

The Real Life: Love Not the World - Part 3-1 John 2:15-17-12 Oct 2014

If you have your Bibles, turn with me therefore, to 1 John chapter 2 and er...that you can look at the verses 15 to 17, in particular once again. Now, let me begin with what happened in my home, in my house. Some months ago, I shared with you that there is a plumbing issue, something was choked up in one of the pipes and water was overflowing everywhere in the kitchen. Well, my house seems to have this problem with plumbing and so this week, I had a problem with a toilet bowl. Er...and this time it's not just overflowing things, not that it's not overflowing but there is an overwhelming stench. So there's a smell that came out of the toilet bowl. I do not know what's going on. The water level in the toilet bowl was going low and when you flush, it will flush and then it will grgrgrgrrr... there's a gurgling sound. So something obviously is not right, but I did what a guy usually does - act blur and do nothing about it. So I ignored it, I didn't deal...deal with it, because it's my son's toilet, my wife doesn't know. (Laughter in the congregation) So I sort of ignored it and passed over it, but the stench just got more and more overwhelming.

And at last, we decided to get the plumber in. The plumber came and he took a mirror and he puts it at the back of the toilet bowl or the unit and he says, "I think I know what the problem is." He began to dismantle the whole toilet seat, the unit itself. Took about 10 - 15 minutes and he says, "Sir, come take a look." And so I went and to my horror, I saw something that maybe if you're not er... prepared, don't see, alright? Viewer discretion is advised (laughter in the congregation). Because when my helper went in, she saw it, she was 'eek' and this is the picture, alright? Close your eyes, if you didn't want to see it. Eh... aiyah...okay... (nothing on screen) close your eyes if you didn't want to see it. Well, it looks like this. (Picture shown) (Exclamation in the congregation) Urrrggggg....the seat is removed and that...that trap at the...on the floor looks exactly like this. So no wonder, my helper shook her head; the plumber when he stepped into the room says, "Wah...什么这样臭啊?" (shen me zhe yang chou a) (Mandarin words meaning what is so smelly?) He cannot believe the smell. And I tell you, even right now, I can smell it. (Laughter in the congregation) Still lingering, I think. 0:02:22.0

Well, when I had this, I thought about the series we are in. We are talking about loving not the world. Why? Because the world is choking up our spiritual life and we don't even know it! There is that smell; there is that filth, there is that stench that is coming out of us, before the Holy God and we don't even know it. What's worse is, we tend to ignore it. We think nothing's going on, we think we are fine, we think we come to church, we think that we serve God and we do not realize that our lives are

actually choked up with worldliness. So we tried to, maybe spray perfume, oh mask that smell. And so as Christians, we mask the fact that we love the world by coming to church, serving God and we think everything is okay. The reality, however, your life is not doing well. You're choked, you're blocked, you stink and it's got to be gotten rid of. That's why the Bible tells us, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

This three-part series began with an understanding of what this world is all about. What does it mean to love the world? We realized, to not love the world is not to say we cannot live in the world, because the Bible tells us to shine as lights in this world. So it's not about possessing the world, but it's about obsessing the world. It's not that we can't live in the world, but the world must not live in us. The heart of the matter is that this is a matter of the heart. Love not the world, because if you love the world, there will come a certain devastation in your life. John tells us, the world passes away and the lust, thereof. If you love this world and you live for this world, then you live for a life that has no future. What's worse? According to CS Lewis, this world is like sweet poison of the false infinite. It kills you spiritually. 0:04:32.5

So, today we come to the final message, which is a needful one, about how you can be delivered from loving this world. This is a message about the 'How?' The first message is about 'What?' The second is about 'Why?' and this is a message about how you and I could be delivered from the power of this world. By the way, this is a command from God. This is not an option when he says, "Love not the world..." It is written in the imperative voice, meaning it is a command, it's not an option. But we know how difficult this is, isn't it? I mean, like I say, when you go to a shopping mall and you see the glittering handbags, the shiny diamonds, your heart longs for these things; when a guy goes to a car showroom, opens the car and smells the new car, the new leather, he's intoxicated with the love for this car. It is so easy to be tempted to go the way of the world when you talk with your friends. Oh, he is now a professor; oh, now he is the CEO; oh, now he is earning big bucks; oh, this is the car he drives; this is the house he lives in. These are the things that appeal to us. So we know we ought not love this world but it's so difficult.

