

# A Passion for Prayer

by Jim Cymbala

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*The key to effective Christian ministry is a passion for prayer, dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit, and a powerful motivation for prayer.*

**Duration:** 1:02:35

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 2:7

**Topics:** "Prayer Ministry", "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of having a heart filled with God's love and compassion in ministry. It shares powerful testimonies of transformation and the need for leaders to have a genuine love for people, seeing them as God sees them. The message highlights the significance of the message of the gospel, the methodology of being led by the Holy Spirit, and the powerful motivation of love that Paul exemplified in his ministry.

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## Transcript

Good evening, everyone. Good evening. It's great to be here.

Can you hear me? Good. It's a real honor to be invited to be a part of your event this evening. How many pastors are here or people who lead others or teach or speak or exhort in some capacity as spokesmen for the Lord in the body of Christ? Just lift your hand if you're involved in any of that.

Oh, wow. I want to talk to you about what was such a mystery to me for years. And I feel the Lord opened a passage of Scripture to me years ago while I was in a hotel in London, actually, sitting on the floor reading the Word of God.

And the Lord seemed to come and just, wow, lights went off or exploded in my heart and mind. And I would say that after knowing Jesus Christ as my Savior, this is one of the most important revelations or things that I've ever had happen in my life. And it's helped me in a great way in what we do.

Many, many years ago, more than 30 years ago, my wife and I came to a rundown building in the downtown, rundown part of Brooklyn, New York, in the hood. We're trying to do some good in the hood, as they say. And less than 15, 18 people in the church.

No crack at that time, but heroin, big time, alcoholism, rundown building, just very, very difficult. And I was an all-city basketball player in New York City. Went to college on a basketball scholarship, played NCAA

tournament.

And that was my life. And here, God doing things, you know, you can't put God in a box. Here I was called into the ministry.

My wife's a very talented musician, has since then won six Grammy Awards with her choir. And here we were in downtown Brooklyn, facing this dismal situation. And, you know, God, how do you do this? How do you make a change in people? How do you see the gospel work out in power? I don't want to just study church history, which I have, about what God did 100 years ago, 200 years ago, or talk about some future revival.

I want to know, we want to know, God, do it now. How many say amen? Go do it now. Do it now in Florida.

Let's get this on and see God do something great. Now, so many years now since then, the Lord has really blessed and helped us. And we've seen some amazing things happen in churches, start out of our church.

And now, like 10,000 people come in and out of the building that we're in now on a given Sunday, changed by the power of Jesus Christ. In my wife's choir, which has like 280, 90 people in it, there are lawyers and doctors next to home, former homeless people and drug addicts, and black and white and Latino, and you name it, we have one who did it. And whatever country you want to name, we have somebody.

But that's the way it's going to be in heaven, amen? Every nation, every tribe, every tongue, all singing praise to God for his grace. But do you ever wonder about this? How did they pull that off in the New Testament? We read it. How did they do that? No Bible, no New Testaments to hand out, hadn't been written yet.

Old Testaments, there were no printing presses, couldn't hand those out, especially in the Gentile world. No buildings. Christian church had no public buildings for more than 300 years.

No microphones. No money. The Roman government and establishment against them with its polytheism and thousand gods.

The Jewish religious establishment against them, totally rejecting Jesus Christ as the Messiah. They weren't about to admit that they missed the one who they were supposedly waiting for. No buildings, no money, no Bible schools, no seminaries.

And the people who started the work were all failures. For after spending three and a half years with Christ on the day that he was arrested, they all fled. And one who ended up being the leader, cursed and denied the Lord three times.

And yet we read about stuff like, they would go into a place like Thessalonica. They're not sure if Paul and his team stayed there weeks or months. But they didn't stay that long.

And they left behind a church and ordained leaders. How'd they do that? No prayer in schools, but they had something better. They had prayer in the church.

The problem today is not prayer in the schools, it's prayer in the church. I don't care if they pray in the schools. I'd love to see them pray in the schools, but it would be better if it started in God's house.

For Jesus said, my house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations, all people. Well, so we're talking about ministry here. How do you preach the gospel? Or how do you minister? How are you a Christian minister? And see the world turned upside down and see miracles happen.

And people set free from demonic influences. And crack addicts get clean. And people messed up in every single way that you could imagine.

Which is what I face every single week of my life. How do you see that happen so that God's name is glorified? Not a church, not a denomination. God's not going to help us so that our church's name is put in lights.

Or that we become famous as ministers. God is not going to share his glory with some church or minister. Come on.

That Christ might be glorified. Well, we know this. We know that Paul is given to us as the model minister.

Jesus, since he had not accomplished the cross yet and resurrected. Is not the exact model we have because he didn't go and preach the gospel. Because after he accomplished what he had to.

He then ascended into heaven after being with the disciples off and on for 40 days. But then he sent them out to preach the gospel. And oddly enough it wasn't one of the 12 that the New Testament focuses on.

But the book of Acts starting with the church in Antioch and Paul's conversion. He becomes the center point of the gospel of the narrative in the book of Acts. And he writes most of the rest of the New Testament.

So Paul is given to us as here's who you look at. He even said be imitators of me as I imitate Christ. He was the ultimate master builder.

He was the efficient minister, competent minister of the new covenant. Not of the letter which kills but of the spirit that gives life. So any minister, any man or woman who wants to make their life count for Christ.

