

Prayerfully Pursuing God's Gracious Power and Loving Presence

Ryan Fullerton | *2017 Fellowship Conference*

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What an unbelievable privilege to get to be with you tonight, and to get to open up God's Word to us. I want to invite you to open to three places in the Scriptures this evening, and to place your finger if you would in each of those places, and we'll read them consecutively.

All three passages have this in common: That God wants to fill the temple. He wants to fill His temple with His Holy Spirit.

The first passage would be Exodus 40:34. Exodus 40:34 The next passage you'll want to put your finger on after Exodus 40:34 is 1 Kings 8:10-11. . And then our passage this evening: Ephesians 3:14-21 And in each of these passages God fills His temple with inexpressible glory. Exodus 40 The second book of the Bible. The people of God are delivered out of slavery in the first half of the book. The second half of the book is the people build a temple. And we'll actually read from v. 33. "Next Moses set up the surrounding courtyard for the tabernacle and the altar, and hung a screen for the gate of the courtyard.

So Moses finished the work. The cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses was unable to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud rested on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." It may be time to get a little more technical. You'll notice what Moses built was called the tabernacle. It was a tent of meeting.

Now here in 1 Kings 8, a more solid structure: the temple has been built by King Solomon. And when that temple is complete, we read this words in 1 Kings 8:10. "When the priests came out of the holy place, the cloud filled the Lord's temple, and because of the cloud, the priests were not able to continue ministering, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple."

Now, Ephesians 3:14, and perhaps if you know the book of Ephesians, you remember that in Ephesians 2 we're told over and over that the people of God are now the temple of God. The Jews and Gentiles. Blacks and whites. Latinos and Africans. People from all over the world are now the temple of the Holy Spirit. And so it shouldn't surprise us that Paul would pray like this in Ephesians 3:14-21. "For this reason, I kneel before the Father, from Whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. I pray that He may grant you to be strengthened with power in your inner being through His Spirit and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you being rooted and firmly established in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width height and depth of God's love, and to know Christ's love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with the fullness of God. Now to Him Who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever." And all God's people said: Amen.

Let's pray.

Lord God, when we think of the way You have descended upon Your people. In the book of Exodus; in the

days of Solomon; in the early days of the church; in times of revival... Lord God, we tremble and are aware that You are capable of doing so much more than we've seen yet. Lord, we have read on this book table, some of us, about what You've done through our fathers. Lord God, we want to ask You, Lord that we too would experience what so many have experienced, that is, a flooding; an outpouring of Your Holy Spirit. Not because we're worthy. Not because we're ready. But because You are gracious. Lord, we pray that You would do this; and I want to pray Lord God that You would use me to stir up Your people to pray. But Lord, I pray that You would rouse Yourself to answer our prayers. Lord, we plead with You that You might give us a heart for Your Word, and that You might give us the fullness of Your Spirit tonight. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

This prayer of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2 is immediately attractive, isn't it? You don't need a sermon to be persuaded that you would like to know more about how deep and how high and how wide and how long is the love of Christ. As the deer pants for the water, so the Christian's soul pants for God. We are a people who long for God. And you know there are many Christians in our day that are very depressed. And because of their depression, they can get the idea that they're not Christians at all. When in fact, the kind of depression they have is uniquely Christian. They want more of God. They long for more of His presence; more of His power. They have in their heart the words of the psalmist when he said, "Seek His power and His presence continually." This prayer of the Apostle Paul teaches us how to pray for more of God's power and for more of God's presence. It comes to us and it speaks to us, inviting us into more of the experience of the living God. Some people are nervous about experiential religion. I'm nervous of not having experiential religion.

The New Testament's Christianity is a Christianity you experience. It's one where your heart is born again. A new Spirit is given to you where new passions are fueled in your soul and new longings are awakened in the deepest core of your being that will not be satisfied until you see the goodness of God in the land of the living. It's not for no reason that the Lord Jesus Christ tells us, "Blessed are the pure in heart; they shall see God." And Christians say, "Oh Lord, purify my heart. I want to see God." Amen?

