

Being a Person of Extravagant Devotion

I. GOD'S FIRST PRIORITY: TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL OUR HEART

³⁷ *Jesus said to him, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and great commandment."* (Mt. 22:37-38)

A. The first commandment is the primary thing with which God is concerned. That is precisely what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church worldwide.

B. ***The great commandment:*** loving God with all our heart leads to great impact. It is great in its impact on our hearts and in our ministries. Loving God ***always*** leads to loving ourselves and loving others. Therefore, it is a dynamic ***means to this end***. It always bears fruit before God.

C. ***The first commandment:*** Loving God with all our heart is the first thing to God and the prophetic Church. Loving God is a glorious ***end in itself***.

D. We must consciously carry our hearts or cultivate a spiritual atmosphere on our hearts in a way in which we are responsive to God (in the present tense) with wholehearted love.

³ *I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.* (2 Cor 11:3, NAS)

E. During the upcoming 40 day fast, we must cultivate a greater response in our heart to love God.

F. This exhortation is to validate the wisdom of a lifestyle of sustained focus of devotion to God. God esteems, remembers and rewards this, although the world calls it weak and foolish.

²⁷ *God has chosen the (so called) foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and...the (so called) weak things of the world to put to shame the... mighty...* (1 Cor. 1:27)

G. This exhortation is a call to renew our hearts to that which we know. It is common to lose our freshness in our love relationship with Jesus. This call can be jaded and subtly reduced to just language about being extravagantly devoted. Do you remember the spiritual romance when you first heard the call to extravagant devotion? The Lord wants that freshness to return to us.

¹ *I write to you this second epistle...I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder...(2 Pet. 3:1)*

H. The Church of Ephesus was a great revival center in the early Church (Acts 19-20). Yet, they lost the freshness of their love for Jesus. They became workers for God more than lovers of God. Lovers will always out work the workers. Service without the foundation of extravagant devotion leads to burn out, disappointment, and wounding. Thus, the service is not sustained over decades.

¹ *To the...church of Ephesus write, 2 "I know your works...3 you have persevered and have...labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. 4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent...or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand...* (Rev. 2:1-5)

- I. Our relationship with Jesus is one of active intimacy. It is a present tense reality. Cultivating a responsive heart of extravagant devotion to Jesus takes time and effort. It is something that we do deliberately and not something we cultivate on the run.
- J. We have many options, (option fatigue) for our career, ministries, hobbies, etc. In our pursuit of relevance, some regularly change directions in ministry without sustaining a biblical direction. We must not get our ministry focus from the latest trends in the Church. God's word is a reliable light of revelation in a dark world so that we are never guessing as to what God delights in.
- ⁷ The testimony (Word) of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; 8 the commandment (Word) of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. (Ps. 19:7-9)*
- K. People of extravagant devotion ask the Lord the right question. We must ask, "What is the most that God will enable me to give Him? We do not ask, "What is the minimum that is required of me? What can I get by with?" We desire to go beyond the minimum requirement of salvation.
- ⁹ For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him. (2 Chr. 16:9)*

II. THE EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION OF MARY OF BETHANY: FILLED WITH THE WORD

³⁸ A certain woman named Martha welcomed Him (Jesus) into her house. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." 41 Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled (bothered; NAS) about many things. 42 But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." (Lk. 10:38-42)

- A. The Holy Spirit emphasized that Mary sat at Jesus' feet to hear His Word (Lk. 10:39).
- ¹ Blessed is the man...2 (whose) delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. (Ps. 1:1-2)*
- B. The Word creates a living active dialogue with God in our hearts.
- ¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit... (Heb. 4:12)*
- C. There are three components necessary for the Word to live in us. First, the free choice of an individual to receive the Word with a spirit of obedience, faith and loving devotion. Second, the continual presence of the Word being fed to the heart (implanted in the heart) through mediation. Third, the activity of the Holy Spirit to turn meditation into living revelation.
- ²¹ Lay aside all filthiness...and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save (supernaturally deliver) your souls. (Jas 1:21)*
- ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you...ask... and it shall done. (Jn. 15:7)*

