

# Book of Acts Series - Part 24 | Another King

by Jim Cymbala

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*Jim Cymbala explores the challenges faced by Paul and his companions in Thessalonica while emphasizing the importance of sharing the gospel despite opposition and jealousy.*

**Duration:** 35:28

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 2:7

**Topics:** "Book Of Acts"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of believers being filled with the love of God. He uses the analogy of a mother tenderly caring for her newborn baby to illustrate the kind of love and compassion believers should have towards others. The speaker also acknowledges that not everyone will believe in the gospel and that sharing the message of Jesus can sometimes lead to opposition and persecution. He highlights the transformative power of the gospel by describing how some individuals who were living destructive lives find peace and acceptance in Christ, but face resistance from their families and society. The sermon concludes by mentioning the occurrence of both revival and riots when the gospel is preached.

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## Transcript

The book of Acts takes up decades of years, tens of years. So it's very interesting to wonder why certain things were included and why not others. Why do certain days, same as true in the gospel, why did the writers pick out certain days led by the Holy Spirit and tell us what Jesus taught and did while he ministered for three and a half years? Imagine all that he did.

Well, imagine all that happened in the book of Acts. We don't know where Matthew went. In fact, I just heard from the people in Ethiopia that they believe, their tradition tells them, it's not in scripture, that Matthew went down to northern Africa and was one of the first people to bring the gospel to Ethiopia.

That's not in the Bible, but that's something that their church tradition tells them. But we don't know where Matthew went. We don't know where Thomas went.

There's reason to believe, historically, that he possibly went to India and brought the gospel there. So we don't know what Paul was doing on other days. We don't know what the apostles were doing during the book of Acts.

They just focus in on Paul, and at that, we just have fragments of his actions and achievements in the Lord. We're gonna now, in our following of his second missionary trip, he's with Silas. He's with a Dr. Luke who wrote this book.

He's with a young man by the name of Timothy who's a fairly new believer, and we just left them. We took two weeks just to talk about their visit to Philippi where they ended up in jail. God delivered them, and they got a beating before they went in jail, a very severe beating, persecution, got out of the jail.

The jailer got saved, his family did, and then after encouraging the believers, they left town. Now, that visit to Philippi, later Paul wrote back to that church, and what is that letter called in the New Testament? Philippians. That's the letter to the church in Philippi.

So now we're gonna try something today a little bit different to help you when you study your Bible. I'm gonna look at this a little differently than I normally would, and we're gonna learn about the next stop. Paul left Philippi, and the next place he went to was Thessalonica.

This is how it all began, all right? Let's look at it. When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica where there was a Jewish synagogue. Who's they? That's the team I told you about, headed by Paul and Silas.

As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue. What's a synagogue? That's where the Jewish people would meet to worship. And on three Sabbath days, he reasoned with them from the scriptures, so hold that, three Sabbath days, that's Saturday to the Jewish, right, calendar, and that would be, he's there at least three weeks.

He reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving to the Jewish people there and the other Gentile worshipers of God that Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ, he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks.

Who were the God-fearing Greeks? These were non-Jews, but who worshiped in the synagogue. They were not considered Jewish, but they were called God-fearers, and they met because they were drawn to the monotheism and morality of the Jewish faith versus the looseness of the Roman Empire with all their gods and of the Greek culture. And not a few prominent women, these were wealthier women, well-known in the community.

But the Jews, who didn't believe, were jealous, so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace. There are always bad characters in every marketplace in the world. Formed a mob, that's not hard to do, and started a riot in the city.

So now some are getting saved. You have revival and riots happening at the same time. It is what it is.

So you have some getting saved. Well, I thought Paul was anointed. Yeah, he was anointed.

I thought he was an apostle. Yeah, he was. Did everybody get saved? No, that is a faulty kind of triumphalism that is sometimes propagated in our circles today, that if God is with you, everybody will get saved, and if they don't, something's wrong with you.

That's wrong. Jesus didn't have everybody converted to his way of thinking when he was here. But some were saved, but the Jews were jealous, the ones who didn't receive, so they rounded up some bad characters in the marketplace, formed a mob, started a riot in the city.