This passage walks us through praying for a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Now, some of us get into a rut where we think, you know, it was glorious that God revived the church in Korea. And wasn't it amazing that Whitefield and Edwards were filled with God's Spirit. And wasn't it wonderful that God aroused students at Wheaton in the middle of the last century! Isn't it amazing that God has poured out His Spirit continually through the history of the church. That's so wonderful to have on a book in your library. I like reading it, but I like it reading it too much not to want to experience. My heart aches to experience more of God's Spirit. And if you're a person like that who thinks that's never going to happen today, maybe we should just start with v. 20-21. It's interesting to have these famous verses put back into context, isn't it? Right after praying that we would know how deep and how high and how wide is the love of Christ, and to know the love of God that surpasses knowledge, Paul now commits us to the God Who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us, To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus - and now watch these three words: to all generations. Even this one. Oh Lord, would You do exceedingly, abundantly more than all we ask or imagine in this generation?

My goal tonight - I kind of have two goals: My first goal is sort of the at-the-least goal. At the least, Lord, would You create a prayer movement for a greater outpouring of Your Holy Spirit?

My second goal which can only be accomplished by the living God Himself - so can the first one, but... in

a special way the second one. Would You do it tonight? I want to show you three things from this passage. The reason. The strength. And the experience. The reason. The strength. And the experience. By the reason, I mean the reason this prayer was prayed. Why did Paul pray this particular prayer? What moved him? What got his heart; inflamed his mind so that he prayed this prayer? It says in v. 14, “For this reason, I kneel before the Father...” So what’s the reason? What moved him? Because if we know what moved him, then we hope that if we have the same Spirit, it will move us. And Paul tells us there’s a reason for what he prays. So what is it?

Well, it’s probably not a bad place to start if you’re looking for the reason to look at v. 13. And in v. 13, he says, “So then, I ask you not to be discouraged over my afflictions on your behalf. For they are your glory.” So it could be that the Apostle Paul is saying, hey, listen, I’m being afflicted. He tells them earlier he’s in jail. He says I’m being afflicted. Don’t be discouraged. And since I don’t want you to be discouraged, for this reason, I’m going to pray that you’d know the love of God. Well, that would work. It’s not a bad interpretation. I don’t think it’s the right one. But it wouldn’t be theologically off. I think that in order to understand the reason the Apostle Paul is giving for this prayer, you need to understand that preachers in every generation have been the same - even when they are filled with the Holy Spirit. They love rabbit trails. Would you look at Ephesians 3:1? Where in Ephesians 3:1 it says, “For this reason...” And if you have an ESV, I believe, or an NIV, there’s a long dash. For this reason (long dash)... Or I believe in the NASB, it says something like, For this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles... (long dash). Somewhere in there, the translators have inserted a long dash. Why? It’s the best the translators could do to indicate to you that the Apostle Paul was going on a rabbit trail. Here’s the gist of the rabbit trail. I’m going to try to make this quick. He says, “For this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, on behalf of you Gentiles...” Then he goes, whoa, whoa, whoa... I just mentioned that I’m a prisoner. That’s going to discourage them. And so then he spends v. 2-13 saying don’t worry that I’m a prisoner. It’s just what God called me to do to get all the Gentiles to saving faith. So, don’t worry, v. 13, I ask you not to be discouraged over my afflictions on your behalf, for they are your glory. So here’s the logic of the passage. For this reason, I’m a prisoner. And then he goes, oh, whoa, whoa, I better explain why I’m a prisoner. Then he explains it. And then in v. 14, he comes back to his original thought and he says, “For this reason...” Ok, I still haven’t told you what the reason is. The reason is not just above v. 14. The reason is just above ch 3, v. 1. And the reason is that Jews and Gentiles are now together the temple of the living God. And so if you pick it up for me in v. 17 of chapter 2, “He (that is Jesus) came and proclaimed good news of peace to you who are far away (referring to the Gentiles) and peace to those of you who were near (referring to the Jews) for through Him, we both, Jew and Gentile have access in one Spirit to the Father, so then you are no longer foreigners and strangers.” He’s saying you Gentiles are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household.

