

# Rooted and Grounded In the Love of Christ

Tim Conway | [illbehonest.com](http://illbehonest.com)

Ephesians 3. We'll begin reading in verse 14. "For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father." For the reason that these Ephesians - all the reasons he's been establishing really through the whole book up till now. They're the chosen of God. They're being built together into a dwelling place for God. God has put His hand on these people. He's chosen them out of all the other people upon the face of the earth. He's saved them. He's shown them mercy and poured His love on them. "For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of God's glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith..." This is what I want to deal with today: "...that you being rooted and grounded in love," that right there - "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 I want to deal with those last words there in verse 17. I don't want to just skip over that. In the original, if you were to read this right out of the Greek in the order of the words, what you have is you have three prepositional phrases back to back. So it literally reads this way: "the Christ may dwell through faith..." there's one. "...In your hearts;" there's two. "...In love being rooted and grounded." Christ dwells through faith in your hearts in love being rooted and grounded. Rooted and grounded, they are passive participles. This is something that is done to you when Christ comes in and dwells. And remember. Remember here right at the beginning. This prayer is for people who are already believers. This is not a prayer for the lost. So what the apostle is saying here is that if Christ comes in to dwell - now, if you're a believer, you already have Christ in there, so obviously he's praying for an increase, an expansion of this. And as the increase comes, Christ comes in and settles down. There's more of a permanence. Christ dwelling in the heart of the believer by faith. And as that happens, the result will be that we shall be rooted and grounded in love. This is what I want to explore this afternoon.

So the question arises right off - now think about this - rooted and grounded in love, or as in the order of the original - in love being rooted and grounded. In love. What love? That often arises when you find the concept of love in Scripture. The love of God or the love of Christ oftentimes, I have found through the years as I've studied different passages where that concept comes up, very often it's not readily apparent if it's the love that we have for God and others, or whether it's His love for us. And so the question arises, what love is this? Here at the outset, we want to ask this: What love is being spoken of here? Who's love for who? What is the love into which the mighty tree - rooted, that's the imagery - rooted - a mighty tree. It's roots go down into something. What love is the Christian life rooted in and anchored into and sends its roots down into when Christ comes in to dwell? Is this God's love to us? Is this our love to God and to man?

Now, I want us just to think about this, and I'm going to actually throw some commentators at you. One of my favorite commentators - I make no qualms about this - I love

Martyn Lloyd-Jones. But you know as I was reading through his commentary, I got to what he said, and I just put a question mark beside the passage there in the margin. Here's what he says: "Paul..." He says this dogmatically. If you read how he's leading up to it and how he says it, without proving it, he just dogmatically says this, and then once he says it, it's like that's the conclusion - case closed, and now he just goes on to preach the message as though that is a fact established. Here's what he says, "Paul is very specifically speaking about our love to Christ rather than about Christ's love to us." Just dogmatically says it - doesn't prove it. And then that's the basis for the whole rest of his sermon. I put a question mark there because I thought, I don't know. That does not seem right to me. But anyway, the question that immediately comes to my mind is how can he say that with such certainty?

Now, another commentator, William Arnot. Anybody know that name? He actually has done a commentary on Proverbs that I have on my shelf which I think is the best thing I have on Proverbs. Arnot comes along and he says this with equal certainty, "The question admits of an answer at once easily intelligible and demonstrably true." In other words, Arnot comes along. He's going to say it's the exact opposite and he's going to say it's absolutely clear! "...That what we have here is the love in which the roots of faith strike down for nourishment is not human love; it's divine love." In other words, it's not our love Paul's talking about - our love for God or for Christ - but Christ's love to us.

And I would just say yes. I think that's right. And here's the evidence. The evidence is two-fold. First, just notice the context. Notice where things go in verse 18. "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." I think that tells us; the context itself - very clearly, this has to do with Christ's love for us. Paul is praying that we might have strength to comprehend, not our love for Christ - we can comprehend that. And the truth is it's very faulty oftentimes. Didn't we just sing a song? We wish we could love God more. Our love for Christ is pretty comprehensible. What surpasses knowledge and is beyond our ability to grasp unless supernaturally empowered is Christ's love for us, right? I think that's apparent.