- D. Martha was distracted with much serving. Martha appealed to legitimate humanitarian needs that the Scripture commands us to serve. She was not corrected for serving but for doing it in a wrong spirit. Being distracted is not penalized, but staying distracted is after the Lord confronts it.
- E. Jesus said to Martha that one thing is needed. If the issue of extravagant devotion (active intimacy) is established in us, then all the other issues of our life in God will be in their place.
- F. Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her (Lk. 10:42). No one can choose this for us. This good way was sustained throughout her life (Dan. 1:21; 6:10; Ps. 27:4).
- G. Mary is described three times in Scripture. Each time the Holy Spirit highlights her as sitting at the feet of Jesus (Lk. 10:39; Jn. 11:32; 12:3).

³² *Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet... (Jn. 11:32)*

³ *Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. (Jn. 12:3)*

III. THE EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION OF MARY OF BETHANY: WASTING HER LIFE

³ *Being in Bethany at the house of Simon...as He sat at the table, a woman (Mary of Bethany; Jn. 12:3) came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard (perfume). She broke the flask and poured it on His head. 4 There were some who were indignant...and said, "Why was this fragrant oil wasted? 5 For it might have been sold for...300 denarii (a years wages) and given to the poor." They criticized her sharply. 6 Jesus said, "Let her alone...She has done a good work for Me...9 Wherever this gospel is preached...what this woman has done will be told as a memorial to her." (Mk. 14:3-9)*

IV. EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION TO JESUS: PICTURED BY DAVID'S MIGHTY MEN

¹³ *Three of the 30 chief men...came to David at the cave of Adullam...14 the garrison of the Philistines was then in Bethlehem. 15 David said with longing, "Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!" 16 The three mighty men broke through the camp of the Philistines, drew water from the well...and brought it to David. He would not drink it, but poured it out to the LORD. 17 He said, "Far be it from me, O LORD, that I should do this! Is this not the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?" (2 Sam. 23:13-17)*

- A. These three mighty men are a picture of the extravagant devotion that we are to have for Jesus. They "caught" the whisper of David's heart and determined to answer it. *They went far beyond the call of duty*. There were 1.3 million soldiers in David's army (2 Sam. 24:9). Yet, only three examples of devotion and valor were highlighted in Scripture (2 Sam. 23).
- B. David recognized how precious the act of devotion was. This gives us a picture of how Jesus responds to our devotion to Him. Our life goal is to stand before Him on the last day and offer ourselves to Him just as these three men offered the water to David at the expense of their lives.

V. EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION: PHINEHAS WAS FILLED WITH ZEAL FOR GOD

¹ Israel...began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. ² They (Moabite women) invited the people (Israelite men) to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people...bowed down to their gods. ³ Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel. ⁴ The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders...that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel." ⁶ One (Israelite man)...presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of...the congregation of Israel. ⁷ When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; ⁸ and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped...⁹ Those who died in the plague were 24,000. ¹⁰ The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ¹¹ "Phinehas...has turned back My wrath...he was zealous (jealous) with My zeal...so that I did not consume...Israel in My zeal. ¹² Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; ¹³ and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God..." (Num. 25:1-12)

VI. EXTRAVAGANT DEVOTION: DAVID WAS FILLED WITH ZEAL FOR GOD

⁷ Because for Your sake I have borne reproach; shame has covered my face. ⁸ I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children; ⁹ because zeal for Your house has eaten me up (consumed me NAS, NIV), and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me. ¹⁰ When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that became my reproach. ¹¹ I also made sackcloth my garment; I became a byword to them. ¹² Those who sit in the gate speak against me, and I am the song of the drunkards. (Ps. 69:7-12)