Now listen, here comes the temple language. “...built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus as the Cornerstone, in Whom the whole building being built together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him, you also are being built together for God’s dwelling in the Spirit...” For this reason, I’m going to pray that you be filled with how deep and how high and how wide is the love of Christ. This book has one author. And He wrote Exodus, and He wrote 1 Kings, and He wrote Ephesians. And He’s able to weave themes over thousands of years together perfectly. It’s not an accident that when Paul tells people they are the temple, that then He begins to think, I want you filled with the unbelievable Holy Spirit of God. And so this evening, as I look out over white

faces and brown faces and yellow faces and black faces... can't we say together, that God has taken Jews and Gentiles, people from all over the world, and made them into His temple. And that we together are being built up into a spiritual house where the Holy Spirit will dwell? That's what moves Paul to pray.

Do you understand who the church is? The church is where God dwells. You know, sometimes people will sell you expensive vacation packages to Israel, so you can go to the holy land and see the temple mount. And I won't lie, I'd love to go to Israel and see the holy land and see the temple mount. But it wouldn't be more impressive than the smallest gathering of Christians in a local church. Because that is the temple of God. That is where God's Spirit dwells. That moves Paul to pray. And first he prays for the strength.

Notice his first prayer request. So "for this reason, I kneel before the Father Whom every family (Jew and Gentile) in heaven and on earth is named. I pray that He may grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power in your inner being through His Spirit." This is the greatest need of the Christian. Strength on the inside. We spend so much time thinking about strength from the outside. If you can just get all the people around you to dress perfectly modestly, then you won't lust. If you can just get all your kids in the perfect schooling system, then they won't fall away. If you can just get all the externals; if you can go gluten-free and everything-free and free-free, then you'll finally eat clean. If you can just get the externals right, then finally we'll be holy. But the Bible starts a very different way. It cares about modesty. It even cares about food. Even cares about all the things that we do externally, but it never starts there. It starts with strength of the inner being. And isn't that the very thing that every Christian in this room knows consciously they need more of? We need a heart attitude change so that we're not caustic and bitter and hateful and mean and unforgiving. It's easy to keep your words clean around the right people. It's impossible to get your heart full of sweet thoughts rather than cussing thoughts, without God's help. And so Paul begins to pray that they would be strengthened with power in their inner being through His Spirit.

Now beloved, we often forget what we're dealing with in the Christian life. We are not dealing with the power of your resolve. We are not dealing with: if you read enough missionary biographies maybe then you'll really, really want to be like one and you'll manage to wake up and not hit your snooze alarm times. And read your Bible for three hours. No, that's not what we're dealing with. We're not dealing with resolve. Resolve is vital, but only when it is empowered by the all powerful... (technical difficulties) We're dealing with the all powerful Holy Spirit of God. The One Who made the world. The One Who empowered all of Jesus' miracles. The One Who empowered His perfect life is the same Spirit that can help mothers not yell at their children; singles not pursue marriage out of a craven desire not to be lonely. It's the same Holy Spirit that can empower us to walk in purity even though every billboard in America were covered in pornography. The Spirit has power to make us holy. But some of you will be here saying, but Ryan, you do not understand how sinful I've been. And not just how sinful I've been before I was a Christian, but you don't understand how sinful I've been since I've been a Christian. I have a hard time reading my Bible. I have a hard time praying. I get angry. I get irritable. When I'm serving ice cream, I make sure I get the biggest portion with the people I like the most. You don't know me. You don't know the depths of continual warfare against sin. And so when you talk about strength for the inner man, it's like water off a duck's back for me. It's not going to apply to me. I'm not going to get that.

Notice something here in the text: "I pray that He may grant you according to riches of His glory..." Don't

rush over that. That's one of those Bible words: "riches of His glory..." You just think Paul slipped into preacher talk. "According to the riches of His glory..." You don't think it's anything really powerful for you. But riches of His glory is best understood from back in chapter 1:5-6. Go back there and look at that. "He predestined us to be adopted as sons, through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace that He lavished on us in the Beloved One. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace."