But here's the other thing. The other thing is the imagery itself, when you start talking about being rooted and grounded - you know what grounded means? Grounded is the idea of a foundation. Do you want your whole superstructure built on your ability to love? Or His love for us? I mean, when you even start talking about just the rooted and grounded concept and begin to look at the imagery, I'm thinking if you're talking about our love, you have a pretty shaky foundation, and quite honestly, I don't want to build my foundation on anything that has to do with me. We're anchored - the roots. See, this is a picture of the roots going down into the soil. Not only for stability, but roots that go down into the soil, they draw up nutrients.

Here's a third commentator - another guy I really appreciate. Alexander MacLaren. Anybody know that name? These guys are quality guys and you can find them online. I think this is the better solution. Listen to what he says. "Where Christ comes, He comes not empty-handed. He brings His own love and that love, when consciously received by us, produces in us a corresponding and answering love in our hearts to Him." See, I don't think we necessarily have to say it's one or the other. The issue is that when we're planted in the love that He brings, the very nature of the tree is to come up and draw from that and produce

blossoms and produce fruit. He says, "So there's no need to ask the question whether love means Christ's love to me or my love to Christ. From the nature of the case, both are included - the recognition of His love and the response by my love are the result of His entering into the heart."

And I would just say this, Scripture over and over again substantiates what MacLaren says. We don't have to argue. We don't have to fight. Because repeatedly, Scripture says that what we are in our love flows out of what He is in His love, does it not?

I mean, I'm going to give you some verses here. Don't turn to these. I'm going to move through them fast. 1 John 4:10, "In this is love, not that we have loved God..." Now, I would just say this, John is saying this: when you really want to size up love, the starting point is never with us. When you start talking love - "in this is love, not that we have loved God..." that's kind of minor, miniscule, and a bad starting point. It doesn't start there. But where's the starting point? "In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." It always starts with Him. Again, 1 John, look a few verses later. "We love Him because..." why? See? He first loved us. You see, our love is a response. Our love flows out of; it's the result of. Or, you have this reality in 2 Corinthians 5:14. "For the love of Christ compels..." or constrains, or controls. What's the idea there? The love that He has for us - in the context, you can tell that's what it is, that He died for us. That compels us. It moves upon us. It creates a result in us. Or you have this - in John 15:9, our Lord is getting ready to go to the cross. He's giving final instruction to His disciples. And you know what He says? He says, "As the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you." And then He says this, "Abide in My love." Be planted in it. Only after that does He then say, "This is My commandment, that you love one another." You see, He tells them first, the starting point with all of this is the Father's love for Me, and as He's loved Me, so I have loved you. I have a love for you like the Father has a love for Me. Live in that love. Abide in that love. Be planted in that love. Send your roots down into that love. And then, and only then, does He turn to them and say, "Keep My commandment to love one another." You see, there's that flow. There's that progression in Scripture.

Remember, come back to this all the time. This is how an apostle prays for people who are already Christians. And when Christ comes in in increasing fashion, we are strengthened with the very power of God through His Spirit in the inner man, and Christ comes in and He settles down - deeply settles down in increasing fashion in a man's heart. Love is the very soil in which that man's life is going to be planted. The tree. What's the tree? The tree is my life. It grows. How? Not by my effort only. Should I work out my salvation with fear and trembling? Absolutely. But you see those roots, they draw nourishment up out of the soil of Christ's love for me. Brethren, this is really the heart of Christianity. It's the heart of blessedness. This is the closest to getting to heaven on the face of the earth. I know one of the Puritans, he talks about assurance, but isn't it coupled together with this? I mean, when the roots of your life go down into the realities of Christ's love for you, assurance, certainty, security, an overwhelming sense of your belonging to Him and His being for you - it overwhelms the person. As I cling to His love by ten thousand tendrils at the ends of the roots that reach down into the riches of this soil, what happens? As it clings in that dirt and it finds its foundation there, I'll tell you what happens, such nutrients flow into me as bring forth realities in my life. And Scripture speaks about it as fruit.

Again, that analogy of a tree. I mean, the blossoms come out and the fruit begins to hang heavy, and we prove the reality by bringing forth much fruit.

This is the picture here. Christ's love being the very source. You see where this is headed. It doesn't just stop with: "Lord..." praying like Paul; Lord, I pray for this church, may Jesus Christ dwell in their hearts by faith more richly, deeper, more experiential. I know this, wherever Christ comes in to dwell, and I mean in saving fashion like this in the heart of a man - He does not come except He comes with His love. Always. The whole life will be like a tree planted in this rich soil. So the point is, we don't need to argue over which this is. Certainly, certainly, the soil, the starting point is His love for us, but it always produces the other. Always produces.

