

God's Love Cannot Be Earned



The Love of God (Part 8)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as I continue to share with you on our special Christmas theme, summed up in one beautiful phrase of measureless meaning: The Love of God.

In my talk yesterday I spoke about love as God's ultimate motivation, the reason why God does what He does for us His people, whether its His people collectively or whether its anyone of us individually. The ultimate reason for what God does is His love. I quoted the passage in Deuteronomy chapter 7 where Moses said to Israel, "You are to be a special people, a holy people." And then he said, "It wasn't because you were great or mighty or numerous that God choose you, but because the Lord loved you." And he never goes on to explain why the Lord loved them nor does the Bible offer us any final explanation of why God loves us.

God is love. It's His nature to love. And as I said in one of my talks last week, His love is sovereign, wonderful and free. It's the ultimate motive for all that He does. We really can never understand the Bible, we can never understand history, we can never understand our own individual experience unless we are willing by faith to enter into this revelation that the ultimate motivation of God is His love, because He loves us.

Today I'm going to explain one of the most important facts about God's love. One that I touched on indirectly in my talk yesterday. Today I want to devote my talk to this theme. The theme is: The Love of God Cannot Be Earned.

I want to illustrate this from an incident in the ministry of Jesus found in Luke chapter 7, and I'm going to read from verse 36 through verse 50. Quite a lengthy passage, listen carefully, it's a most beautiful story.

> "Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped

> them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. [An extravagant display of love you could say.] When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is, that she is a sinner.' [And by that, of course, he meant an immoral woman.] Jesus answered him, 'Simon, I have something to tell you.' [Notice Jesus answered his unspoken thoughts. The Lord does that.] 'Simon, I have something to tell you.' 'Tell me, teacher,' he said. 'Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?' Simon replied, 'I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled.' 'You have judged correctly,' Jesus said. Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins hve been forgiven, for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.' Then Jesus said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' The other guests began to say among themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?' Jesus said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'" (NIV)

What is the moral of that story? I suppose it could be explained various ways. I don't believe the moral is that you have to be terribly sinful to have a love for God. I believe in a certain sense that it depends on our own evaluation of ourselves and our needs how we respond to God.

I want to point out to you two ways in which the woman was different from the Pharisee. The Pharisee, of course, was religious. He was a man who didn't see himself as being in any sense sinful. I don't suppose he really felt any need for God's love or forgiveness. But this woman there were two facts about her. First of all she knew she needed God's love. She knew that would be no good appealing to God on the basis of her righteousness or her good deeds, or her religious practices. She knew that she just couldn't even begin to approach God and Jesus on that basis. But she just knew she needed love. And I suppose a person who needs love senses when it's there. It's like there is something in a soul like that, that discerns in the presence of Jesus and in the person of God, that which alone can satisfy them.

Secondly, she knew she could never earn God's love. If it was going to come to her, it had to come to her freely. There was nothing she could do to qualify. On the other hand it seems to me that the problem of the Pharisee, and that's the problem of multitudes of people today, religious people, good living people, moral people, is self-righteousness. He thought that somehow he could qualify for the love of God by being good, by doing good, by observing the requirements of the law. Now I don't belittle any of those things. I think they are meritorious. I respect people who live that way, but there is just one important thing that such people need to realize, that all of us need to realize, that the love of God cannot be earned. No matter how good we may be, we don't deserve the love of God. And if we think we can deserve it, we probably never will receive it because it has to be received only by faith without deserving it, without looking to our merits, without trying to qualify for it.

And so this sinful woman entered in and this righteous, good living man apparently was excluded. What excluded him? Not God but his own righteousness.

As I continue to speak to you about this love of God which cannot be explained and which cannot be earned, I want to turn again to the Old Testament. I want to turn to what I call the Bible's great love poem. I wonder whether some of you realize that there is a love poem in the Bible. And I believe, and I've read a great deal of literature in various languages and from various cultures, I believe this is the greatest love poem that was ever written. It's called "The Song of Solomon," and it is a poem about love between a man and a woman, but interwoven with it and behind it all is a picture of yet a greater love, the love of God. And in this very, very beautiful poem, in the last chapter, chapter 8 and verse 7 this is what it says about love:

> "Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned." (NIV)

What a beautiful picture of love. "Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away." That is what Israel experienced. The Lord said to them, "When you pass through the waters, they won't wash you away because I'll be with you. My love will be with you, my love will uphold you." And then in this verse from this love poem the writer says this, "If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned." See what the message is. Love cannot be bought. There is no way that you can earn the love of

God. If you give everything you have, it's utterly contemptible as a price for the love of God. If you do all the good you could do all your life, it no where even begins to qualify you for the love of God. It cannot be earned, it cannot be bought, it has no price tag, it's priceless.

I remember a friend of mine many years ago when I was still a student. He was invited to the home of some wealthy people and by a clumsy act he knocked a jar off a table and it was smashed on the floor. And he began to stutter and stammer and say, "Oh, I'm so sorry. Is it very valuable?" And his hostess replied, "It's priceless." He had broken something that could not be replaced. Well, that is like the love of God. It's not just valuable, it's priceless. It cannot be replaced. There is nothing else that could take its place. You can't buy it. There is only way to receive it. The way that Paul spoke about through the Holy Spirit by faith. You can open your heart and receive what you can never buy or pay for, the love of God.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow I'll be sharing with you How Marriage Is a Pattern of God's Love.

Radio Program

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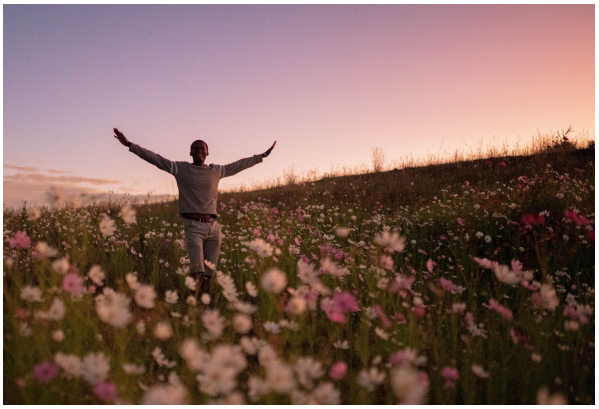

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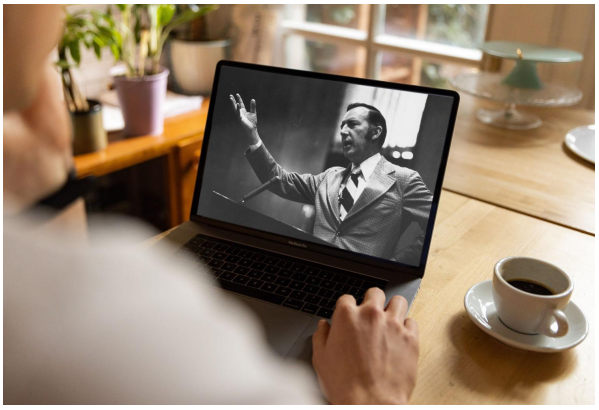

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