Do you see that here? In v. 6, we have glorious grace. In v. 7, we have riches of His grace. And then over in chapter 3, Paul talks about how we have to be strengthened according to the riches of His glory. Well, I'm just here to tell you they all mean the same thing. Riches of His grace. Riches of His glory. Glorious grace. What he's saying is I want you to be strengthened with the Spirit according to the same grace that comes to us in the cross. According to the same grace that chapter 1 says forgives all of our sins. According to the same grace that redeems us. According to the same grace that we were predestined for and was lavished on us not in ourselves, but in the Beloved One. So whatever depths of sin struggle you've had till this point in your Christian life, we are not here to say, "Lord, I've worked really hard. Now I need the big stuff from the Holy Spirit." We're not here to pray that. We're here to ask for power according to grace. According to: you don't deserve it. Which means that the weakest Christian here - the one who's just looking around thinking everybody's holier than me - should be putting their finger on it going it's according to grace. This getting power - it's according to grace. Then if it's according to grace, then it's for me. And if anything's keeping you from thinking it's for you, by grace, it's the devil. Because the Lord is saying to believers, I have power for those who need grace. That's incredible.

Now I want you to notice something. That when Paul prays for deeper spiritual experience, he doesn't start with the experience. He starts with obedience. Why is Paul praying for you to have strength in your inner man by the Spirit? It's so you'd obey God. It's so you'd have strength.

A few weeks back, I preached a sermon that was really born out of some repentance in my life. God had been calling me to repent of some ways I was treating my wife, and to care for her better. And he began to bring Hebrews 12 home to me in a very powerful way: how God disciplines His children. And I was getting disciplined, and my wife was getting encouraged. Because that's what wives do when their husbands get disciplined and they're taking it. Amen, brother. So, she's getting encouraged. And I preached on Hebrews 12. And God took the sermon in a unique way. And Christy was there to say to me, you see that - you were repenting; God was empowering. You see that? You were repenting. God was empowering. And about a week later, I'm thinking Lord, You just used that sermon so much last week. That's so amazing. Lord, would You empower me, empower me, help me, help me, empower me... Christy called me while I was studying and says to me, "How are you doing?" I'm ok. I'm praying for power. She's like, "Oh yeah?" She said maybe instead of praying for power - and I'm saying this as your sister in Christ - you should keep repenting. She was exactly right. When Paul moves towards praying for the temple to experience how deep and how high and how wide is the love of Christ, he starts with praying that you'd actually have power to obey. Because God does not pour out His Holy Spirit on a disobedient church so that they can have a sort of spiritual joy ride in the midst of their disobedience. But He pours out His Spirit to empower the church for obedience, and then He also increases their experience. Do you see that? He prayed, "for this reason..." "I pray that you'd be strengthened with power in your inner being..." According to grace, strengthened with power, in your

being, so that - let's look at this: v. 17, "so that Christ might dwell in your hearts through faith."

Now, some of you are theologians. You're going wait a second, Christ already dwells in the heart of the believer. What's Paul doing praying that Christ would dwell in the heart of a believer when Christ already dwells in the heart of every believer? Well, the word here is *katoikesai*. And it's a word that actually means "to settle down." He's not asking Christ to move in for the first time. He's asking for Christ to settle down. And one person has illustrated it this way: How many of you have ever moved into a fixer-upper? Anyone ever move into a fixer-upper? A few people have done that. So you move in there and it's just got the layout you want. And then the lime green shag carpet in the bathroom? And someone thought it was a good idea to put wood paneling in the basement at one point in time. So we'd like to change a few things. And do you begin to renovate the living room. And then you begin to renovate the kitchen. And then you begin to renovate the bathroom, and pretty soon you're like, this is home. This is my place. I feel comfortable in every room. That's what Jesus does with us. He moves in. He's comes around the wallet. Circles the wallet. Deals with the wallet. Comes around the bedroom. Says listen, there's one place you're supposed to be drunk, and that's your wife. No one else. Comes into the living room and deals with the speech. He comes in and He renovates every room of our lives, giving us strength to obey in every area of our lives, and then He's just like, I feel at home here. And we experience that, don't we, as we give Him more and more of the areas of our life? He settles down. And Christ, even though He's immediately in the heart of every believer, becomes a very welcome and a very real and a very tangible Guest in the temple of the Holy Spirit that He's made us. So because we're being made into the temple of the Holy Spirit, and God as our Father, Paul bows his knee - that's his reason, and he prays for strength. But he doesn't just pray for strength, does he? He prays for experience. He prays for experience unashamedly. Paul, you may be aware of this, was reformed in his theology. Or should I say reformed people ought to be Pauline in their theology. And even though he was reformed in his theology, he had a massive category for Christian experience of the deepest and the warmest kind. In fact, now listen to this: He viewed it as essential for Christian growth. Let me say that again. Deep, warm, overflowing experience of God is viewed by Paul as essential - not optional for Christian growth. And I'll show you that as we go on.