And I would remind you, I want to keep coming back to this. Paul is praying for those who are already Christians. Why? He wants to see this reality increased in their life. He wants to see these roots laying hold in this rich soil and producing this reality. And I'll just say right off, how does that happen? I mean, yes, we have an analogy of a tree. We have an analogy of roots that go down and rooted, grounded, secure. There's security there.

Have you ever seen a monstrous tree? I mean, sometimes trees, the roots begin to rot and so the tree falls over. But listen, I had a bulldozer one time. I borrowed it from Johnny Systma. I was out in the woods where I lived out south of town, and there'd be a hickory tree there. It might be six inches in girth, and I'd hit that thing with that big old bulldozer and it would stop that dozer in its tracks. Why? That thing had roots that went way down. In fact, if you could ever pull a tree up, some of these massive trees - Diego and I were just down in Ecuador. We saw some of these monstrous rainforest trees with monkeys way up there in those limbs. Monstrous trees and they come down and the root system, the trunk as it's approaching the ground just goes way out, and you can tell underneath the ground, if you could pull that thing up and just leave those roots absolutely undisturbed and turn that tree upside down, that root system is like another tree in itself. All those roots going down into the ground.

And what Paul is praying for is for Christians, that that great big root mass would be down there and it would be embedded. It would find its solid foundation; it would find its stability; it would find its nutrients in this soil of Christ's love. That's for us. Paul wants us to be strengthened that we might be able to endure this reality, that this might come - and the way we draw those nutrients up as Christians is by studying that love; it's by looking at that love. Like James was talking about, where does poisoning come? It's in the mind. Where does this come from? It's got to do with not just this knowledge that puffs up, but it's this knowledge of Jesus Christ. It's coming to know Him. It's coming to know His love. It's coming to study more and more what He's done. It's coming to see more and more the sacrifice that He's made. Why do you think the Lord would have us go back to the Lord's Table over and over again? It's because He died. And He specifically says this is for you. It's very personal. He died for us. And that reality, this is the imagery Paul has in mind. This is what he's praying for. You want to be like one of these great big magnificent trees.

I tried to look it up. What was the name of the tree killer? The killing tree. There's this tree down there. It's amazing. A tree's growing. This tree begins to grow from right around the base of the other tree. And it grows up around that tree and it will actually lift the host tree, tear it right up out of the ground. We saw one and a whole palm tree was just suspended in mid-air.

But you know, we came to one closer towards the end. And the guy specifically said there's one right there, but the host tree, it was too big. And the roots were too firmly established. So when the enemy came along, it couldn't pull it out. See, Paul wants us to be strengthened. That's what he wants. When all these influences come along; when these parasites come along and they would steal us away, steal away our affections, steal away your life, steal away your time. Paul is praying we would be so established in this love that you can't be shaken, you can't be pulled up. We desperately need this.

You know, once in a while, you come back and you just have to do a survey of the New Testament. Just think with me here. We're to walk as Jesus walked. 1 John 2. We're to love our enemies. Sermon on the Mount. We're to forgive as Jesus forgave. I mean, remember Him in shame, anguish, on that cross, looking down. They're blaspheming Him. They're murdering Him, and He prays for them. He forgave. We're to be aggressively kind towards those who spitefully use us. We're to pray for them. We're to love the brethren fervently. We're to love, ladies, you're called upon to love your husbands and your children. Men, you're called upon to love your wives as Christ loved the church. We're to give our possessions, sell our possessions, give to the poor. We're to visit the widow and the orphan in their affliction. We're to visit the stranger by bringing them into our house. We're to visit the needs of the sick. We're to visit the needs of the imprisoned. We're to visit the needs of the hungry and the naked. In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, we're to let our requests be made known unto God. We're to rejoice in the Lord always. We're to think on whatsoever things - James mentioned this - true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, any virtue in them, any praise. We're to be holy because God is holy. The Savior says that if we believe, we're going to do greater works than He did - the same that He did and greater works than those we will do. He said if we believe in Him that rivers of living water are going to flow forth from us. We're going to stand out in bold, unmistakable contrast from this crooked and perverse generation and we're to shine as lights. We're to die to self daily. We're to bow our will to His will. We're to resign all and renounce all that we have. We're to set our affection on things above. I mean, I don't need to go further.