They rushed to Jason's house. We don't know who Jason was, but obviously it's where Paul and Silas and the group might have been staying or connected to him in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. That would have been bad.

But when they did not find them, praise God, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting, these men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here. And Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar.

That's the ruler of the Roman Empire. Caesar's decree saying that there is another king, one called Jesus, and when they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. Then they made Jason and the others post bond, they paid bail, and let them go.

And as soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue in Berea. In these nine, 10 verses, we have the founding of the church in Thessalonica.

So let's just analyze this. Paul and Silas, who had that beating, went through these Greek cities that are just mentioned, and they went from Philippi to Thessalonica, and that is about 100 miles. See, in just one little sentence, they went from here to Apollonia to this and all of that, but that was, on the map, about 100 miles.

There were no taxis and there was no airplane. That meant they walked 100 miles after taking a beating that could have killed them. The scourging that they took was called 40 minus one because they had given 40 lashes or 40 hits with wooden rods, and it killed some people before they could get them in prison.

So they made a law in the Roman Empire, you only do 39 because 40 could be fatal. So after taking that beating and getting thrown in prison, they now, in obedience to their commitment to Christ, they travel 100 miles on foot to go to Thessalonica, and where do they go? You talk about courage. They go to the synagogue.

They always did that, it seemed. They started to the Jew first, also to the Greek. They started in the synagogue and would start there.

Paul was Jewish, Jesus was born to Mary in a Jewish home. The message came to Israel first, so they went to the synagogue. That was their custom if there was a synagogue in the city.

And then, depending on what happened there, they would then turn to the Gentiles, in this case, the Greeks, and give the gospel. So with their courage and endurance, they traveled 100 miles to go to a place where there was nothing but trouble looming for them. They were going to a synagogue to tell people, Jesus is the Messiah, y'all missed it.

That usually does not get a great reaction, but this is what the Lord told them to do. And he said, there would be hardship when you do it. He said, not everyone will believe.

And the Western mind that we have been invaded by, our Western mentality, you know, knows nothing about hardship here in America when you preach the gospel. We might have somebody look at us and say, you're a jerk, get out of here. Somebody in the elevator in the building that I live in, I was coming down in the elevator today, and she was with two children, and she looked at me, and she said, had my attache case, my, you're dressed up for a Sunday morning.

And I said, yes. She was smiling, you're dressed up. And I guess I had talked to her children, they were so cute, and they had a little dog.

I said, yeah, I'm going to church. And the minute I said church, she went, oh, you get that reaction, don't you sometimes? You know, if you're going to Crack House, they would go, yeah, have a good time. But going to church, going to church, where are you going to church? What are you talking about, church? Are we talking church here? To us, that's like a little inconvenience, but where I was just now, I found out that when the communists took over the government in Ethiopia, all kinds of pastors were put in prison.

Some lost their lives. They had to evade the law, because they had another king named Jesus who they were going to obey, rather than the communist government. A Muslim faith is making militant inroads in the eastern part of the country, near Somalia, so now there's difficulties of another kind.

So to serve Jesus in many parts of the world means trouble, and to the western mind, that's like, we have these evangelists and televangelists, if you serve Jesus and just quote that word, you'll get a raise in your job, and you'll have a bigger home, and you just speak that word, and the western mind, which has an appetite for materialism, these ministers are very clever. They know, they're not interested in what the Bible says, they know what the people want to hear. So they cherry pick verses, and leave out all the other verses like this one.

They travel 100 miles, and they go to the synagogue, and then you get this mixed reaction, which we've talked about. When you share Christ, not everyone will believe. That's not our business.

Our business is just to share Christ. God has to do the saving. How many say amen? And how they get saved, and how we plant the seed, and what will happen now, then, later, all of that.

Imagine when we get to heaven, and we meet people that we possibly talk to, who we saw them reject, but that seed was planted, and maybe a half hour before they died, they said, Lord, have mercy on me. And they're gonna be with us in heaven for all eternity. So you never know, you just keep talking, inviting, loving, knowing that not everyone will have a positive reaction.

