

Do You Have Expectation?

Tim Conway | illbehonest.com

Ephesians 3 will be the portion of Scripture we'll be looking at this morning. You can look with me at chapter 3:14. I might entitle this sermon, "Expectation." To those of you that are weary, maybe heavy-laden, to borrow a couple Scriptural terms; Hebrews - you've got the imagery of somebody's whose arms are hanging down. We ought to pray and not faint. Maybe some feel faint. Anyway, this message is to the weary, the distracted. I'm calling it "Expectation." Let's look at the verses, 3:14, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father..." Just a reminder, Paul is telling the Ephesians about how he prays for them. "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father." That's prayer. "...From whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." Literally, "so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith in love being rooted and grounded, that you may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

So let's just think about this a second. Notice, I want to primarily dive into v. 18. That's the primary text I want us to be absorbed with. I'll pull in the surrounding verses as may be necessary. But you notice, breadth - that's got to do with the width. Length, height, depth. We've got dimensions that are called out here. Some would argue about what breadth and length and height and depth refers to. And even before preparing to preach on this, I've come across that in the past. Some suggest these words do not refer to the love of Christ, but to something else. Because in their estimation, Paul doesn't directly say that these words apply to the love of Christ. But my question would be, well, what then do they refer to? I mean, if you just look at the context, what are the other options? What's right before it? "Being rooted and grounded in love." And as I sought to make the case last time, certainly, our own love doesn't make a good foundation. The foundation we want to be planted on is the love of Christ. And then if you go after, you go into the following verse 19, "...and to know the love of Christ." Now, I recognize that the way Paul says this is a little odd. But, think about it, what's he praying for? He's praying that we would have strength to comprehend something. Well, just in the context, what would we need strength to comprehend? The love of Christ surpasses knowledge. That's the thing being put on the table that is so difficult and takes a supernatural strengthening to comprehend. So, I think you're just left with no other options and I don't really know why anybody would want to waste their time arguing about that.

But now, you notice, he wants us to comprehend and to know. You can basically take that "and" at the beginning of v. 19 - you know, the height, the length, or the breadth, the length, the height, the depth - that's kind of additional information. Those are modifiers in there. Basically what he's saying is this: he's praying that we with all the saints would have the strength to comprehend, and then after that, just take that out. Everything else in there is a modifier. But it's to comprehend, and - you have that "and" right there, that conjunction at the beginning of v. 19, "and to know..." It's to be strengthened to comprehend and to know

something that he then immediately turns around and says is incomprehensible and unknowable. Almost contractory.

What sort of talk is that? I'll tell you this, it's the sort of talk that people who are going to live forever want to hear. You say, what do you mean? Well, it means that our Christian life all through eternity is never going to reach stagnation. That's a good thing! That's a good thing for you to know. If the love of Christ was something that we might easily measure and get our hands around and get an adequate estimation of, what? Then we'd be done. I mean, if I brought out my tape measure and I measured it, and it's 24 inches long, well, that's it. I mean, that's it. We sized it up. There it is. There's no more. Now what?

I mean, you know, as I was thinking about this, just the ideas that are put in the mind. This comes from the theology taught by Bugs Bunny. You know, as a kid, you watch people die and they float up and they sit on a cloud. Yosemite Sam - he's still angry, and he's up there and he's got the harp. And you know, you get that kind of imagery. Well, that idea of heaven is like: I don't want to go there! That's like miserable. This idea of just sitting on a cloud and that's it. Is that heavenly? In some people's minds I suppose. But listen, we are people - you know it - we are born to worship. We are born to admire. We love that. We love being impressed.

I was just talking to a brother yesterday, and he was telling me in his lost days how he was really absorbed with horror movies. Well, you know, that ought not to shock us. Many of us, when we were lost, we were absorbed with that kind of thing. And even though it's the kind of thing where you didn't really want to sometimes because it left horrible nightmares and thoughts in your mind, but there was something attractive. Why? Because we like to feel emotions. We like to feel. We're created that way. God created us to worship and you know this very well. If we're not worshiping God, we are master idolaters and we're going to find all manner of things. We love to be wowed. We love that! And listen, if you could bring out the tape measure and it's like: there it is! That's it. That's done.