You got to study Paul carefully because he was the bomb right then. Right in the New Testament. He got hooked up with God and was used tremendously by the Lord.

Well when we analyze Paul. How did he pull these things off? How did he do this? Well we know his message was the gospel. His message was the gospel.

He didn't preach some dream or vision. He didn't preach something he read in the newspapers. He didn't get corporate speak and be clever.

In fact he said my preaching was not with wise and persuasive words. But with a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit. So he said I'm not ashamed of the gospel.

He preached the good news. He didn't preach Moses. He preached Jesus.

He didn't preach the Old Testament. He preached the New Testament. And he only used the Old Testament and the law to create a sense of need.

Conviction of sin so that people could believe the good news. Christianity is not about bad news. It's about good news.

Do I get an amen here from somebody? It's about good news. So he preached the gospel. Brothers and sisters let's remember that.

You never stop studying the gospel. What is the good news? How do you preach it? How do you explain it? How do you apply it to a prostitute? How do you apply it to some angry 11 year old kid in the hood? Who's seething with anger because he has no father. Doesn't know where his mother is.

And he's against everything. How do you bring the good news to him? What is the good news? How do I preach the good news in 2011? In Florida or New York City or wherever you might be from. That's the message.

What was his methodology? Well we know his methodology from the book of Acts. And it can only be summarized by one word. The Holy Spirit.

You cannot predict what Paul will do. Read the book of Acts. You'll have no idea what he's going to do next.

Because he was led by the Holy Spirit. Remember that place in the book of Acts? Where he wanted to go into Asia to preach the gospel. But he says the Spirit said no.

Then he tried to go into Bithynia. And again the Spirit of Jesus forbid him. How did that happen? Why? He just knew you can't go anywhere unless God sends you.

And he wasn't trying to sell computers. He was trying to preach the gospel. But the Spirit forbid him.

Why would that happen? We don't understand those things. But we want to be in the right place at the right time doing God's will. So his methodology was to be led by the Holy Spirit.

To depend on the power of the Holy Spirit. That reference I gave you from 1 Corinthians chapter 2. My preaching was not with wise and persuasive words. In most seminaries and Bible schools, that's the main thing they're trying to teach guys and girls to do.

Be wise and persuasive. How else are you going to get converts? Paul said, I wasn't wise and persuasive. But my preaching was with a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit.

What did that look like? I don't know, but I want to see it. I want to experience it. He broke through into a pagan world and saw converts to Christ.

Because he wasn't clever. He was spirit filled. That's not emotional.

That's not yelling. That's not faking tears. That's not being quiet.

Not faking humility. There was some mantle and anointing of the Holy Spirit. That when he spoke, it penetrated people's hearts.

Did everyone believe? No. Everyone will never believe. They didn't believe when Jesus was here on earth.

But when we're anointed and speaking the gospel with the power of God, we're going to see converts. We're going to see the name of Jesus glorified. We're going to see changed lives and miracles happen.

Florida needs it. Have you noticed? New York City needs it. So we can't twiddle our thumbs and curse the darkness.

We've got to light a candle and say, we want to tell you about Jesus. We've got to preach the message. And we've got to have confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit.

All formulas are worthless. Going to visit a church and trying to copy it, you are wasting your time. The history of the Christian churches, while we can learn and be encouraged by others, you have to seek God for yourself and find out what he wants you to do.

You can't be a typical evangelical, typical Baptist, typical Calvary Chapel. The minute you say that, you're a loser. Because God doesn't use copycats.

God uses originals. Study the book of Acts. Study church history.

Everyone God ever used was an original. They didn't copy anyone. They were influenced by people.

But they had the confidence to, God's going to use me through my personality. I went through a great battle. Maybe this will help somebody here.

When I first went in the ministry, I had a great battle with that. Because I've never been to seminary. Never been to Bible school.

I was shooting jump shots from the top of the key. What did I know about the Bible? So when I went in the ministry, I suffered from a lack of confidence. Like how could God use me? I don't have a great speaking voice.

I'm not an orator. How's God going to use me? So I tried to for a while. At the beginning, I tried to act like a preacher.

Whatever that image you have in your mind. Whatever the image I have in my mind. That's what I tried to be.

Because it protected me. It could be my armor that I could keep people away from me. Because I couldn't believe that God could use me speaking conversationally like I am now.

I couldn't believe that. I had to be like someone. So I had certain images in my mind.

I was acting like that. And my sermons were horrible. They were so bad, I fell asleep while I was preaching.

That's not a good sign. Why? Because I couldn't believe that God could use me in my personality. But I want to assure all of you here.

The moment you mimic anyone, even unconsciously, you grieve the Holy Spirit. He doesn't anoint actors. Actresses.

People putting on a soft voice. Acting different than they do in their normal life. That is not part of being a minister of Jesus Christ.

Jesus never put on another voice or acted different when he was with disciples. And then when he spoke on the mountain and gave the beatitudes. Or the apostle Paul and his ministry.

So our message is the gospel. Our methodology is Holy Spirit lead us. Holy Spirit anoint us.

Holy Spirit show us where to go. Remember what happened when he was forbidden in those two places? He didn't know what to do. When you don't know what to do, you wait.

You don't think, you wait. You wait for directions. We're servants.