Sometimes we need to look at our lives and look at the shape of the church. This is the measure of the Christian life. I mean, look, if this is the basis upon which we are to be judged? "Well done, good and faithful servant." He gathers those nations and He says, "I was sick and you came to visit Me. I was poor, and you sold your possessions. I was a widow and I was an orphan and you made the sacrifices to see that My needs were taken care of. I was your wife and you sought to love Me the same way I poured out My life for you." You go through all of this, and you recognize the standard is staggering. You know, you start to think, this is what we're called to do. Are you dying daily? Are you carrying your cross? Are you laying down your life? Are you living for Christ? Are you following Christ? Are you forsaking all to Christ? I mean, we can be staggered by this standard. And I think the thing is when you start to really think about it, it makes us aware of our own spiritual poverty. But I can tell you this, I am weary of shallow imitations of Christianity. I'm weary of people claiming to be Christians that they're barely trying to not do the bad, let alone to be examples of love in this world. "As I have loved you, so you are to love one another." There's so much mockery and sham.

Listen, we are to be more than a little better than we used to be. And we're to be more than just a little better than the world out here. We're to be like Christ. What Paul is praying for -

this is absolutely essential. Every one of us who are already believers, we need Christ to so come in and settle down and bring His love in there that we are moved and that we are affected. We need this. We need this.

And you know the thing that's amazing? Is it doesn't say that we're rooted and grounded in any other perfection of God. It doesn't say that. Our Christian lives don't throw their roots down into anything but Christ's love. There's no other attribute. There's no other perfection of Christ. No other attribute, no other perfection of God that is said to be the soil and the anchor and the foundation of our lives. We're never said to be rooted and grounded in God's wisdom or God's truth or God's justice or God's holiness or even God's power. I think of Craig's message last week. Or even in God's glory. Why is that? Well, I'll tell you this, whatever perfections and whatever attributes of God we might talk about, if we don't have His love in there, you know what it tends to be like? I know this about myself. There's something attractive to me about a hurricane or a tornado or an earthquake. There's something attractive. There's power in that. There's something magnificent and terrible about it. But it's destructive. And you know the reality is that whatever perfections and attributes we might talk about concerning God, we may see beauty in them; there may be some kind of attraction, but without Christ's love to lay hold of, you know what all those other attributes become to us? They become a terror. They actually move us backwards. But His love... what can draw forth the roots of the tree of your life?

I mean, you know, I have to be careful, because I have planted trees in my yard close to my water line. You know why that's dangerous? You know why I should never have done that? Plants have the ability, those roots, they look for water. They look for good soil. In fact, that's another thing. I put a raised bed garden not too far away from a Sycamore tree, and I just know that thing is throwing roots down under there and up into the garden. It can find that. And if you think about that, what attracts the very tendrils of our hearts like love does?

I mean, you think about it. It's true even on a human level. I can be really impressed by a guy's ability to play basketball. I can be impressed by a guy's ability to play guitar. There's all sorts of things. I may be impressed by somebody's knowledge. I may be wowed by somebody's ability to memorize Scripture. But what is it that really attracts and draws? Like that tree. That water line going through there and those roots. What moves your roots? The truth is nothing like love attracts those things. Nothing. All His other perfections without love to us - it's like the tornado. Wow, that's amazing! But if it starts coming too close, it's not so amazing; it's terrifying. Let's get out of here! (Incomplete thought) It's how we are. It's like, yeah, I think, well, I'd like to experience an earthquake sometime. But then when you're in it, it's like, no! I want out of here! I've actually thought about going to the coast when a hurricane was coming before. But you know what that's like. There's a curiosity. There's a draw. But where there's power, and where there's love, you don't get only so close and stop and hesitate; you keep going because there's something in His love like nothing else that can touch the heart of the Christian. We know this. We know this.

I just think about when I was lost, the sports stars that I admired or Eddie Van Halen playing the guitar. But you know, as much as we can admire those things, our hearts are kept fairly intact. But you know, even when we're lost, where somebody loves us - and oftentimes it was our mother or grandmother for a lot of us, but where you find a person that really loves you, there is a strong, strong attraction there.