Some believe, Jews, God-fearing Gentiles, prominent women, and then others say, what? The Bible says they were moved by jealousy to make trouble for Paul and Silas. So now let's just talk about that for a second. We've seen this now in several places, that jealousy is a motivating factor for a lot of trouble when it comes for Christianity.

Jesus was delivered up for jealousy. When they saw the crowds, the religious leaders saw the crowds he was drawing, they were jealous because he had authority, and people were drawn to him, and they were losing their sway and their perks over the people, and that's when the Bible says they plotted to kill Jesus. And when they delivered him to Pontius Pilate, Pilate, who was very streetwise, he knew in a second he read this thing, and he knew, they're just jealous of him, that's why they've cooked up this charge to try to get rid of him.

And now we see, why did the Jews persecute Paul? Because they were so against what he was teaching? No, because people were leaving the synagogue and saying, no, I'm gonna follow Jesus, I wanna hear more of the teaching of this apostle Paul. Jealousy is an ugly thing, isn't it? And it not only can be that kind, it can be among Christians. Denominations are jealous of other denominations.

Churches in the same city are jealous of other churches. I know pastors who rejoice when they hear a bad report of something happening in another church. And if they hear that God is blessing some other church, they go, yeah, well, you can't be sure about all of that, you really gotta check it out.

Anything to just, isn't that a horrible thing? Woman buys a nice dress, she looks in the mirror, she's so happy, she looks nice, comes to church, sees someone who has a nicer dress, ruins her day because of jealousy. Same way with men, women. Come on, aren't we all the same? Jealousy, you don't have to teach jealousy.

You just give toys to children. I watched that one Christmas, giving presents to my grandchildren. Minute they opened it, and they were playing with it, and they loved it, and then their cousin opened another present, I want that, I want that, I want that, and they had their own gift.

No, it just, let's ask God to save us from jealousy. Let's rejoice when other people are blessed. Because when you're jealous of someone, what you're doing is saying, God, I don't like the way you're blessing that person.

That's not a good way to start the day. Just, let's rejoice. There will always be people more wealthy than you, more talented than you, nicer personality, whatever.

That's what it is, it is what it is. Let's just be thankful for what God has given us. Do I get an amen here? Come on, let's say amen to that.

So now, the Bible says, in the synagogue, how did he win converts? The Bible says that he reasoned with them from the scriptures, proving that Christ had to suffer and then rise from the dead. All right, let's think about this. How did Paul preach the gospel? There was no New Testament.

He couldn't say, for God so loved the world that he gave his only, he said it, but he didn't quote John 3.16. John hadn't been written yet. So what did he do? He reasoned with them from the scripture. And what he tried to tell them was Christ had to suffer and then rise from the dead.

What was the stumbling block to the Jew about Jesus being the Messiah? What kind of Messiah are you talking about? The guy died on a cross. The Bible says in the Old Testament, cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. You're trying to tell me this guy's special? He was arrested and put on a cross, and you're trying to tell me he's special? So this was a stumbling block to the Jewish mind because they wanted a triumphant Messiah.

They wanted a Messiah who would take the Roman Empire and put it under his heel. He would use verses that they had already accepted as scripture and said, no, you got it wrong. Don't you see God foretold what would happen to Messiah? Messiah, by the way, is the same word as Christ.

Christ is in the Greek language, and Messiah is the Hebrew term. The anointed one is the one Christ, and the expected anointed one to the Jewish mind was the Messiah, same word. So he would quote verses like this.

Look in Isaiah 53. Isaiah, writing hundreds of years before, how would he write this and know that this would happen? Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He, this is the suffering servant of the Lord. This is what Isaiah is prophesying about, not himself, but he's about someone who will come.

He grew up before him like a tender shoot and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him, speaking of Messiah, that would come. He was despised and rejected by men.

He was a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and he carried our sorrows yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted, but he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray.

Each of us has turned to his own way and the Lord has laid on him. Praise God, the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth.

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. That's exactly how Jesus died. He didn't argue and fight with Pilate.

He didn't argue with the Roman soldiers. He didn't fight with the Jewish Sanhedrin when they trumped up charges. He was wounded for our transgressions.