So how can you and I be delivered from the love of this world? That's the question we want to answer today. How do people answer this question? Well, some of them answered it this way: Pastor, I know how I cannot love this world. I will give up all my creature comforts. I will sell my bed; I will give away my pillow; I will not eat any delicacy but 'jiak loti' (A mixed of Hokkien dialect and Malay words meaning eat bread) and drink water everyday. I will not have lights nor computer or television. I

gave all these things away. That's how I love not the world. But do you realize that, even if you give away these things and you drive a 'lau pok chia' (Hokkien dialect words meaning old lousy car), you can still love the world? You can still be coveting? You can still be longing and craving for the things of the world, so removing these things on the outside may not help you deal with a heart problem. 0:06:39.6

Some of us like the Amish people, they withdraw from society. They say, "Oh, love not the world." So I tear away from this society; I tear away from people. I go to the desert; I go to the monastery; I stay only with Christians. Well, even if you're staying away from society, it doesn't mean that the world does not creep into you as well. Some of us narrow it to external practices. Orr... love not the world means I'm not going to drink; I'm not going to smoke. I'm not going to do this, I'm not going to do that. I live by a code of conduct. But again, that is no sure-fire method to cure the worldliness that can be growing in us. So how can you and I deal with this heart problem? It's not about the outside. It's really not about the outside. The outside is merely a manifestation of the inside, of the heart. So how can I deal with this heart disease called 'Loving the World'?

In order for you to understand this, I want you to think about this little difficulty I have. I have this bottle (Pastor holds up empty bottle), empty bottle, umm... you could see it. It's empty, but it's not empty because there is what inside? There is air inside. It's sealed, alright? It's seal real tight. There is air inside. Can you help me find a way to get rid of the air? If I were to give you any device, any machine, anything at all. Even yourself, you can use whatever parts of your body. I give you anything you can. Could you for 10 seconds think and don't tell anyone yet. Think for 10 seconds, what's the best way for you to remove this air from the bottle. Don't tell anyone yet, alright? Think for yourself 10 seconds and locked in the answer in your mind. (After a short pause) Okay, times up! I will ask anyone of you can? No lah, stress you. You become so stressed. Give your answer. What is the best way to get air out of this? Put in a...? (Response in the congregation) Aiyah, all so smart people! This spoils my game (laughter in the congregation) but okay, I still will demonstrate to you. This... this, some of us may think, open it up and... (Pastor suck out the air from the bottle) suck the air. Some of us may attach it to a vacuum cleaner, but yeah I think most of you are right, this is the best way to get rid of air. (Pastor opens another bottle) My...my son's water bottle. (Pastor pours red-coloured water into the empty bottle) I think, this is the best way to get rid of air in the bottle. And this is a remembrance for this message. 0:09:24.8

How do you drive out the love of this world? The Biblical basis for this is found in 1 John 2:15. "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." We began by looking at this simple principle. There's only room for one in your heart. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. There's only room for one. And there are therefore two rivals for your human heart. There is the world who wants your heart and God who wants your heart. But if you allow the world to occupy your heart, if you love the world, then the love of God is not in you. And therefore, the only power that can expel the love of the world in your heart is when you have the love of God in you.

This principle is what Thomas Chalmers says in his sermon, 'Expulsive Power of a New Affection'. Thomas Chalmers is an old Scottish preacher known for one sermon, okay? He's most well-known for this one sermon and the sermon is what we are looking at today - The Expulsive Power of a New Affection. Why new? Because we are never born with the love for God. This love for God is given to us by Him, but once you have the love of God, this is a powerful force that drives out the natural love for God in our hearts. Thomas Chalmers argues, that if you just tell people the world is bad, the world is bad, you got to get out of it, you got to get it out of your heart. If you just tell people that, it will never last. Because the world once driven out for a moment, would easily come back. It's almost like if I suck the air out of the bottle, when my face turn green, yeah, maybe there is less air but the moment I stop, it flows right back in. Nature doesn't like vacuum. So Thomas Chalmers says, if you just tell people to love not the world, tell them to do that is bad, they will not be able to sustain that kind of a life. The only way to really do so, is when you're filled up with the love of God. The red, pure love of God. He says, "We know of no other way by which to keep the love of the world out of our heart, than to keep in our hearts the love of God." Very, very simple point. How can you and I deal with the air in our life? The vanity of this world in our life? When you are filled up with God's love. 0:12:08.5

This is very simple and I think even a child can understand that. This is a picture of my son, Matthias. Er...the second one. Matthias is a very cheeky boy and he loves to take photos. He will take...he will pose for you, er... and he's very strong-willed. My older son is very much like my wife - very gentle, very kind. My second son is like me - stubborn like...like nothing, okay? Matthias is very stubborn and he loves to hold on to...to things he likes. So umm...wherever he goes, he will hold on to something and if you want to take that thing away from him, he will fuss. He will complaint, he will cry, he will make a lot of difficulties for you, so that he doesn't have to let go.