Servants obey a master. They don't do... God's not waiting for creative thought from any of us. He's God.

So as a servant, he waited. And in the night, he had a dream. And he saw a man from Macedonia saying, Come over and help us.

And then Luke says, he must have joined him right around then. And he says, and then we took it that God was leading us. And then all that great missionary trip and all the blessings that God brought upon him.

Why? Because he waited and was led by the Holy Spirit. We have very little of that today in my judgment from what I can see. Everyone's formulized the thing.

Meetings are formulized. Holy Spirit has very little room to come and lead people. We got it down to the minute.

Listen, if God could lead the Israelites for 40 years, don't you think he could lead you and me through a meeting? Don't you think he knows what's going on? Don't you think he knows right now what's needed in this room? Don't you think he does? I don't. But don't you think he could communicate that to me? Or to you when you're doing ministry? The more we program the thing and become mechanical, the more we're really saying, I don't need the Holy Spirit. I know how to do this.

We don't know how to do this. We need God. Can we all put our hands together and say amen to that? Well, all of that to say this.

I was aware of those two things and what I just said. I know you're aware of it. And most of you here can now preach me.

So I'm not bringing anything new to you. Ah, but I didn't know the third thing. The message, yes.

The methodology, it's not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, sayeth the Lord. Not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit. So your faith wouldn't stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

What must that have looked like? No wonder they turned the world upside down. But here's what really helped them turn the world upside down. This is the third part that God was gracious enough to show me that's helped me so much.

I wanted to help somebody here. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul reveals himself, his heart, and he says this. You can just listen to me.

You want to turn to it, I'll give you the references. 1 Thessalonians 2, he says this about his ministry. You know, we never used flattery when we were with you ministering, nor did we put on a mask to cover up

greed.

We weren't trying to make a buck like these guys on television. You know, God just showed me there's 500 people supposed to give \$1,000, you know, and all that. All that's a con game.

You know that, right? Those are con artists. If God gave them how many, why didn't he give them the names so we can just move on with the whole thing and get it over with? But it's business. It's business.

God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. That's important to remember as ministers.

If we're looking for praise, we've missed the mark. Not to look for praise from men. Boy, that was a great sermon.

Man, you were good. No, it's when you get along with God that he praises you and says you did good. As apostles of Christ, we could have been a burden to you.

We had rights as a minister. But we were gentle among you like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much.

Is this a love letter? Are they dating or is this an apostolic letter? Listen, we loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel, but our own lives as well because we loved you so much. And you have become so dear to us. Later on in the second chapter, it says, But brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time in person, not in thought, we never stopped thinking of you.

When you're in love with someone, you never stop thinking of them. Out of our intense longing, we made every effort to see you for we wanted to come to you. Certainly I, Paul, did again and again.

But Satan stopped us. We don't know what that meant. But Satan somehow stopped him.

For what is our hope, minister? What is our hope and our joy or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy. And then in the next chapter, he talks about the fact he couldn't stand being away from them. So he sent Timothy to find out how they were doing.

Timothy has just come back to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. That's what we're trying to see grow in people. Not are they coming to the building on Sunday.

Are they growing in faith and love? He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us just like we long to see you. Are they dating? This sounds like you opened someone's love letter. You long to see us.

Oh, we're happy because we long to see you. We miss you. You miss us.

Oh, wow. Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution, we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live because you stand firm in the Lord.

Here's the third missing thing that we need in our churches. I certainly need it in my ministry and we need it in the Brooklyn Tabernacle. And that is Paul had the message and he had the methodology, but he had a powerful motivation.

He was absolutely by the grace of God and through the work of the Holy Spirit, he was madly in love with the people he ministered to. That's where we fall short. We're preaching the gospel of Jesus without the love of Jesus.

You can preach and be mad at people. You can be angry. You can be upset.

You can be venting while you're preaching. Have you ever seen a minister do that? Is he speaking truth? Is he preaching from the word? Yes. Is his spirit right? No.

Does he care about the people? No. He's just waiting for the meeting to get over. He wants the meeting to get over.

That's his job. He's putting his time in. He gets a salary.

Don't you get it? But Paul, that would be unknown to Paul. Paul said, when I was with you in Thessalonica, don't you remember how I was with you? I didn't use flattery. I wasn't trying to con you.

I didn't want your money. I wanted you. You remember when I was with you.

Look at the picture in the Greek. For I was like a mother gently nursing her baby. And the picture in the Greek is a woman pulling down her blouse and bringing an infant to her breast and feeding her.

That's how I was when I was with you. You ever see a mother feeding a baby? You think she's doing it for money? When she looks down at the baby, do you think she's watching for any problem because she loves that child? She's giving the baby figuratively her life. That's how I was when I was with you.

Maybe that's why he was so powerful. He not only had the right message and he depended on the Holy Spirit, but when you love somebody and you're passionate about them, they know it. Your words will penetrate.

Many years ago, 20 years ago, when my oldest girl got away from us and away from God, my wife and I went through a long two and a half year nightmare. Our oldest girl away from God. She's now the wife of a great pastor and she's doing a great work.

She has gifting of her mom who's not trained. Neither is Chrissy, but she writes music, directs worship, directs a choir. But when she was away from God, my heart was broken.