The thing I want you to see about v. 17 is this: Notice the order. Christ may dwell in your hearts, then, you are being rooted and grounded in love. This is critical. The love does not come first. Christ comes first. I say this for this reason. We can want the experience of love. We want to feel loved. We want to feel warmth. But if you start there, that's the wrong place to start. We may want a sense that somebody outside of us loves us. We may want a sense that God loves us. But if you start by looking for that experience, you'll never find it. Nor do you want to seek to try to love God first. Some people, you come along with the Gospel, and it's like, "well, I'm trying to clean up my life." "I'm trying to make myself presentable to God." "I'm trying to do this," or "I'm trying to do that." No! That cannot come first. We must not seek the blessings that Christ can give to us apart from seeking Him and His salvation. Look, even if it's salvation that you want, you don't start by seeking salvation apart from Christ. You'll never end up there. That's what people are doing in religion all the time. Why do people get religious? Because they want to try to escape what their conscience is telling them is coming when they die. But you don't want to try to go down any road like that except you first start with Christ. Don't seek the blessings Christ can give apart from Him. We must not initially - anything - seek the ability to love others; we shouldn't seek holiness first, good fruit first, some deeper experience first. Don't seek revival first. We need Christ to come. We need Him. It's Him. See, when He comes, He brings all that He is. He brings all that He imparts. He brings all His love. But you've got to have Him. If you try to get all of the other stuff, anything else without Him, you totally missed it. All experiences of His love for you will come at once once you have Him. The experiences... The realities of it. Yes, I recognize, the experience itself, it ebbs and it flows. All ability to love Him, to love others, to grow spiritually, they flow from Him. He said, "Without Me you can do nothing." It's Him. Him. The roots have to go down. He needs to come in. The roots go down into His love. But see, that love, it's a package with Him. You can't go after the one without the other. "Whoever abides in Me and I in him..." See, I have to be there. I have to be in Him. That's the one that's going to bear much fruit. "For without Me you can do nothing." That's what He says. This is no small matter.

Listen, I'll tell you this, if you look at the very heart and soul of everything that the Apostle Paul is writing to the churches, it always comes back to this. He is seeking to make Christ preeminent in the life of these churches. All the time. He's answering that reality. This is no small matter, because literally, every single problem in believers and unbelievers can be traced back to this. Looking for and seeking something other than Christ. Now, look, this is obvious with unbelievers. They're unbelievers precisely because they don't believe that Christ is everything. All in all. That He's their only hope. And if they do seek Him, it's not really that they're seeking Him. They're seeking money or happiness or something that they perceive that He can give.

Listen, believers can go just as wrong. Just as wrong if they seek holiness first. Or if they seek some kind of morality first. Or some kind of perceived arriving at the keeping of the law or the commandments. They seek to love first or they seek any experience of the Christian life first except this experience: the experience of Christ coming into their hearts.

And then He comes, and when He comes in - see this is the connection Paul's making - when He comes in, if you have Him settle down, He comes in bringing this aroma of love into

your soul. And it's Christ residing and abiding, settling down. It's Him. And when we have Him, He's present. He's powerfully present, dwelling there. Then things happen.

Listen, what you need to recognize is this: When Christ comes into the heart of the believer, He comes as a lover. And that struck me as I was thinking about this. He comes as a lover. We sing, "Jesus, lover of my soul." In the Song of Solomon, we find this captured. Here's Christ speaking to His people. "Behold, you're beautiful, My love." Behold, you are beautiful. But those two words jump out. "My love." What happens when He comes in? He whispers peace to your soul. Peace. "My peace I leave with you - not like the world do I leave with you." Remember, He came and stood in the midst of His disciples, and they were all full of anxieties and fears and they were locked in there. And He suddenly shows up. And when He comes, what does He say? When He comes to His people, He said, "Peace." And do you know what else He said? "Look at My hands and My feet." Of course, Thomas kind of promoted some of that. But you know what He whispers? We have it in Scripture there. "I have you engraved on the palms of My hands." Or He whispers to us - look, greater love - there's no greater love than this, no greater love than when one would lay down his life for his friends. And He speaks to our soul. He says, "I'm the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep." When Christ comes in to your heart, it's "My love." You. It's very personal. I want you to know this. When Christ comes in, the roots go down into a love that is specific for you. You know when He comes in, He doesn't just say, "I died for all My people." He doesn't just say, "I died for the world." He speaks peace to you. He says, "You are My love." You.