Can you imagine? You size it up in this life. That's all there is. We've basically experienced the fullness of it, now we got to glory and what? Same old thing? No, that's not the way it is. See, this thing can never be reached. This thing has no limits to it. It's way beyond our comprehension every time - both now and far out into eternity. You think about that. When you've been in glory for 10 billion - not years - 10 billions ages, the beauty is it's still beyond knowledge. All knowledge! Not God's knowledge, but all of our knowledge. All the knowledge of angels, all the knowledge of men. Even eternal knowledge. There's always more to explore. I mean, the very mountain peak of this love - who's tread there? Who lives there? Not you. Not me. Not the angels. We'll never get there. That's the beauty! It's like we're climbing this mountain and Paul's praying: Go up! Climb higher! Climb higher! Even though he knows we can never reach the top. Why? Because going up it is glorious! And you don't want it to have an end. Because even if we said, well, 10 billion ages out, we're going to get there. You plant the flag on top. And here we are. We made it to the moon or we made it to the top of Everest. And now what? You look around. Man always wants to go higher. And you know that. Why? Because it's like the horror movies. You know, you watch a certain one and it's like terrifying, but the next time, you need it scarier. We always are looking for something bigger, something beyond, something more impressive.

The picture I had in my mind, you know those little plastic rulers. Home schoolers - yes, of course you do. You know the little plastic rulers that little kids have. And the thing is, we're like little children with this little plastic ruler. And we're trying to measure this thing. And Paul's saying - he's praying that we'd pull out the Hubble telescope. But you know how it is with the telescopes. Every time the new and latest version comes out and man peers out into the universe, he thinks, this is it. Isn't it amazing? Man always thinks whatever measuring device he has, that's the limit. And now we see it. The universe is this big. But then they get the bigger telescope and they look out there and they say, okay, we were wrong. Now it's this big. Well, see, that's the thing. The limit is with us. And it's like Paul wants us to put away our little ruler, and he wants us to take out the Hubble telescope and start measuring this thing. But even then, how far have we gone? With the Hubble telescope, how far do you think we've really seen? Because you know this, they're going to put up another one this year or next year. And then what we're going to see is going to blow our minds all the more. This is how this is.

Now, I really want to stop at this point. And I want to press home a reality here. Because I called this message "Expectation." We're talking about the love of Christ. I'm talking about the heart of Christianity. I'm talking about the thing that makes it worthwhile to be a Christian. You say, I thought the thing that made it worthwhile was the fact that we got to escape hell. That's just the negative. That's not the primary glory. When Jesus summed up eternal life, what did He say? He didn't say it's to miss hell. It's to know. And that's what we have here. To know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge. It's to know the true and the living God and the Christ Whom He has sent. But I want to stop here and just point something out. Paul is not telling us to do anything here. Yes, I recognize that when it comes to the word "comprehend," "know," - we can deduce things that we can be about to increase our comprehension and to increase our knowledge. I recognize that. I recognize that you can deduce something we should do, but you need to recognize that Paul isn't telling us to do anything. Paul is praying for us. He's asking God the Father to make something happen. He's not just praying; this is an inspired prayer. God is being prayed to, but it's God Himself Who is moving upon Paul to pray this way. And I want you to feel this.

Now look, Friday, my air conditioner was making this horrendous noise. All through the week, the pounding in the attic became more and more violent. And walking by the air return, such noises were coming through there that I recognized, okay, I better go deal with this. And when I opened it up, I found the blower motor was busted. The squirrel cage fan was busted. So I took them out and we haven't had air conditioning since then. I know this is a lowly illustration, but I want to try to bring something out here. My air conditioner - it's broken. I ran over to Grainger, OEM Motors, I couldn't get it there. So, David Luciano works for John Wayne Air Conditioning. And so, I looked into them. I had them come out and give me a quote. The main reason I had them come give me a quote is because David works there. And he thought that perhaps he could get a discount for me because I'm his pastor.