He was bruised for our iniquities and what Paul did was said, no, you have the wrong idea. You're our own scripture. Show, this is what Messiah would do.

So he tried to prove to them from scripture. He fulfilled all those things. Let us tell you what Jesus of Nazareth suffered in Jerusalem for you and that he also would rise again.

So he said, don't you remember what David said in Psalm 16? He wasn't speaking about himself because his grave is with us. He lived, he died. He stayed in the dirt.

But who is he talking about here? Psalm 16, I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices.

My body will also rest secure because you will not abandon me to the grave nor will you let your Holy One see decay. He said that was written prophetically that the Spirit of God would come upon the Old Testament writers and they would not only write for the people of their day but sometimes the Spirit would lift them and they would begin to speak of things that would happen hundreds of years later. And he said to them, let me prove to you this was spoken of Jesus.

David is dead, he's in the grave. So who is this one that he speaks of that would not see corruption? It's Jesus, the Messiah. And he appeared to me and he told them of his conversion and many other words.

He gave them the good news of Jesus. This is either true or it's the biggest con game that's ever been invented. Either Jesus died and rose again or he's the biggest religious imposter along with Paul and along with the scriptures that ever came down the pike.

It's either true or it's not true. It's not just true for me and something else is true for another person. True is true.

It's according to reality. And the reality is that God inspired people to prophesy things that Jesus had done to him which were beyond his control. The beating, the scourging, the crown of thorns, all of this was predicted.

The rejection, being spat upon. They ripped at his beard. The spittle ran down his face.

This was all done but predicted hundreds of years ago. The Hebrew and Greek scholars who know the Bible know that Isaiah was written hundreds of years before Christ. Isaiah was written hundreds of years before Christ.

How could they predict exactly what happened to Jesus? Because God inspired this book that we call the Bible. Can we say amen to that? Many people don't like what it says and many people don't want to say I'm a sinner and I need to repent and that's why they fight what the Bible says. Not that the prophecies aren't true.

They just don't like the content of the message. He did that and some were converted and others fought him and that's interesting that we could use that when we talk to people and point out those prophecies. Study your Bible, get in your concordance and find those prophecies in the Old Testament.

Do you know that Micah even said the city that he would be born in? Out of you, Bethlehem will come the Savior and Jesus obviously could not control where he was born. That was in the providence of God that God would fulfill every word spoken. Oh, I'm so happy that I am worshiping the true and the living God and his son Jesus.

So now, the people who are jealous of him, let's close. People were jealous and they went out to the town square like where people hang out and they got together a mob and they talked some trash to them about Paul and Silas and the next thing you know, you have a mob and now they're gonna catch him. Oh, it looks like another beating for Paul.

Will his body be able to take it or are they gonna put him in prison? What are they gonna do? We don't know where they were but thank God, they weren't at Jason's house and they went to Jason's house, they weren't there so they pulled Jason there. I want you to notice two things that they said which is interesting about Christianity. They said to the crowd to work them up.

We gotta get rid of these guys. This guy Jason took them in. This Paul and Silas and their group.

These are the people who everywhere they go in the world, they cause trouble. Christians were called troublemakers because Jesus said, I didn't come to bring peace. What did Jesus say he came to bring? A sword.

When the gospel is preached, it has a reaction that people believe or don't believe but the people who don't believe, they get up in your grill quick. Well, why should they? We're gonna find out that these people in Thessalonica were so hostile that when Paul goes to another city, next week maybe we'll study this, he goes to another city. Do you think they leave him alone? They follow him to that city and try to kill him there.

Why? The guy just sees things differently. Let him have his view, you have your view. No, no, no, no, no, not when it comes to Christianity.

Jesus says they hated me, they will hate you. They rejected me, they'll reject you. They persecuted me, they will persecute you.

I'm telling you that because I wanna be a faithful servant of the Lord and tell you the whole counsel of God. When you witness for Christ, trouble will sometimes come. I've seen that in houses.

One person gets saved, they were fine. No, how about this? I've seen this 100 times since I've been in the ministry. Someone's living the wildest, craziest life, dropping out of school, not fulfilling commitments, on drugs, alcohol, whatever, and then they hear the gospel.