So first thing, he prays for the experience. He prays for the strength, now he prays for the experience. "I pray (v. 17) that you being rooted and firmly established in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width and height and depth of God's love and to know Christ's love that surpasses knowledge so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Now, it's important to note here that Paul is not praying - when he prays that they would have knowledge and comprehension, he is not primarily praying that they would grow in their intellectual apprehension of the Christian faith. You have to remember that these Ephesians were the doctrinal branch of the church in the early Christian days. These Ephesians are the ones that Paul could write Ephesians 1:3-11 to. That blessed be God Who's given us redemption and forgiveness and adoption and predestination. And he never stops to define his terms. He just rushes through all of these doctrines. Why? Because they knew them. This was the church that in Revelation 2 tested apostles to make sure they taught true doctrines. The Ephesians were a doctrinal church. They knew the definitions. If they'd had catechisms, they'd have memorized catechisms. These people knew doctrine. But apparently Paul perceives that there is still a greater need for their experience of the sweetness of these doctrines. Perhaps he even is aware of the erosion that will lead to the Lord Jesus saying to them, "You have lost your first love." And so he

says, "I pray that you be rooted and firmly established in love." He uses two metaphors there. One's organic. One's from the construction world. But they sink the roots of their lives down into Christ's love. Like when you spread fertilizer in your garden, it makes sure that wherever those roots go they're going to be bringing up the very best nutrients to make those leaves miracle grow. Paul is wanting you to set the roots of your life down into love. And that you'd be built up in love. That the foundation of your life would be the love of God. You know, some people here, I'm sure the foundation of their life is law. The foundation of their life is rules. The foundation of their life is principles and regulations. Those have their place. But Paul wants the starting point of your Christian life to be the love of God in Christ Jesus. That's the only fertilizer that the Christian soul will grow from. It is good for the heart to be established by law, right? No, wrong. That's not what the verse says. It is good for the heart to be established by grace. I want you to be rooted and firmly established in love so that you can comprehend what is the length and the width and the height and the depth of God's love and to know - this personal knowledge - Christ's love that surpasses knowledge.

Now I want you to notice something. It doesn't bypass knowledge. Do you hear me? It doesn't bypass knowledge. You do not get to the love of God by saying, I'm not studying theology. I'm not studying. Those Bible studies are just dry. And there's people who love the Spirit and people who love the Word. And I'm a Spirit person. That is not the way to go. That is a dead end street. You do not ever want to bypass the knowledge of God's Word. But you do want to surpass it. The story is told of R.A. Torrey, a preacher in the last century, of him desiring more and more of the Holy Spirit. And he prayed and prayed and prayed for more of the Holy Spirit to experience something along these lines of how deep and how high and how wide is God's love. And one day the Lord came and met with him. And He poured out His presence on him so deeply that R.A. Torrey had to say, "Please stop." Wouldn't you love that problem in prayer? Please stop. Most of us are at: Please start. And Paul wants to encourage that you should start. You should pray, "Lord, help me know how deep and how high and how wide is the love of Christ." You know we've got this illustration going around that says, your feelings don't matter. All that matters is that your faith is in the facts. You can't let your feelings guide your faith. You've just got to let facts guide your faith. Now, there's a great element of truth to that. And in dark moments in your soul, you should just grab on to the facts of the faith and hold on and don't let go, even if you die without feeling a thing. When you are dark, you grab a hold of the facts of the Gospel and you do not let go. But the problem with that illustration is it seems to make feelings optional. Like, hey if you don't have the feelings, just hold on to the facts. Beloved, we should want every Christian to be experiencing the melting love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says the love of Christ constrained him. The reason so many people are eager about theology is because the sharp edges of truth constrain them. I've got to win this argument! Rather than the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ that said to the rich, young ruler, looking at him He loved him, and said, "Go sell all you have." In order for that to happen, we have to be moved by love. We have to have the love of God poured out on us. We have to ask that God would give us more of an experience of His love than we already have. We shouldn't take what we have now as baseline. The prayer proves that Paul thought you could have more. Whatever level of the experience of the love of God these Ephesians had, Paul thought he was serving them to pray for more. He didn't think, well, they've had quite a bit of experience - if they have too much, then they'll get derailed into experience. No. He said they've experienced a little, they need more. I want them to surpass knowledge. I want them to be overwhelmed with the love of God in their hearts. Are you? And if you're