But we found one method to make him let go happily, willingly, without complaints. We found a new affection for Matthias. You see, if I tell Matthias, “Don’t... Matthias, share the toy, give to your brother, share with friends.” He won’t! But now we have discovered a new affection for Matthias and it all becomes easy. Noticed what’s in his hand? The dinosaur. He won’t...he won’t appreciate if you say ‘dinosaur’, you must be very precise, T-Rex (laughter in the congregation). He knows Diplodocus, T-Rex. He knows T-Rex so...and he has a few T-Rexes. He has an orange one, brown one, this is the green one. The green T-Rex is Matthias’ favourite. Before he sleeps, T-Rex must be beside him. When he wakes up, he says, “My T-Rex! Where is T-Rex?” And wherever he goes, he loves to bring T-Rex around. So now we realize that if Matthias is doing iPad, or he is playing with toys and we want him to leave that, the best thing to do is, “Matthias, T-Rrrex!” And he lets go of his iPad, he lets go of the things that he wants to be playing and he goes for T-Rex. No quarrel, no problems. He’s able to let go because he has an overwhelming passion for T-Rex.

Why would you give up this world? I mean the world is fun, iPad, lots of nice things. Why would you give it up? Simply because someone tells you the world is bad? No, the heart is wired to crave for something. It must search for something and if you say, “Don’t touch it!” You must give it something else and the only power strong enough, for a man to let go of the world, is the new affection - the love for God. 0:14:46.9

Parents, I want to share something. I...I don't have kids who love to play computer yet, but you probably have kids who are... who play computer everyday. You say to, “Ah Boy, ‘mai shen liao’ (Hokkien dialect words meaning don’t play already). Ah Boy, don’t play already. Play so much computer, you can’t study. You must study. Give up computer, it’s not good... you nag and nag and nag and nag. I tell you what your Ah Boy still do, still play and play and play and play. Why? You...he...it’s not that he doesn't know he is wasting his time, I can tell you that. He knows it’s a waste of time. He knows it should be spent more profitably. But he can't let go because you are telling him it's bad but you’re not giving him anything that really motivates him. There’s no new affection.

For some of you, you are trying to lose weight. People tell you fat no good, fat no good, fat no good. Yeah, I know no good but I...I can’t lose weight. You know why? Because there’s no affection for something else. I know it because I was a ‘Pui Kia’ (Hokkien dialect words meaning fat boy). Er...I was...I was really overweight when I was in primary school, secondary school. I was part of a very famous club called the TAF Club. Heard of that? Trim and Fit Club. Actually not very trim and not very fit lah. All oversize people. I was part of the TAF Club. Never really wanted to lose

weight. I mean what's wrong? I eat all I want, I have all the KFC I like. What's the big deal? Until...Winnie came into my life (Laughter in the congregation). The expulsive power of a new affection. We all understand this. And when it comes to the world, there is a new affection that changes our life - The love of God. o:16:27.6

This is what Thomas Chalmers means, and I think that's what we can learn from 1 John 2. We are naturally born with a love for this world. You tell this world, get out of my heart but the world will creep back in. There's a vacuum and the only way this world is going to be pushed out in our life is when there is a love for God that fills this heart. That's the only way. Is this true? Yeah, look at Moses. Moses could be the number 1 man in all the world at his time, he could be. He could have all the glory and pomp and pleasures of this world, but you know what the Bible tells us? Moses didn't want all that. Amazing! He didn't want the pleasures this world has to offer. He chose to be mistreated with the people of God. You say why? Why would he let go of Egypt? Why would he let go of this world? Because he has an expulsive power of a new affection – Christ. And even if he were to suffer for Christ, he says, I would gladly go. So overwhelming for this man of faith, that he lets go of this world, because he has a deep love for God and Jesus Christ.

This is exactly what Jesus said in Matthew 13. Sometimes when we read these parables, we don't get this angle but if you look at it this way. “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” (Matthew 13:44, ESV) Basically he exchanged everything he had for this one treasure. He happily lets go of all that he has for this one treasure. This is the Gospel. This is the love of God. What does it mean to follow Jesus? It means I'm willing to let go of everything in my life so that I may have God and it is because of God that I happily give up everything in my life. It's because of Jesus that I would deny myself, take up the cross and follow Him. Is this such a pain? No, because I have Christ! The expulsive power of a new affection. This man is no loser. He has the joy and love of God.