I could hardly get to church sometimes. I would just cry the minute I turned on the ignition and drove 20 minutes to the church. Do you think when I talked to her, I went, basically Chrissy, I'd like you to turn to First Thessalonians with me here for a second.

I'd like to share a little word with you. You think I'd talk to her like that? Have you lost your mind? I would never talk to her like that. I talked to her from in here.

That's my girl. That's my daughter. My daughter's on the edge of an abyss.

That's my girl. When you love your daughter, you talk not from here, you talk from here. You talk truth, but you talk from here.

Paul said, when I was with you, I was like a mother nursing her baby for I not only wanted to give you the gospel, I wanted to go down for you. I was ready to die for you. I haven't met five ministers in my life ready

to die for their congregation.

I was just with someone. I was with Rabbi Zacharias in Hong Kong just a few weeks ago ministering to hundreds of mainland China underground home church pastors. Oh, I felt so unworthy.

I didn't want to get up and talk. Half of them been in jail and I'm preaching to them. There was a passion intensity.

Listen, Christianity is never laid back. If you're into being laid back, you can't be effective for Christ. Calvary has nothing laid back about it.

There's nothing cool about Christianity. It's passion. It's love.

He wept over Jerusalem. He was crucified stark naked. He rose again from the dead.

He wept over Jerusalem even though it was going to crucify him. And Paul says, when I was with you, you think I was giving you a sermon so I could get a love offering? Are you kidding? You were like my children. The mother doesn't charge the baby she nurses.

She loves to do it. It's her life. And they had that.

Paul had that. Boy, do we need that. Because you can get mechanical and just preach to people.

It's time to share a word. Do a teaching. I got my next expository little word.

I looked in some commentaries. I got my three points and a conclusion. You think that's going to change the world? Brothers and sisters, look at me.

You live in Florida. Florida got a lot of problems. I'm from New York.

Got a lot of problems. You think the world's going to be changed by little ditties that we're going to share with somebody? Oh, come on. We're going to need something from God full of the Holy Spirit and we're going to need to have it filled with love.

If you believe what I'm saying, just lift your hand and say amen. So this is how the church was born. What you and I have developed, whatever American concept we have, we got to compare it to the original and say, God, help us to get back to the power and fervency of the original.

Paul goes on later to say, and I'll close here, and Paul says, for I had to leave you torn apart, but I never stopped thinking of you. I meet a lot of ministers who the congregation is a pain in the neck. They'll preach.

They'll take their check, but the people, their problems, counseling them, it's like, you know, that guy, he just drives me insane. He's always got a problem. I'm tired of counseling that dude.

What is it with him or her or whatever? Paul says, when I was torn apart from you, just in, never in thought, I never stopped thinking of you. You know, I have a new grandson. I never stopped thinking of him.

My daughter, Susan, my middle girl is 37. She has two children, 13-year-old, 10-year-old. I was just showing some of the pastors before the meeting picture of my new grandson.

She's always wanted to adopt a child that nobody wanted and that probably would never hear of Jesus. So she started working with an orphanage, and after 11 months, they called her and said, we got the boy that you put in for. So last March, she took her husband, who's one of my associates, and the 13- and 10-year-old, Luke and Claire, and they came back.

My wife and I met him in Kennedy when they came through customs with my new, he's now 13 months old, my new grandson from Ethiopia. Bet you don't have one of those. Anybody here got an Ethiopian grandson? His name was Bushara, which means good news there.

Mother died giving birth from malaria. Father's 6'3". Boy's going to play in the NBA, I'm telling you.

He's going to be shaking and baking somebody. Had four other kids, the father. Didn't know what to do.

Couldn't keep Levi, Bushara. Could have left him by the roadside. Thank God he rode eight hours on the bus and left him at the orphanage that Susan was working with.

I love him. I've somehow knit and bonded with him. I try to find, you know, I ask, can I babysit? She said, I'm bordering on idolatry with the child, but it is what it is, you know.

I think of him all day long. I prayed for him today. You think you have to tell me to pray for him? Listen, when you love someone, you will pray for them.

Paul says, I remember you constantly in my prayers. Why do you think you had to tell him in the morning? Now get up, Paul. You got to pray.

You think when Chrissy was away from God, you think you had to tell me to pray for my daughter? Come on. Our problem is we don't have those deep currents of love and passion for people because when that possesses you, you get crazy for God. You get crazy for them.

You pray. You'll agonize. You'll travail because love makes you do crazy things.

So Paul says, of course I think about you always because when Jesus Christ comes, what is my crown? What is my glory? What is my joy? What is my glory? Is it not you? Did you know, pastors, those of you who are leaders, when Christ comes, you don't have anything else to show God but people. I have a beautiful building. It was built in 1917.

4,100 seats when it was built. We restored it to the way it looked like in 1943. It really is.

God bless us. It's a beautiful building, and it's a beautiful place to meet. Downtown, all the subways and buses come there because half our people don't have cars, and that's very important in New York.

How are you going to get to the subway? How are you going to get to the place? Especially at night, things go down. So I rebuke whatever that was. So what am I going to show God? A building? When Christ comes, what am I going to show him? A building? He made the heavens and the earth.

My wife won six Grammy Awards. What was she going to do? Hold up a Grammy Award for him? Years ago, I won Book of the Year for a book I wrote, and they sent me a certificate. I didn't go to the award ceremony, but I was out of the country.