Now, I want to use this example and I want to focus in on level of expectation. Just think with me here because I'm going somewhere with this. If David didn't work there and I still thought, okay, I'm going to call John Wayne. I'm going to get a quote from them. What would my expectation level be of getting a good deal? Getting a discount? Low. Very low. But the thing is, to have somebody that I know has an "in" and is going to plead my case? What happens to your

expectation? It goes up. And it is. I'm like what can David do for me? So, yes, it goes up. But, if I heard that the owner of the company personally came to David and he told David, "David..." David communicated this to me when I was asking about this. If he would have said, hey, you know what? My boss - the guy that owns the company - actually came to me six months ago and he told me that he has a real burden for pastors, and he especially wants to try to help pastors. And he instructed David, "Make sure if your pastor ever has a need, I'm determined to help him." Now, if I heard that, what do you think would happen to my expectation? It'd go up. But if even more than that, the owner of John Wayne said, "David, I want you to know this, that if your pastor ever needs help, I'm going to help him according to the riches of the glory of my company and my wealth. And David, if you ever have to come to me and ask me for help for your pastor, I want you to ask me and remind me of that very reality that I told you, I encouraged you to come ask me that way - according to these riches." And then, my expectation is going to go even higher. But if on top of all that, I found out the guy that owns this thing is a billionaire, and the riches of his glory are untold, unfathomable - what then?

See, you have to recognize this. Paul isn't just praying this. Paul's under inspiration. God told him, "Paul, pray this way, and I want you to plead the riches of My glory. I want you to do that. Paul, when you see that God's people need to have their perception and comprehension of the love of My Son to them increased, I want you to ask Me on their behalf. Paul, I'm inspiring you to come and plead based on the riches of My glory. Do not come and ask less than that."

You see what I'm driving at here? Brethren, in the weeks ahead, I want to explore the love of Christ. But I know this, if we attempt to look in these coming weeks - we look and admire - we attempt to - and delve into the love of Christ, and you know what? If six months from now it's like you don't even remember what I was preaching on back in June, you're left unaffected, you're left dry, you're left still feeling like "I need revival," you're left distant, you're left cold, you're left calloused, you're left unmoved - you know what? That would be like a billionaire promising the most astounding air conditioning system that money could buy - something so magnificent as to give expression to the glory of his riches and the glory of his kindness, but in the end I'm left feeling unimpressed. I'm left with a unit out there that's unimpressive and average. You know what? It's unimpressive and average when we talk about the love of Christ for people to yawn; for people to think about what they're doing in the afternoon. It's unimpressive and average for our church to look at the love of Christ over a number of weeks and then determine that movies are better. That's unimpressive. What I'm saying here is, look, if God Himself said, "Paul, I want you to pray according to the riches of My glory for them to be strengthened to comprehend the love of Christ," does that sound unimpressive and average?

And see, this is an appeal to God. If I said, well, you know what this is really about; you know what Paul's teaching here. Paul's teaching that we really have to strive. Now, I'm not saying that we shouldn't really strive. We do need to really strive, but that's not the point of the text. The point of the text is that God is being appealed to to give us according to the riches of His glory. And you know what? If people are going to prefer sports, or they're going to prefer the movie, or they're going to prefer their hobby, or they're going to prefer some other thing, the truth is that's normal. That's man left to his own strength. Is that an indication of the riches of the glory of God to comprehend much more the dimensions of the love of Christ? I mean, certainly, we would expect something impressive and life-changing.

Listen! If God answers this prayer, what would you expect? What are your expectations? You say, "I don't really have any." I'm saying look at this prayer and have an expectation! Listen! If God is telling Paul to pray for you and to pray not some meager little thing, but to ask God and beseech Him, "Father, according to the riches of Your glory, make this happen." I would expect more than four weeks down the road here, we're all basically unaffected. Well, we're just the same as we were four weeks ago or six weeks ago. Because then that's like, "Father, why? Why did You put this here?" We may say, well, we didn't pray it. Well, I've been praying it. And I'll continue to pray it. And Paul prayed it. I mean if we get down the road and that happens, Lord, why would You stir Paul to pray this way and in inspired fashion, unless You truly mean to give us what's being talked about here? This is a prayer for God to do something. It's in the song. We're praying, "God, revive us again." This is the heart of revival. This is where it is. It always has been. When revival comes, what is it that happens to God's people? There's an awareness of God. There is an awareness of His love for His people. Will you be content, brethren, to be unmoved? To be untouched? To not be strengthened? I would say God forbid that that should happen.

