alabaster jar which she then broke. The jar could never be used again. It was totally gone in just a few moments. That was extravagant!

Second, Mary was totally devoted. She not only poured the ointment on His head, as we read in Mark, but in John we saw that she poured it on His feet and then wiped His feet with her hair. Picture Mary, kneeling at the feet of Jesus, letting her long hair hang down, wiping the ointment on His feet, rubbing it in and smoothing His feet.

What Jesus Said

Consider a number of very powerful things Jesus said about this woman. He certainly did not take sides with the critics. In Mark 14:6 He said of the woman, "She has done a beautiful thing to me." We can be grateful for that particular translation, "a beautiful thing." Jesus saw in that act something that struck Him as beautiful. Extravagant love is beautiful.

In Mark 14:8 Jesus said of the woman, "She did what she could . . ." That is so simple, but so important. God never asks us to do more than we can. I have often heard people say, "I wish I could do more." But something in me always asks, "I wonder if they are really doing what they can?" God will never require of you more than you can do. But, if you do what you can, the attitude of Jesus will be just the same as it was to that woman.

Also in Mark 14:8, “She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.” That is an amazing statement. None of the disciples really believed that Jesus was going to die and be buried at that time. Yet Mary, of all the people, had the revelation that He was to die and be buried. When He actually did die on the cross they never had time to properly anoint His body. They had to wrap Him in sheets and put some perfume and spices on the body, but they could not do the real anointing. They had missed the opportunity. But Mary was open to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit could tell her something, because He could speak to her heart, not necessarily to her head. There is a saying in the French language, “The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing.” I think the heart of that woman had some reasons that all the people who sat and reasoned just did not understand.

The tremendous reward of Mary is recorded in Mark 14:9:

> *“I tell you the truth* [Jesus said], *wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”*

Even this message is fulfilling that prophecy because it is also broadcast on radio, and is ultimately heard around the world. It is just one fulfillment out of many.

How the Critics Reacted

Finally, let us look at the critics’ reaction. First, they were stingy, as religious people often are. Consider the phrase, “Poor as a church mouse.” There is an awful giveaway in that phrase because the world views church mice as poorer than other mice. The world thinks of the church as a pretty poor, stingy group of people. A lot of Christians give them good reason to think that way. But it was the critics who were stingy, not Jesus and not Mary.

Second, those critics were hypocrites. They suddenly got very concerned about the poor when they saw the ointment being poured out. It can be questioned whether they had been doing much for the poor up to that moment, or whether they did much for the poor from that moment on.

Third, and this is typical of critics, they were miserable. They did not even enjoy the perfume. The whole house was filled with this fragrant, beautiful perfume and they were so busy being angry and critical that they could not even enjoy it.

As we close this particular section on how we should respond to the

extravagant love of God, I want to ask you a rather personal question. Has the Holy Spirit ever touched your heart to be extravagant in your devotion to Jesus? You cannot do anything directly for Jesus Himself, because He is in heaven. But, like Mary, you can do something for His body, His people on earth.

This message is also being broadcast to many remote areas of the earth; to China, India, parts of Africa, Central and South America, the Islands of the Sea, parts of Europe and Asia. Many of those, perhaps most, who will hear it are, by American standards, extremely poor. They probably have no sheets on their beds. In fact, many of them probably do not even have a bed. They probably sleep on a mat in a hut. Many of them have no shoes on their feet. Most of them probably have no choice of food to eat. We are so used to wondering whether we will eat this or that, but we do not realise that the world is filled with people that never have that choice. Some of them do not have any food at all.

If you will help me to reach these people, you are doing something for Christ's body on earth. If the Holy Spirit touches your heart, will you be like Mary? Will you dare to be extravagant? Will you dare to do something out of the ordinary? The religious people may criticise, but, remember, Jesus will praise you.

About the Author

Derek Prince (1915–2003) was born in India of British parents. Educated as a scholar of Greek and Latin at Eton College and Cambridge University, England, he held a Fellowship in Ancient and Modern Philosophy at King's College. He also studied several modern languages, including Hebrew and Aramaic, at Cambridge University and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

While serving with the British army in World War II, he began to study the Bible and experienced a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ. Out of this encounter he formed two conclusions: first, that Jesus Christ is alive; second, that the Bible is a true, relevant, up-to-date book. These conclusions altered the whole course of his life, which he then devoted to studying and teaching the Bible.

Derek's main gift of explaining the Bible and its teaching in a clear and simple way has helped build a foundation of faith in millions of lives. His non-denominational, non-sectarian approach has made his teaching equally relevant and helpful to people from all racial and religious backgrounds.

He is the author of over 50 books, 600 audio and 100 video teachings, many of which have been translated and published in more than 100 languages. His daily radio broadcast is translated into Arabic, Chinese (Amoy, Cantonese, Mandarin, Shanghaiese, Swatow), Croatian, German, Malagasy, Mongolian, Russian, Samoan, Spanish and Tongan. The radio program continues to touch lives around the world.

Derek Prince Ministries persists in reaching out to believers in over 140 countries with Derek's teachings, fulfilling the mandate to keep on "until Jesus returns." This is effected through the outreaches of more than 45 Derek Prince offices around the world, including primary work in Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, South Africa, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. For current information about these and other worldwide locations, visit www.derekprince.com.

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