But when Christ comes, what am I going to show him? Book of the Year Award? He wrote the Bible. What am I going to show him? My book? Look, I wrote this book. He'll say, I wrote this book.

How about that? No. All we have is people. Paul, who wrote the New Testament, said, You are my crown.

You are my glory. You are my joy. What else are you going to bring him? Just people.

I was so proud to hear the report this Sunday afternoon. I was away. I'm supposed to be on vacation here in Florida with my wife.

We're in the Tampa area, and a girl who was demon-possessed and brought into our church many years ago, she gave her testimony for the first time publicly. This girl is 4'10", and she was on drugs. They said they're going to bring her to the prayer meeting, pray for her.

This was a long time ago. I said, Yeah, bring the girl. We'll pray for her.

So we're in the beginning of the prayer meeting, do praise and worship for a while. I said, There's a couple here, siblings, a brother and a sister. They got some girl here that wants to be prayed for.

Her name is Diana. So everybody, we're going to pray for her. And she walks up, 4'10", right? And when she got about 10 feet away, the Holy Spirit began to warn me.

Something was going to go down. Something was going to happen. My heart started to beat, palpitating.

I got very alert spiritually, mentally, emotionally, every way. I called a minister, a woman evangelist who was in the front row. I said, Come and help me pray for her.

So she's coming as the girl's being brought down the center aisle. And this woman, I think, moved upon by the Holy Spirit, just said, Oh, Jesus. And when she said that, this 4'10 girl who was stooped over like she's on methadone, you know, just kind of like that kind of body posture.

She flipped out, rushed me, threw me against the facing of the platform, ripped the, I had a dress shirt on. Did she wear a tie? She ripped the shirt, the collar, like it was tissue. She's 4'10.

Like tissue, the thing came off. She has her hands on my throat. I grab her, throw her down, and these voices start yelling at her all through the church.

There were a thousand people there. There's 3,000 people now. Every Tuesday in our prayer meeting, there were a thousand people there that night who heard the voices screaming at me and all of us.

Leave her alone. She's ours. You'll never have her.

Get out of here. She's ours. I threw her down on the ground.

Her eyes are rolling. She spits in my face, and I had a deacon tap me on the shoulder, and he taps me on the shoulder while this is all going on. He says, Pastor, I believe she's demon-possessed.

I'm a real prophet on my staff, you know? So she gave her testimony on Sunday. Her name is Diana Berrios. I wish she was here.

If you brought her out, you'd never believe that she could ever do that because just like the Holy Spirit gives us power to do things we can't do, demonic possession is nothing more than Satan's counterfeit of a church filled with God doing exploits. If you ever saw her, you'd say, no way she could do that. A little stick of a woman flipped me like that.

I still tell her now, you know, Diana, I love you, and you're serving the Lord. He's kept you all these years, and I heard she was so anointed on Sunday. They said, oh, did God use her when she told her story, how she grew up.

Her mother was a witch, and it got involved in all this dark side stuff. But I told her, Diana, I love you, but you ruined a shirt. You're so cheap.

Would you buy me a shirt, please? 1634, and she'll laugh and laugh. Now, my book award or whatever, any notoriety, that means nothing. But Diana, oh yeah, I'll show Diana to Jesus for what else is my crown? What else is my hope? What else do you have? But change lives.

If we don't have those, what are we going to show? What's your crown? Finally, and this reveals it again, Paul says, so I couldn't take being away from you because I had to know that my work was not in vain. I had to be sure this tempter hadn't come and tempted you. So I sent Timothy, oh man, it's so good because Timothy's come back, and he told us how strong you are in your faith, and now I really live because you stand firm in the Lord.

Oh, I've seen that. Haven't you ever seen that? Haven't you ever seen a mother in the hood? I've seen this so many times. She works three jobs.

She works herself to the bone. She looks 15 years older than she is, but she walks up on the platform at the end of a service or walks up to me and introduces me to her son and says, he's been accepted into med school or he's going to be a lawyer, and she killed herself. But do you think it bothers her? Of course not.

When you love someone, you'll kill yourself. If you don't love someone, it's just a job. Just a job.

Punch in the time. Do the preaching. We'll pray for you.

I've got to get to the golf course. That's what my real life is about. That wasn't the early church.

They were crazy. They had the same spirit that was in Christ. So Paul says, now I really live.

Put me in prison. Do anything you want. Do anything you want.

Now I really live. My children are growing in their faith. Brothers and sisters, listen.

You cannot teach that. We have like a cult today of teaching, I think. We think that Christianity is a teaching religion.

It is. We need teaching. You can't teach love.

The Holy Spirit imparts love. The love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit. Not only love for God, but the love of God.

So we have too little prayer, too much teaching. So what we have is a kind of mental-oriented Christianity without su corazon, without the heart, the guts, the blood, which is what they had at the beginning. Yes, they had teaching.

Apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists. But they continued steadfastly in prayer. And in times of prayer and breaking before the Lord, when you bring your empty vessel to him, he pours his love in and you start looking at people differently.

Here is my prayer, brothers and sisters, lately, all the time. God, help me to see people the way you see them. And help me to feel about them what you feel about them.

And none of you could teach me how to do that. Oh, we could show you this what Jesus did, this what Paul did. But have us do it? How do you see people the way God sees them unless he does it by the Spirit? How can you feel compassion about people, unlovely people? I deal with a lot of obnoxious people sometimes.