not, won't you be rational and pray that you would be? Pray that God would do this again.

And notice a little line here: He says, "...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, I pray that you being rooted and firmly established in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints..." Did you catch that? With all the saints? This is not just something for your personal prayer closet. This is not just like, Lord, I need to be filled with Your love, and I don't know where the rest of the church is at. No, this is something for our corporate prayer meetings. Lord, would You fill us with the love of Christ? Would the whole church experience a greater outpouring of the love of Christ in Christ Jesus so that we together - the temple of the Holy Spirit - would experience the love of God.

Now, I want you to notice something there at the end of v. 19. It tells us why. Why do you need to experience the love of God? Not just take the love of God by faith, but believing the love of God, also feel it in your heart, because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Why do you need that? So that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Well, again, there's one of those Bible buzz words. I want to be filled with the fullness of God. What does that mean? What does that mean? Well, there's a few different places in Ephesians that will help us to understand what that means. The first is in chapter 1. In chapter 1, it tells us in v. 20 that God exercised this power in Christ by raising Him from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavens, far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He subjected everything under His feet and appointed Him over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of the One Who fills all things in every way. Here the Lord Jesus Christ is portrayed for us as an exalted ruler; an exalted King. And we're told that He rules over the church, which is His fullness.

Now, what does it mean by fullness? Well, I think it means something like this: Have you ever heard someone say they were filled with anger? They don't mean there was a liquid in them called anger. They meant that anger controlled them. When Christ fills something, He controls it. Where something is full of the fullness of Christ, it is under His control, and to be filled with the fullness of Christ is to be under Christ's control. Don't get tired yet. Look at Ephesians 4 and see this again. Ephesians 4 tells us that pastors are to teach the people of God. I'm in v. 12. Chapter 4:12 To teach the people of God so the people of God can have their ministry of equipping each other for ministry. And it says, they're to be equipping the saints for the work of ministry to build up the body of Christ until we all reach the unity of the faith, the knowledge of God's Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. The church is to grow up into the very fullness of Christ, where Christ is in control of everything. One last illustration. One that you'll probably know well. Ephesians 5: Do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Holy Spirit. Again, the Holy Spirit's not poured into us like a drink, but rather He takes control of every area of our lives.

Now, go back to Ephesians 3 and work out the implications for this. Paul wants us to know how deep and how high and how wide is the love of Christ and to know Christ's love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. I want you to have everything in your life under Christ's control. In order to get there, you'll need to know His love experientially. Do you ever just come up against a brick wall in your sanctification where you're just trying to do all the right things? I read it! Husbands love your lives. I'm trying to love her. I'm mad. But, I'm trying to love her. Wives submit to your husbands. Ok. You know that expression: God doesn't want you to be happy, He wants you to be holy? That's such a stupid expression. I hate that. I used to be happy, but