You know what? You know what came to my mind? I read in Scripture that the heavens - the heavens - we are told in Psalm 8, it is the work of God's finger. I asked myself this question: Does that sound like it exhausted the riches of God's glory when it's the work of His finger? Oh, it declares His handiwork. It declares something of His glory. But it's the work of His finger. When I hear "according to the riches of His glory," to me, that sounds bigger. If I went in my backyard and I did some work with my fingers, does that reflect the riches of the glory of who I am? Paul wasn't asking that we be strengthened according to the work of God's finger, but asking to be strengthened according to the entire riches of God's glory. That makes me think something greater than the universe. This really ought to give us an expectation that God will do something. I have it.

Shall we be content to be confronted with all of this? Are you content to just remain unchanged? Listen, you may be weary and you may be heavy-laden, you may be tired, exhausted, your arms may be hanging down, you may be discouraged, depressed, but is there an ache? Are you just willing to be content with that? Or can you look at a promise and does the Spirit of God give you some hope? Yes. Yes, there is a promise here. What I want you to do is I want you to have your expectations raised. Like, Lord, if You said this, You mean it. And I'm going to hold You to it. And I'm going to keep reminding You of this until I get this. I mean, what do you think God wants us to think when the riches of His glory are put on the table as the ground of all this? You think He wants you to be content? You should ask yourself that question. I would say no.

If we get a month down the road and basically nothing happens - we can't even remember what was preached, what shall we say? I mean, yes, we can say the problem is with us. Yes, we can say that. I mean, brethren, that is exactly what Paul is praying about here. We're weak. And we need to be strengthened. I recognize the problem is with us. I recognize the problem lies in our weakness. But you see, that's the very thing Paul is praying is that our weakness would be strengthened. Yes, our weakness is the issue. But the expectation is that God will do something to overcome our weakness. Are you feeling lethargic? Yes, but that's why you need strength. Or do you feel like you need revival? Yes. Do you feel cold? Listen, maybe

some of you are kind of riding a high spot in your Christian life, but listen, wherever you're at, there's infinite depths to explore beyond where you are. You don't want to be content. Not at all. This is the prayer. He will intervene and come and strike power into our weakness and give us comprehension at a level that we would otherwise never have if He doesn't come and deal with us according to the riches of His glory. That's the issue. Yes, we're weak. Yes, we're perhaps dull. We're forgetful. Oh, we are forgetful. Because you know what? I've had past seasons in my Christian life that were wonderful, that were glorious, and that were up there on the plateau. But I know two things, one, we're very forgetful - we forget about how glorious it was - but two, we don't live too well on yesterday's manna. We don't live well on yesterday's revival. We need it today. We need fresh things today. Yes, we're slow. Yes, we're far too content to spend our time in the lowlands paddling around the edges of the ocean when there's such things to be discovered that we've never imagined.

The question is this: I ask you, do you expect God to help us? To come and empower? Do you embrace this with a determination to have God do what He undoubtedly is promising to do? He wouldn't have put this prayer in His Word if it wasn't His desire to give us a hope that He intends to do something with regards to it.

Now, look at verse 18. Do you see the word "comprehend?" "That you may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth..." The word "comprehend," like I said before, in an off-handed way, he's praying that the Spirit would strengthen us so that we might comprehend. Obviously, we are not left in a place where we're just passive. This implies something. But he's praying that the Spirit of God would so blow upon the people of God that we would be strengthened for this to happen.

Comprehend. What's the word? It has a prefix: kata, which brings intensity to it. It's to grasp with force. To comprehend. To lay hold of. The idea here is to seize, to acquire with significant effort. So let's try to grasp Christ's love with an effort that at least looks somewhat significant. We know. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." And on the other side of the coin, "it's God Who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure." We can trust God to do this, but we need to be putting ourselves in the place for this to happen. (Incomplete thought)

Charles Leiter - this undoubtedly is in one of his books, but I just remember him telling me about how Mona visited some of these Welsh folks where Martyn Lloyd-Jones used to vacation. And they lived in this farm. They got their power from water that flowed off the mountain and turned a generator. They got their power, but sometimes their power would go out. What would happen? Well, limbs and garbage would collect in there. And right before the generator was a screen, and so this stuff would come down pushed by the torrent of water and it would collect there on this grating. And if it impeded the flow? No power. No electricity. No flow beyond that point. And so they'd have to go out and pull the stuff off.