I deal with people who touch little children. In the natural, I'll throw them out of a four-story window. In the natural.

You touch a child, are you crazy? And yet, how does God see them? That's impossible for me, I know me. I'll go off on people. Any of you here like me? Anybody here in the natural just go off on people? Come on, let me see your hands.

Don't lie, I'm a man of God, come on. You're in church, tell the truth. But all the love of God, how rich.

So, I'll tell you one little proof here before I end. Paul, you can't teach this. Paul says, look at it when you go home, Philippians 2 verse 19.

Paul says to the church in Philippi, Now listen, I'm going to send Timothy to you, to minister to you. I have no one else like him who will seek your interest and will imitate the way I treated you. For everyone else, he's speaking about the ministers who travel with him.

Everyone else seeks their own interest and not those of Jesus Christ. What? Paul says, I have no one like Timothy. I got a lot of ministers who travel.

They got three points in the conclusion. They're called to the ministry. But because I love you so much, I only have one Timothy.

I could only produce one Timothy or God produce them, who will care for you the way I care for you. Because everyone else I travel with, they're preachers, but they seek their own interest, not those of Jesus Christ. They want to do ministry, but on their terms.

They want it comfortable. You look it up. I'm not making it up.

It's in the Bible. Only one Timothy. Even Paul couldn't get folks like that.

But I want to have that. Because that changes everything. When you have the right message and you're depending on the Holy Spirit and God's given you a heart of compassion, watch out.

Something good's going to happen. Did you know the best is yet to come in all our churches? I didn't get any amen. I thought that was profound.

Let me try it again. The best is yet to come. Because the Bible says we go from glory to glory, from faith to more faith.

There's no program in the Bible where we go down. We only go up. Did you know that God could do more? I pray this for my own ministry.

God could do more in 2011 than he's done in the last five years in your church. Why can't he? There's not enough sinners? There's not enough people that need God? Come on, can God do it? If you think God can do it, put your hands together with me. Okay.

Just before I invite you to pray, I thought I learned this, you know. I told you about that time in the hotel and God really dealt with me and I realize now, if you're sincere, listen to me, Pastor, someone may be doing it longer than you have. Three points and a conclusion and getting a message.

That's not hard. It might be drivel, it might be just nothing, but you can get three points and a conclusion. But a message that touches people's heart, well, that's another whole thing.

It has to be biblical, but it's got to be more than a robot preaching three points and a conclusion. Because now God has to break us and deal with us so that we see people the way he sees them and feel what he feels. How could I represent Jesus if I don't feel what he feels and see what he sees? Does that make sense to all of us? It's not right.

You could say, yeah, but I'm preaching the word. I share the word. I know, but the success of preaching has more to do with just what you say.

It's the person who's saying it. So, I think I learned these things, but I don't. I learn it and then I fall back.

But God gave me a lesson. Maybe two years after that happened to me in London. It's Easter Sunday, lines around the block in our previous facility, three long services, Easter program my wife put together just with a testimony, just to present the gospel to people.

I make an invitation at the end of this little cantata or whatever she did that night, that year. We had a girl, woman, young lady in the church who's HIV positive who used to get beat up by her boyfriend in the building right next to the church, that building where we were in. She used to be beat up and was watching the Super Bowl and she annoyed him.

He broke her nose, but he wouldn't take her to the hospital because the game wasn't over. You know, one of these women that just seeks out self, just destructive men. So she shared a little testimony.

So I pray for people third service tired. It was much younger, but tired. I was very tired.

So I sit down on the edge of the platform just like this. People are praying. My wife's in the band are playing some music.

She's on the keyboard. Wow, what a long day. Good day.

A lot of people come to Christ. They're being prayed for, filling out cards, being ministered to. You know, you can't rush when people come to Christ.

Don't do that. Don't rush them out. Don't rush them out.

Isn't there something wrong that people can watch two and a half hour football games and pay money to see a movie, but church has to go quick? Does that add up to anybody here? If in his presence there's fullness of joy and all those verses, why does everyone want to get out so quick then? You're not saying amen, but you know what I'm talking about. That's a bad sign. Why would God send people to heaven who don't want to be in his presence on earth? You ever think of that? I'm not being legalistic.

I'm just saying logically. You don't want to be with the Lord. So I'm just there, pull down my tie, wear a tie, try and look ministerial and everything, and there's a guy, black guy, five rows back in the middle aisle, and he's looking at me, got a cap in his hand, and he's looking at me like he wants my attention.

Looked bad. Looked seedy to me. And I'm thinking to myself, I'm telling you the truth, man, what a bummer of a way to end Long Easter because at that building and where we are downtown, a lot of people coming in for money.

They hit you up for some money. So we got a whole process. No, we'll give you food.

We'll buy it because they want money for what's something else. You know that. But man, I'm tired.

I see this guy, and I think to myself, bad way to end a Sunday, and I'm not going through the process. Let me just talk to him. He wants to talk to me.

I'll give him some money. So I call him forward. I go, come on.

So he's about seven, eight feet from me. I've smelled some smells. You've smelled some smells.

I never smelled a smell like this. That's the foulest smelling human being I ever smelled in my life. Urine, feces, street, sweat.

Mix the equal parts and stir. That's what was coming at me. It was so bad I could not inhale.