And I'll tell you this, Paul heard that. Have you ever read there in Galatians 2:20? "I live by faith in the Son of God..." not who loved all of His people; not who loves the world with this general kind of love. Paul specifically says as he's speaking there, "He loved me and He gave Himself for me."

Brethren, do you not feel from the depths of your soul? Religion. Church. Christianity is nothing without this. It's vanity. It's emptiness. Unless, taken hold of in the heart and affections by this love. It's all powerless apart from that. This is what moves the people of God. This is the foundation. We sink deep down into this. See, the thing is, you can smell where Christ lives. Why? There's an aroma of love. There's a fragrance. The very atmosphere is one of this fragrance. It fills the heart and soul. And it doesn't leave us unchanged.

Brethren, we need to be like these trees that send down those roots. Feed on that love. That's the thing, He has that love for us. He wants us to explore it. He wants us to love it. He wants us to delve into the depths of it. Dive in and swim in it. He wants us to be anchored in it. Seek to plant your affections down in that love. Listen, He can whisper to us in ways that only the true Christian knows. But so often, those whisperings come hand-in-hand with diving deep into the truth of His love. Seeking to span the depths of it through His Scriptures. Sometimes it's in song. Sometimes it may be reading things about His love or about the Scriptures or about His death. Sink your affections. Behold! Like John, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us." I would say this too. Behold, what manner of love the Son has bestowed upon you. Behold it! Look at it. Consider it. Drink it in. Let that myriad of rootlets of your life sink down. I'll tell you, there is sweetness to be drawn up, and I don't know all how it happens, but I see the connection. We love because He first loved us, and His love compels us and constrains us and influences us and touches us and changes us.



Listen, you see, what happens is we can oftentimes come to recognize - and we should recognize this - you know what the reality is? By nature, we are selfish. By nature, Scripture says, we hate each other. We're hated and hating. That's how we are. We do what we do, and if we have friends, and if we have family members that we're close to, we do it for the good we can get out of it. We do it for how it makes us look or how it makes us feel or how it's to our advantage. We do it because we want to. We're selfish. Our carnal man - it's not inclined to love. Yeah, we can get sentimental. You can go to a movie and you can cry. That's not love. Love is when there's a willingness to sacrifice. And love can always be measured by the sacrifice. God so loved... The "so" - see, that's the measure. How much? Well, He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. You see, you measure love by what that love is willing to give. That's why Jesus is talking about: This is love... to lay down your life. That's how it's measured. Part and parcel of our miserable nature - lost - we are selfish and unloving people. Just part and parcel of our miserable, sinful condition. We don't love anyone as we ought. And you know, the reality is, look, we need this in the Christian life.

Look, you can apply this in your own life. But I recognize this, I can preach because it's my work. It's my task. You pay me to do this. I may preach somewhere because I'm under some constraint. I told somebody, "Yes, I'll do that conference." Maybe it's because I want to do someone a favor. I mean, somebody could do it because they want to get paid. Or because there's just this expectation. Or because I don't want to disappoint somebody whose opinion I care about and before whom I want to have a good reputation. But how different it is, you know, if it's like, well, I need to do that because it's expected of me, and that's what I do. But how different it is when a man is motivated by love - by a love that has roots that are down in the love of Christ, and it produces the flowers and the fruit. A man stands in the pulpit and he preaches because he loves the souls to whom he preaches. And there's a difference.

Let's talk about pastoring. Pastoring itself. A man could pastor because it's expected of him. A man can pastor because it's his responsibility. If he doesn't do it, he'll be seen as a failure. He'll be seen as stepping away. If he doesn't carry forth his duties, he feels like he needs to perform his leadership. Or a man likes the power, the prestige, the position, the prominence that he perceives will come with that. That can inspire and drive a man. But you think about our Lord. What does it say of Him? He saw the crowds. He had compassion for them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. See, that's what it is to pastor. It's to be a shepherd. That doesn't specifically say there that He is shepherding them, but that's what's implied. He sees the people as though they don't have a shepherd, and He's moved out of compassion. Huge difference when a man pastors because he's moved from this kind of love. You see, this is such a practical reality. We desperately need Christ to come in and bring that love for the roots of our life to go down to that we might draw up and have this foundation and be affected in this way, that our lives are producing that same aroma that He brings into the heart. That we're doing what we do out of love. It's very impactful.