Charles talks about that as being a good illustration of the Christian life - keeping those channels open. There's things that clog the screen. Putting ourselves in an optimal position to be visited by the Lord. Perhaps there's things in your life that you know they're impeding the flow; they're grieving the Spirit; they're quenching the Spirit. James just this morning was telling me about a covenant - reminding me - he'd told me before, that he made concerning a certain thing in his life. Brother Craig just the other day was talking about earlier back in January just

making a determination about something. You know, some of us - and I've been at those points - where it's just like you get aggravated with something and you recognize it's impeded your Christian life long enough. And you say no more! I don't want that anymore! Lord, I'm done with it. For good. You want to be careful when you begin to make vows before the Lord. Be careful. But I know that. I know that inner feeling when you've had it with something that has been a distraction to you for too long. What is it? What's impeding? See, we want to put ourselves in the place where God is most likely to break through. We don't want to be grieving Him. We want to try to comprehend the love of Christ. Get the distractions out. If you really want to climb this mountain, because this is what will fuel everything - you're rooted and grounded in this love. You're overcome by this.

I remember years ago when I preached on this, and I think I got this actually from something John Piper said. But you know, when you're filled with the fullness of God and you're overwhelmed by the love of Christ for you, you don't easily go out and have sex with your neighbor's wife. That might be an exaggerated way to put it, but you get the reality. You don't easily go have an argument with your own wife. You don't easily just go off into sin. Because there is something about the love of Christ that is compelling and constraining. It constrains us. It's hard to be melted by the kind of love we're going to look at in the weeks ahead and then just to say, you know, I think I'm going to go get drunk. Or, well, that's nice, but after all, "Lord of the Rings" is better than that. You don't do that. This love of Christ has an influence.

Well, I'm going to give you some examples here just to kind of prime the pump. But before I give you some of those, the Song of Solomon - this came up Friday night. Somebody said - Zach said, Song of Solomon - allegory? Oh, I think so. Listen to the Song. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, for Your love is better than wine." See, that's the thing. His love is better. Better than... you can fill in the blank. But it's better. It's not better if you don't experience it. If it's just theory, if it's just dry doctrine, there's a lot of things better than that. If all we do is get into dictionary definitions of agape and phileo and we start sorting through all that, well, yeah, there's a lot of things better than that study if all it is is dry academics. "Your love is better than wine." People talk that way when they're being overwhelmed by that love. Not just when it's a theory. Not when you open the textbook and it's like, okay, today we're going to study agape love. That's not what people mean when they say, oh, their love is better than wine. And you just think about Jesus coming and what in the world was He trying to say to the world when His first miracle was actually to turn water into wine? It speaks something of this Christ.

The question is this: Can you say that to the Lord? Your love is better than wine, or whatever else you want to fill in to the blank. I mean the real question is how much do we know of this? Is this real to you? Has it ever been real to you? When's the last time you felt your heart quickened? Oh, I know, there's been seasons longer and shorter. I know what it is to be studying the Word of God, and I'll tell you this, you want to put yourself in the right position to be overwhelmed? You want to get the garbage off the grating? Then exchange a lot of things that you do in your life for getting into the Scriptures more often and more deeply. One of the things that we all need to recognize is this: Paul does not offer this prayer in a vacuum. Do you recognize that the people that were listening to this heard chapter 1 and chapter 2 just moments before this? God's people typically almost always, they're overwhelmed by expressions of the love of God while meditating deeply in the Word. And if you think about this, chapter 1 and the

beginning of chapter 2 is largely about the love of the Father. It's really going through chapter 2 - Ephesians 2, as you move through this chapter, it's really about verse 13 where the love of Christ comes in. That doesn't mean that nothing's said about Christ before this. There's lots of references to Christ, but it's mainly what the Father is doing. It's here where we're brought near by the blood of Christ. He shed His blood. He Himself - that's Christ - is our peace. Christ has made us - Jew and Gentiles - both one. Christ has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility. Christ has abolished the law of commandments expressed in ordinances. Christ creates in Himself one new man in place of the two. Christ makes peace. Christ reconciles us both to God in one body through the cross. Christ kills the hostility. Christ came and preached peace. V. 18, through Christ we have access in one Spirit to the Father. You see, this is what's been talked about.