I'm telling you the truth. I look to the side. I go, what's your name? My name is David.

Where'd you sleep last night? Empty truck. Abandoned truck. How long you been in the street? Couple of years.

Why aren't you in a shelter? Too scary. I was at a shelter, and I was scared for my life. I'm safer in the street.

His eyes are glazed. Hair is matted. I don't know the last month he had a shower or a bath.

Missing two front teeth here. He looked 50. He was 32.

He's standing there with me, and I'm sitting on the edge, and I'm going like, oh, wow. This is nasty. So after I engage him, find out a little bit about him, I reach in my back pocket, get some money.

I take out the money, and he presses closer to me, and he pushes my hand aside. He said, I want your money. I said, what? He said, I want your money.

I want that Jesus you were talking about. And I go, what did you just say? He said, I'm laying out in my own urine on the outside of your building on the side, and I heard the music, and I came in what that girl was talking about. I want that Jesus.

I'm going to die out there. Brothers and sisters, listen to me. I got so convicted.

As God is my witness, I got so convicted. I had turned into like my worst nightmare, a cheap preacher. You know, some guy with sermons and gibberish, but with nothing in here, empty, nobody at home in your soul.

Jesus had sent somebody to me, and I'm going to give him five bucks or three bucks just to get him out of my way. That's what I was doing. So I forgot about him, and I lifted my hands up to God, and I said, God, please forgive me, and I just started praying for myself.

I didn't care about him at that moment. The person in need was me, not him. Did you know that God started to fill me, fill me, I tell you, with love.

I mean like love, like you couldn't believe. And this love was flowing in my soul and in my heart and breaking me, and I started to cry, and I'm just weeping, and God's breaking me of all that hardness, that Jim Simbala nonsense that can so easily dominate. And did you know that he knew it? He knew it, and as I was starting to cry, not even thinking about him, he gets real close to me, and he falls on my chest, and he puts his arms around me, and I put my arms around him, and as God is my witness, we're there like for three or four minutes just rocking back and forth, him crying and me crying.

You can't make this stuff up. He gave his heart to the Lord that night, but while I was hugging and rocking with him, the Lord spoke and did something very unusual. He spoke to me and said, you see this smell? If you don't love this smell, I cannot use you, because that's how the world smells to me.

So if you can't get past that smell and put your arms around it, I cannot use you. I'll pass you by. I'll find someone else, because that's the smell I called you and your wife to.

And then he changed that smell into the most beautiful perfume I had ever smelled in my life, and as I'm rocking there with him, there was no more bad odor than I could pick up. And David found the Lord. We put him in the hospital for a few days, get his body clean, got his teeth fixed, put him on staff cleaning the building till I could figure out what's going on.

When he got all cleaned up, handsome guy, had this ability to memorize scriptures. The dude could memorize the Bible better than me. He joined the prayer band.

We have a group of 450 people that pray in our church around the clock. They're praying now. They know I'm here.

Not bad, right? They're praying for me right now. Imagine that. They know my schedule.

They know everywhere I go. They're praying for every kind of need. They pray from 9 in the morning till 10 at night, and then they start again in the morning, just rotational office people, everyone, because we're not gonna do this by mirrors.

We need some visitation from heaven. We need God doing something, and he's not gonna come because we sing merely praise and worship songs. I love to sing praise and worship songs, but he's a rewarder of them that diligently seek him and earnestly do it.

So, David spent Thanksgiving at my house. He knocked over. My wife had a fancy table.

He had never had a Thanksgiving meal like that. She knocked over the apple cider that was on the table. He got all embarrassed.

My children were so good. They said, David, don't even worry about it, and he just was, you know, a little felt out of place. He's in the prayer band.

He spent Christmas with us, Christmas Eve. You know what he gave me? He gave me a handkerchief. I still have it, I believe.

He gave me one single white handkerchief. Do you think any other present that I got that year meant more to me than that single white handkerchief? Did you know where he is right now? It's so funny. They had told him, they gave him checkups.

They said, if you ever get married, you're never gonna have children. You've abused your body too bad. So, he met this beautiful African girl who was a pharmacist in our church, and they got married.

So, they got married. That was a miracle. The guy was homeless.

He got married. So, they come to me after about two years, and they say, would you pray for us? We wanna have children. I said, I'll pray for you.

I prayed for them. Ten months later, she has a baby. A year later, she has another baby.

They came back to me. Would you pray and reverse that first prayer? Because we can't have any more kids. I love him.

You know what he is now? He's an ordained minister. Lives in New Jersey. Come on, let's give God praise and honor and glory.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Come on, let's pray.

If you're here and you're a pastor, you're a wife, you're a leader of any kind, and you are just hungry for a fresh baptism of God's love. Just, pastor, I need an invasion of God's love. I wanna minister on another level.

I know about the message. I wanna depend more on the Holy Spirit, but I need bowels of mercy. I need compassion.

I need to see people the way God sees them. I need to feel what God feels, and you can't teach me that. Nobody can teach me that.

God's gotta put that in me. Breaking down my selfishness and my walls and my box that I've created where I minister, but only within the box of what I feel comfortable with. I see people of different colors and backgrounds get rid of prejudice, get rid of all that cultural junk that we all carry through life, because Jesus isn't white.