now I'm holy. Holiness is when we find our happiness in God. Holiness is when we learn to love what God loves and to be devoted to what God loves. That is holiness. There's no such thing as the unhappy holy Christian. The holy Christian is the happy Christian. And the only way to be happy doing the things Jesus' authority requires - the only way to be happy, moving out into obedience, is to be motivated by love. D.A. Carson uses a marvelous illustration of how important this is. He tells a story of a test that was done on two baby chimpanzees. And they put the one baby chimpanzee in a cage with a chicken wire mother. Chicken wire mother. And they put a bottle in this chicken wire mother. And basically you had this little baby chimpanzee - a real chimpanzee - and then a chicken wire mother with a bottle sticking out of its chest. That chimpanzee had everything he needed to live. There was milk in there - milk in the bottle. Chicken wire mother. In the other cage, they put another chimpanzee. Only this time they covered the chicken wire with fur and put a hot water bottle in it and made it warm. They made it more like a real mother. The first chimpanzee died, even though there was milk in the room. The second chimpanzee lived, because milk is supposed to come from the warmth of a mother. So too with God's truth. Some of you are dying because you take in God's truth - you take it in like crazy. You buy books about it. You have conversations about it. Bible studies - you're there. Blogs, Internet, video - you're there. You're taking in truth. But it's not coming in hot. It's not coming in warm. And it's killing you. And it is not making your character the fullness of Christ. When I'm talking to you about warmth in religion and power from the Holy Spirit and Him giving you the knowledge of His presence, Him teaching you that Christ's love is not something that you define, but something you describe. I'm not talking about something that I think will add a little spice to your life. I'm talking about something essential to Christian growth.

And so I want to ask you to make this resolution. The resolution is that you would pray continually based on this reason. Because we are the temple of God, would you ask and seek and knock at the door of Heaven? Would you ask like the importunate widow? Would you seek God until He will be found by you? Will you wrestle with Him and say like Jacob, "I will not let You go until You bless me." Will you grab ahold of the Lord Jesus Christ and try to touch the hem of His garment on this matter? Asking Him, Lord, I need power. And I need it according to grace, because I can't earn it. Would You give me power? And oh God, would You flood me with the knowledge of Your love? Not just so I can define it, but so I can describe it. So I can tell others, oh, how deep and how wide and how high and how long is the love of Christ. I'm going to tell you one more story and I'm done.

We have a young girl in our church. She's a pre-teen/early teen. She's had a hard time with her parents. And they so desperately want to see her saved. And we have an African lady in our church and she just walked up to this young girl just recently actually; and walked up to her and said, "Oh, the beauty of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ." Now, I've got to be honest, I've been a pastor for awhile, and that's not usually how I greet people. And I'm sure I'm paraphrasing what she said, but she just began to sing and to tell of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it may not be an accident that here a few weeks later, it looks like this young girl's been converted. There's something about the love of God. The full warmth and full experience that wins us to walking in the very fullness of Christ. Let's pray.

Father, we join together to say that we have not walked as fully in obedience to You, because have not known as fully Your love. Lord, we pray like in that old illustration that You would go from holding us by the hand and that You'd pick us up like a father and just hug us into Your arms. We pray this Lord, because there's only so much growth

we can experience without it. We come to You, Lord, and remind You that in this generation, this kind of love - at least in circles we're in, Lord, we've not seen much of it. And we're asking You, Lord God, to end that. We're asking You to pour out Your Spirit on Your people afresh, and we're asking You, Lord, at the very least, to give us a spirit of prayer that will not be satisfied. Lord, our brother this morning called us to a holy contentment, and he was right in everything he said. And Lord, in this matter, there is a holy discontent that says, "Lord, we will not let You go until You bless us." We will not despise the day of small things, Lord. But neither will we be content until You give us all that You have promised to Your people. We beg that of You, Lord. We're not sure how long we can go on, Lord. Help us. Help us. We pray for power to overcome prevailing sin. We pray for power to overcome entrenched sin. We pray for power to help us repent and to walk. We pray for confidence that there's grace to give that power, even today; even tonight; even now. And we ask You, Lord God, that You would flood Your people with Your love, so that we might more fully display the glory of Christ Who loved us and gave Himself for us. We pray this thanking You for every measure of grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