What I find is this, historically, when I find men and women who have really, they're living in a sense of the riches, their minds are being strengthened. These little rulers? They're our brains. If you're going to exchange that little ruler for the Hubble telescope, that's your brain. That's comprehension. That's what's being talked about here. Comprehension. Paul prays this prayer after he's been telling us these expressions of the love of Christ. It doesn't come in a vacuum. It comes in Scripture. If you are neglecting Scripture and continue neglecting Scripture, you're giving a great indication that you really have no desire for this. You can't say, God, please, I bend my knee before the Father to ask You, please Father, according to the riches of Your glory, please strengthen this church. And then if the church goes on no more committed to Scripture, then we're not really taking this serious.

Look, I'm not talking about in theory knowing that Christ loves His people. Or even in theory, trying to convince yourself Christ loves you. That's not it. I know this. I know that some of the greatest expressions of God speaking to my own soul - I'm pondering Scripture; meditating on it, and I recognize, when you're preaching week in and week out, speaking Tuesday, Thursday, Sunday, and in the Word all the time - I recognize that if you're preaching, you have an advantage for being in the Word. There was a time when I wasn't a preacher. And I know that you can stay in the Word regularly. You can be in it a half hour, 45 minutes, or an hour every single day. And you should be. There's been times when I've been sitting in my office and I'm looking, and suddenly, something happens. I mean, I am overcome by suddenly as the truth of something, I'm beginning to realize it, it's as though the Spirit of God just pours the reality, the riches, the joy, the love of it to where I can hardly contain it, I have to fall out of my chair. But see, the point is, it's in connection with the Word. It's in connection with the truth. It's in connection with studying the expressions of love. See, this is the thing: love. Love.

It was Peter Marshall - you guys know who that was? Scottish preacher. He was actually in the Congress as a chaplain. But I think it was Peter Marshall who said this, that love is like the fragrance from a flower. Who can dissect that? Lloyd-Jones said all you can do is say certain things about it. That's just as far as you can go. And typically when we talk about love, we look at what it does. I mean, we can try to talk about agape, and we can try to define love, but typically what you're left with is what it does. That's what impresses us about love. What bowls me over and causes me to fall out of my seat is not some dry theory about the different nuances of the four Greek words that could be interpreted love. That's not it. It's what He's done for me who does not deserve any of it. It's that personal - we're not just talking about

comprehending that Christ is loving. We're talking about comprehending His love for you. That's the issue.

Listen to this. Thomas Charles. This guy - a Welsh non-conformist. He studied under John Newton. He says, "I had such a view of Christ as our High Priest..." Now, you probably need to stop right there. That ought to tell you something. He was meditating on Christ as a High Priest. He said, "I had such a view of Christ as our High Priest, of His love, compassion, power, all-sufficiency, as filled my soul with astonishment, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. My mind was overwhelmed and overpowered with amazement. The truths exhibited..." See, that's the thing. Truth. We're talking about experiences buried in the truth of Scripture. "The truths exhibited to my view appeared too wonderfully gracious to be believed."

Howell Harris. Another famous Welsh preacher of the First Great Awakening. Contemporary with Whitefield. Daniel Rowland. William Williams. He says this, "Love fell in showers on my soul so that I could scarcely contain myself. I had no fear or any doubt of my salvation. I felt I was all love. So full of it that I could not ask for more."

William Grimshaw. Seems like James spoke to us - gave us a biographical sketch on Grimshaw. He was another Methodist contemporary of John Wesley. He says, "I expect my stay on earth will be but short." I think there was a typhus epidemic. And he died one year older than I am right now. "I expect my stay on earth will be but short, and I will endeavor to make the best of a short life and so devote my soul to God as not to go creeping to heaven at the last." Don't you like that? May God help none of us to creep into heaven. Kevin, don't creep into heaven. And even if your life is cut short, live while you have life. No creeping. Church, don't creep! "His soul at various times enjoyed very large manifestations of God's love. His cup ran over. Higher degrees of spiritual delight would have overpowered his mortal frame."

George Whitefield. "I myself was so overpowered with a sense of God's love that it almost took away my life."

Sarah Edwards. "It seemed to be all that my feeble soul could sustain. All that fullness of joy which is felt by those who behold the face of Christ and share His love in the heavenly world."

Moody Stewart. Christian from the 1800's. I couldn't find out much on him. "When we were on our knees, I was so filled with a sense of the love of God that the joy was too much for me. It was all that I was able to bear, and it was with a struggle that I did not sink under it. It was a gracious outflowing of the love of the Lord Jesus making His servant sick of love." You say, "sick of love?" That's an expression from the Song of Solomon. Sick of love. May God according to the riches of His glory teach you what that expression means.