Jesus isn't black. Jesus is Jesus, loves everyone, died for everyone. If you're here and would like me to close tonight, and you want me to pray over you, and we just believe God for something coming down from heaven, just get out of your seat and come up here quickly.

Come on, anybody. Balcony, downstairs. Just come up here and stand right here.

Don't kneel. Just stand right here. By the way, anybody here, we're gonna pray if you have a wayward son or a daughter, because as I was mentioning Chrissy, some of you, your heart was leaping out.

Oh God, do for me what you did for Chrissy. We're gonna pray for your wayward child. If you have a wayward son or daughter or a wayward grandchild, they're not serving God, and you know it.

Get out of your seat too and come up here and join the rest of us. We praise you, Lord. We praise you, Lord.

I don't know what your custom is, but let's just lift our hands up to God and everyone out loud, let's just start praising God out loud. Come on, everybody. We praise you, God.

We praise you, God. We're not ashamed or embarrassed to praise you out loud, God, for you are worthy. Jesus, you are worthy.

We magnify your name. We glorify your name. We bless your name, Jesus.

Oh, Jesus, we love you. We praise you, Jesus. Father God, I want to bring first our sons and our daughters, our grandchildren that are away from you.

If you have one, lift up your right or left hand right now. Just lift up your right hand or your left hand now if you believe in God. He can bring them back.

He can wake them up tonight. He can get those bad friends away from them. He can turn it inside out, upside down.

He can. You have to believe. Don't give up.

Father God, we ask you to bring sons and daughters back. Back to not only their mothers and dads, but back to you, God. Back to you, Jesus.

The faith they once had, the seeds that were sown in their life, Lord. The enemy has come in to steal it, but we ask you, Lord, raise up a standard against the enemy, Lord. Raise up a standard and bring those children back, Lord.

We pray that you'll break the shackles that hold them, whether it's drugs or whatever it is. Every kind of compulsive behavior, Lord. Break the back of it, Lord.

Break the back of it, Lord. In Jesus' name, break the back of it, Lord. Open the prison doors.

You said you would set the captives free, Lord. We ask you to bring back, Lord, those that we love. Just like Hannah prayed for Samuel, who was yet born, Lord, we bring the children that are born and we ask you to bring them back.

We intercede for them right now, Lord. Give them a dream. Remind them of a verse.

Send somebody to them. We don't care if they're in prison. Visit them in prison, Lord.

Wherever they might be, Lord. For with you, nothing is impossible. God, with you, nothing is impossible.

Now, Lord, we pray for us as leaders. We pray that you're going to do something new in our hearts. Lord, our heads are ahead of our hearts.

That's our problem. We know more than we live. We talk about verses that aren't really reality yet in our lives the way they should be.

Starting with me, God. I pray you'll baptize us with compassion. I pray you'll baptize us with tears.

I pray you'll baptize us with love and mercy, Lord. I pray that you will help us to see people the way you see them. I pray that we will love and feel about them the way you feel about them.

And God, that is beyond us. Come, Holy Spirit. Open the heavens and come down, Lord.

We pray that our churches will become Holy Ghost hospitals, Lord, where people come in to be healed and loved and helped, Lord. Not cliques, not judgmental places, but open with compassion, Lord, like you've been with us. God, we've made a mess so many times and you never have thrown us away.

But you've been merciful and kind to us, Jesus. Me the most, Lord. You've been so kind and patient.

And we ask you to give us that spirit, Lord, so we see Florida like you see Florida. We see men and women the way you see them. Give us that ability to be able to say, I was like a mother nursing her baby when I was among you.

I didn't preach sermons to make a buck. I didn't teach because it's my job. I did it because I love you.

I love you, people. Give us a spirit of self-sacrifice and break down selfishness in us, Lord. I pray that we'll remember that people are our crown, our glory, our joy.

What else do we have to show, Lord, when you come back? But people, people have been changed through our ministry as we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Help us to have such love for people that we'll be able to say, now I really live because you stand firm in the Lord. Not because something good happened to me.

No, I really live now. I rejoice because of what God's doing in your life. Lord, you have to come by your spirit and do that.

Eyes closed, our brother's going to come and just start playing the guitar. He might lead a song in a second, but right now, here's what I'm going to ask you to do when I tell you, not yet. When I tell you to, you're going to open your eyes and every man's going to just turn and find one prayer partner.

He'll face that man. You'll join hands in front of each other. One pray out loud over the other.

Then that person pray over the other. And here's what we're praying. God, do what we heard about tonight in your word.

Give us your heart. Every woman in the building, you find a woman. I want everybody to stand in the building, not just those here.

The Bible says, pray one for another. The Bible says, when we call, he will answer. The church was born not in a teaching session.

It was born in a prayer meeting. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were gathered, praying and waiting, and the spirit came and changed the world through a church filled with the Holy Spirit. I want you to pray.

You linger as long as you want. We're not in a rush to go anywhere. Where are we going to go without God meeting us? I don't want to go back to New York unless God changes me.

And I want the best for your church because we're all brothers and sisters in Christ. It's been an honor to be with you. Everybody now, find your partner.

Come on, every brother, find a partner. And I want to hear you praying out loud. No quiet praying.

You pray out loud, every sister with a sister. Decide who's going to pray first and then pray with all your heart. Come on, pray in faith.

Pray the blessing of God upon somebody.

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