Sometimes right in this church, they get saved and they were fine with their family. They were fine, nobody said a word. They're coming home at 4.30 in the morning, everything was cool.

The minute they say they're Christians and they're going to church, all hell breaks loose in the house. All kinds of things explode. Everybody's against them.

What are you doing? You think you're better than us? Why are you going to church? Bunch of holy rollers that are there. They just want your money. And before, when they were living crazy, everything was fine.

Why is that? It's because what we read in the Bible. There's something about Jesus that separates people. How many have witnessed that or experienced it yourself? You know what I'm talking about.

It's Jesus. Watch what's gonna happen in the months and years to come with this current administration, our government, whatever's happening now. Other religions who've sold certain views about teachings in the Bible about sexuality or different things, they get a pass.

They're gonna come after the Christians. Watch that. But it is what it is.

We're serving Jesus. How many have determined no matter what, we're gonna serve Jesus, right? We're gonna follow Jesus? No turning back? No turning back. One other thing was made accusation.

I pray this accusation will come against us too. They said, you gotta get rid of these guys because they're teaching that they have another king. They don't buy into Caesar.

They got another king. They're disloyal. Wouldn't you like someone to say that about you? You know what I don't like about them? They're not a Democrat.

They're not a Republican. They're not Americans first. They're not into their West Indian thing.

They got another king named Jesus. And what he says, that's what they go by. And they relate to people in his kingdom.

And his authority is supreme to them. And they have a loyalty first to him, not to the government or their culture or their race. They're troublemakers because they have another king.

I wonder how many of us could have that accusation made about us, the way we live on our jobs and the way we carry on that people would say, you know what, she's different, he's different because they got another king. They go to the sound of another trumpet. They're following another whole thing.

They're just, they live in another world. Wouldn't you like that accusation made? That was the accusation made against the early Christians. Now, the question comes to us.

How long did they stay there? Nobody knows. We know they went on to Berea. How long did they stay in Thessalonica because when we read 1 and 2 Thessalonians, they had a dynamic church.

How did Paul do that? Was he there two or three months? He could have been there just three weeks. But that's all we hear about. When did the persecution come? We don't know exactly, but definitely, they weren't there for a long period of time.

So how were they so effective to preach the gospel, preach Jesus? They were faithful to preach Jesus. They based it on the word of God. How were they so effective in planting a church? I know they were anointed by the Holy Spirit.

I know they gave the right message of Jesus. But I wanna know as a pastor, and we should wanna know, are there any secrets? Let's look at those 10 verses. No, the 10 verses don't tell us.

And this is what you can do when you read the book of Acts. If you can, where were they in Thessalonica? Later on, Paul wrote a letter to them, two letters, called 1 and 2 Thessalonians. And just look at the secret to how Paul did this and was so effective.

He anointed by the Holy Spirit. He gave them the message of Jesus. He didn't say, join my church, join my denomination.

Ah, he preached Jesus. But look, as apostles of Christ, he's writing to them in Thessalonica. We could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.

We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship. We worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

Ah, there's the secret. They not only told them about Jesus and depended on the Spirit, their hearts were filled with the love of God. And love wins people to the Lord.

You know what our problem is a lot of times? We don't love people, but we try to tell them the truth. And they can pick up our harshness and say, I don't wanna know about your Jesus. Spare me your Jesus.

You're obnoxious. You're impolite. You don't care about me.

You're just trying to convert me to your religion. Am I not right? You know what the secret for all of our churches are around the world, around this country? We gotta be baptized in the love of God so that we are tender with people and kind to them. The picture there in the Greek, which I've told you in the past, where Paul says we were like a mother tenderly nursing her babies when we were with you, it's a picture of a woman pulling down her dress and taking a newborn baby to her breast and nursing the baby.

Paul says that's how we were when we were with you. Oh, shame on us pastors. And shame on us believers that we're not filled with more of the love of God so that people can say, how tender you were.

How kind you were. How loving you were. You know what? I wanna be filled with more of the love of God.

I want truth. I want the Bible. I wanna tell people about Jesus.

I believe in the power of prayer. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. But notice what Paul says.