How frequently the word "compassion" is used in connection with our Lord. Look at Him. His miracles, His works. Kindness just permeated. He relieved the sick and the suffering. Do you remember? There would at times be groans there. He's raising Lazarus from the dead. He's weeping. There's people hard of heart when the man has a withered hand, and He just sighs. He's groaning. He feels for people. I mean, can you imagine, there's that leper: "If You will..." "I

will." He's moved. That compassion, that love - that energized, that provided the motive for Him. That was the power that led Him on. The great tree of the Christian life is to be like that and rooted in that.

I had a Maple tree in my front yard. The contractor put three Maple trees in my yard, but for some reason, I don't know what it was, there was one - it was sickly. It was bad. The leaves looked bad. The tree just was not growing near as well as the other two. And I watered it, but it looked bad. In fact, I recognized, it's really close to dying. But then, I brought the compost in. I brought the compost in and it just totally revived. It totally turned around. For a number of years, I kept making amendments to that soil till that soil all the way around the roots, it was rich and full of nutrients. And the tree had its roots buried in that soil and it thrived and it grew.

What a picture of the Christian life! This is us. And this is what Paul's praying for. And he's not praying for the lost. He's praying for us. He's praying for Christians - yes, the Ephesians, but we can imply in that for all that fit this condition. This is what we need. And he's praying for the power of God. And where all this goes is it's leading us somewhere. It's leading us to the comprehension that we might comprehend the very breadth and length and height and depth - that's where all this is moving. That's where he's going with this. We need to have a right view, brethren, of Christ's love. We need a feel for where all this is going. He wants us to have strength to comprehend this. Because there's vastness here that unless God strengthens you - you know what one of the real issues is? Sometimes it's not that you're not studied enough, it's not that you haven't spent enough time, it's simply that God has not released the bounds of your mind to be able to take it all in. You need to be strengthened to comprehend with all the saints what is the measurement of this love.

And this is where all of this is headed. And that's what's going to happen, Lord willing, in the next few weeks. We're just going to contemplate that love. Why? Because I've been praying, as we've been moving through this, I'm praying this for this church. I'm praying this for myself. That we would have this - Christ would come in and settle down in a way that He never has before, and that we would become more and more anchored in this love, and that we would see it and be given this comprehension; God would strengthen our minds, our souls, our comprehension, our capacity to know, to where it would be stretched. And how can I do that? Unless God intervenes, unless God helps, unless God grants the prayer. I can try to say things to you, but it can just be a bunch of words. Unless God takes it - and you know how it is. I know how it is. You're studying along through God's Word, and God opens up something to you, some truth like you've never seen it before. That happens all the time. The more you study Scripture, the more we should expect that that kind of thing is going to happen. And I'm hoping that will happen in the weeks ahead. We'll really comprehend just the love.

This, if it happens, what's going to happen is the result. If you're anchored in that, what it's going to do to the tree will be vastly visible. This is what we want. This is maturity that he's praying for. I want to see this church to be like those massive trees - I don't even know what the names of them were. But those massive rain forest trees. I've not ever seen the Redwoods, but I think those were the biggest trees probably I've ever seen. Massive. That's how we want to be, like these great, stately, impressive trees with roots that go so far down in there. This place is relatively close to the Pacific Coast, (incomplete thought) I'll tell you this, I never saw one of those trees knocked over in those woods. Now some of the smaller ones were pulled up by

those viper trees, but we want roots like that. Stability. Down in that love. So when the storms come, you're not moved; you're not shaken, but rather, the fruit is heavy. That's what we want. We want the boughs on those trees. You come to my yard and you look at my peach trees. Those things are looking kind of sorry because they're bowed down so far. Their branches are coming down to the ground because they're so heavy laden with peaches. That's what we want. We want to be bowed down. That's a good picture. Bowed down, but then so heavy laden with fruit that your branches - some bring forth a hundred fold. Why shouldn't it be us? If you jump up, out the door: Yes! Hundred-fold! You're not starting in the right place. We need to be taking along with us all the time and studying the love of Christ. And then you're going to have the fuel, you're going to be rooted in the right substance to reproduce Christ out there and in here. That's where we're headed.

Father, we just pray that You'd help us and bring the reality of this out in our own church. I pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.