John Owen. "To give a poor, sinful soul a comfortable persuasion affecting it throughout in all its faculties and affections that God in Jesus Christ loves him, delights in him, is well pleased with him, have thoughts of tenderness and kindness towards him, to give a soul an overflowing sense hereof is an inexpressible mercy." And it may be. But inexpressible mercies in my estimation are right in league with: according to the riches of His glory.

D.L. Moody. Chicago. Actually, on this day, he was in New York City. "Day and night he would walk the streets desperate for the touch of God's power in his life, then suddenly, one day in the city of New York, oh, what a day! I cannot describe it. I seldom refer to it. It's almost too

sacred an experience to name. I can only say that God revealed Himself to me and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand."

You know what Lloyd-Jones said about all this? He said above all, you have to experience it. Because hearing these, I don't know about you, but if you all came in and said, "God has taught us, brother. God has taught us. God came. There's a revival in the church. What you asked for that Sunday there in June, that God would teach us what it means to be sick of love, He's taught me." And if all of you said it, and God passed me by... I know Scripture says rejoice with those who rejoice, but I can tell you, I would weep. And I would go out of here weeping. Because the truth is that love experienced by others does not satisfy your soul. And God doesn't intend it to.

What does it say in Jude about the love of God? "Keep yourself in the love of God." That doesn't mean keep yourself saved. Like Andy Hamilton says, keeping yourself in a sensible sense of God's love for you. What foolish people we are in light of these kinds of realities to be content. Our foolishness is found in our contentment with the things of this world. You know what? It is really foolish to be content to be an average Christian when there's promises like this.

Now, I'll say this, experiencing deeper and deeper and deeper revelations of the love of Christ is being prayed for. It ought to raise your expectation. And listen, it's for all Christians. Not all people - don't get me wrong there. It's for all Christians. Look at verse 18. It couldn't be more clear. "That you may have strength to comprehend," with who? "All the saints." Not the particularly godly ones. Not the early first century Christians. Not the apostles. That's not what it says. It's all saints. Look, of course, the man who is not a Christian can't experience these things. Why? Jesus Himself said His Father was going to send another Comforter - the Spirit of Truth - Whom the world cannot receive. You see, the world can't receive the Spirit. The Spirit is the One that Paul is praying would strengthen us that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. Strengthen us to comprehend. They don't have that. But if you're a saint, you could be the least - Jesus talked about those people, right? The least of My brothers. You can be the least, but this is for you. The least Christian can be brought in and overwhelmed by a comprehension of this love of Christ. Brethren, is there an ache? Is there a desire? Is there anything in you that wants this? Or are you just going to be content? I'm praying, Lord, sick of love. Teach us. Men and women have walked before us. They almost couldn't handle it.

Lord willing, in the weeks ahead, I want to begin to look into the depths of this with whatever ability God gives to me. We want to really start thinking about His love. Trying to grasp, trying to get a feel, trying to absorb the doctrine and hopefully in the midst of that, God is going to cause some expansion in our comprehension and in our knowledge and in our experience. I'm hoping for glory.

Father, please, You've promised. You've promised, Father, and if we are six weeks, eight weeks down the road and nothing happens and it's just average and it's unimpressive, Father, You stirred Paul to pray according to the riches of Your glory. Father, will it not be a testimony to the riches of Your glory if nothing happens? Father, by inspiring Paul to pray this way have You not put Your own name at stake here? Are You going to leave us the same? Lord, we recognize in this prayer there's an acknowledgement of our weakness. Otherwise, we wouldn't have to be strengthened. It doesn't say we're already strong. It said therefore we should comprehend this according to the strength that we have. Paul's praying that we would be

strengthened obviously because we don't possess right now what we should possess or need to possess, must possess to be able to grasp these things. That means You have to give us something. Lord, we know this, that even if we tried and put forth our best effort to not grieve the Spirit and remove all the stuff on the grating, to allow this power to flow, Lord, if You don't come; if You don't help; if You don't enlarge; if You don't speak; if You don't give us comprehension; if You don't stretch us, then nothing will happen. Lord, we need You. We need You to help. And we ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ Whose love it is that we're taken up with.
Amen.