He said, you all remember how I was when I was with you. I was ready to give you not just the gospel, I was ready to give you my life as well. Like a mother would.

Oh yeah. You know, choir, don't you know we have people in our church, I've met them in the past. They walk up to me and I haven't seen them in years.

And they've aged like 15 years in six years than the last time I saw them. And I wonder why they're looking that way. And as I'm shaking their hand, this has happened a few times, I'm going, hi, how are you? And they went, Pastor, I want you to meet somebody.

This is my son. He just graduated. He's the first one ever in my family tree to graduate from college and I'm sending him to law school now.

He's gonna be a lawyer and he loves Jesus. And then I notice her hands and they're gnarly and she's been working two or three jobs to make that happen. Like a mother nursing her baby, that's how I was when I was with you.

When you love your child, you're gonna do anything for your child, am I right? And Paul said, when I was with you, you were like children to me. I was ready to do anything. No one taught him that.

You can't teach people to do that. I'm too selfish, you can't teach me to love like that. It has to be something that God puts in us.

You know what, we want to witness to more people. Don't we need to ask God as we close, God, baptize me in your love. I don't want to just talk the talk.

I want to walk the walk. I want to show people love and compassion and concern. You win people by love.

Don't you know how many wounded people there are in New York? They've closed themselves in because they've been hurt by so many people and they won't even listen to us when we tell them about Jesus at first. You gotta sometimes win their ear by loving them, by showing them kindness, buying them breakfast or just something that God will lay on your heart. Then they'll open up and say, I can trust you because we got a lot of people around us who don't trust a soul.

They've been hurt. They've been hurt and the walls are up. And I've met them in my office, I've met them in the street and you want to talk to them about the Lord but you realize, I try to get out of here with that religion.

That'll be their reaction. But sometimes you just gotta begin by, how are you today? Something I can pray about, something I can help you with. Well, let's ask God to fill us more with his love today.

Shall we bow our heads? Father God, there's no altar big enough for all of us to come to. Would you fill us with your love today? Baptize us in your love. Help us to reason from the scripture.

Help us to share the message of Christ everywhere we go. I thank you for all you've done in our lives. I ask you to forgive us for our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us.

But God, as we study this passage, it just stares at us that they weren't just robots speaking a word but their hearts were full of mercy and compassion and love. Paul, Silas, Luke, Timothy. Would you forgive us, Lord, for our selfishness and our lack of concern for other people? That we don't mind sharing a word and a verse but then when it comes to really loving them, Paul says, I worked hard day and night so I wouldn't be a burden to you.

God, would you put that in our heart, please? Let the testimony be when people come in this church, not the building or a minister or a choir but let people say, God, please, for Christ's sake, let people say, I felt the love of God in that place. The people loved me. I was greeted, I was encouraged, I was welcomed.

Tomorrow or tonight, tomorrow, if you give us another week, can we spread your love everywhere we go, Lord? Would you help me to be more than a preacher? Help me to be a man of love, Lord? A man of kindness and gentleness? Would you help us to want to be with people? Some of us are loners, we isolate ourselves and then we wonder why more people don't respond to us when we talk to them. Would you help the choir behind me, Lord? Would you help us all today and baptize us with the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Spirit? It can't be our love, God, because I don't have that kind of love. You know who I am, Lord.

But we pray in the name of Christ that you will do a new work in us, Lord, and make us tender, make us sensitive, make us compassionate, not just to people of our own race or people who are like us, but help us to love everyone the way you love everyone. Help us to see people the way you see them. Help us to feel what you feel.

God, if I would just feel what you feel about people, I would preach so much better. So God, I ask you to work in us and soften us and give us that spirit of Paul, which is the spirit of Christ. For God is love.

He that abides in love abides in God. If anyone says he loves God and doesn't love his neighbor, the truth is not in him. Save us from the delusion that we love God and we don't care about people.

Save us from that. Some of us have been brought up in churches, Lord, where we were taught devotion to you and then the people don't matter. Save us from that, Lord.

Save us from that. And visitors who you brought in here today, God, who have been misguided in their concept of Christianity, would you straighten out all of us today and fill us with your love and compassion that we can minister one to another? We pray this in Jesus' name.

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