I walk in hospital wards, by and by visiting people. I talked to my friends who are doctors. Maybe now private practice, whatever. Am I a loser? I say, “No, I have Christ.” And I gladly give that all up because I've found a treasure. The positive power, expulsive power of a new affection. o:19:25.9

Sinclair Ferguson, a modern preacher today who, after reading Thomas Chalmers, puts it in simpler English and therefore I share it with you. He says, “You cannot destroy love for the world merely by showing its emptiness. Even if we could do so,

that would only lead to despair. The first world-centered love of our hearts can be expelled only by a new love and affection for God and from God. The love of the world and the love of the Father cannot dwell together in the same heart.” There's only room for one. “But the love of the Fa... of the world can be driven out only by the love of the Father.”

Jesus Christ. He says, “I do not ask that you take them out of the world...” (John 17:15) The cure to worldliness is not taking them out. In actual fact, Jesus wants them to be in the world. To shine, to preach, to bring the Gospel message, but how to prevent the world getting into them? The expulsive power of a new affection. “I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them...” (John 17:26, ESV) What they need is the love of God. So what is the cure? What is a true antidote to worldliness in life? You've got to be filled up with the red love of God. You've got to love God and when you love God you will not love the world.

Let me tell you something however, the bad news - you don't have the love of God. None of us is born into this world with this red love for God. We don't. We are all born with a love for the world. So how? I'm filled with air. Where can I get this red love for God? The good news, is even though you do not have the love of God by yourself, by nature at first, there is the love from God for you. So this is the amazing thing about the Gospel, this is the amazing thing about the Bible. The Bible tells us that when we do not love God at all, there's nothing in us that longs for God, God loves us. He loves us. He made us and he loves us. And the Bible is telling us that God's love is for you, who has no love for him and this is the direction of life. You see, most of us think that we love God, then God will love me, isn't that what it is? Every religion says you do this, you do this, you do this to prove your love for this deity and this deity will now love you in return. The Bible says it doesn't work that way. You can never love God, by yourself, but it starts with God. God loves us when we are totally unlovely and when he loves us and when we feel and we know and we've receive this love, the Bible tells us, we now love Him. 1 John 4, “We love because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:19, ESV) I did not love God on my own. It's because He loves me first and now I have the love from God, that allows me to have the love for God.

How do you know God loves you? Some people today think that God loves me because he healed my disease. He helped my boy get into this school. I earned the 1st million bucks. Wah, God really loves me. Well, maybe that's true, but I tell you, those are not the pinnacle expression of God's love. The pinnacle expression of God's love,

according to the Bible is here: “In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.” (1 John 4:9, ESV) How is God's love made so clear? The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Good News, that while we were yet sinners God sent his only Son so that we might have life. This is love unspeakable. This is love that is stunning and out of this world because it is... has nothing to do with how worthy we are. It's all because of God. And that's why this love from God is experienced via the Gospel of Christ. I think this is what the Gospel is all about. The Gospel is a glorious message that God loves me. And the Gospel is the message that when I receive understanding that God loves me, I now live for him. 0:24:25.5

The world today, Christianity today, has by and large miss this when we neglect either part. Some of us say, “All I need to do is to love God.” And what it produces is religion or works-based religion. We produce Pharisees. Oh, Christianity is a set of rules and regulations by which you earn God's love. You talk about love for God without the love from God, that doesn't work. That's ‘Pharisaism’. That's legalism. That's flesh-based religion.

On the other hand, there are people today who says, “God loves me. God loves me. God loves me.” But there is never an expression of love for God, in obedience. That's really not the Gospel as well. Grace and godliness are together. You take away anyone of them, you do not have the Gospel. True Gospel centeredness is God's love for me and my love for God, in response to that. That's why, again, the Gospel says, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8, ESV)

We're called Gospel Light Christian Church. Gospel light! This Gospel light is not just for the unbeliever, this Gospel light...this Gospel is also for the believer. Because it's only when we know God's love that you and I can live that life that shines for Jesus Christ. It's only when we understand the Gospel that we can really live out the true life of godliness. And this is what we need: the Gospel-centered life. Not about flesh-based religion, not about indulgent erroneous teaching of grace, that doesn't lead to godliness. This is the center and the love from God and the love of God are to be held in tandem. 0:26:37.8

See, this is what we are (picture shown). This is you and I and all of us have dreams. Some of us dream of cars. Like I've shared with you, I had last time. Some of us dream of houses and money and gadgets, the things of this world but maybe you don't want material things, you want these things: you want the applause of men.

You love it when people applaud you. You love it when people accept you. You love it when your Facebook has a 1000 likes. You love it when you're the number 1 person wherever you are. This is what you live for. You know why? Because this is from the heart that loves the world. It's natural. This is very natural. So weird! This is universal because this is your heart.

So when a preacher comes along and says to you, "Don't love this world, because the world is bad. The world is bad! The world is bad!" You say, alright, the world is bad, I...I'm going to stop thinking about it. I'm going to stop thinking about it. I'm going to stop thinking about it. The next moment it comes back in. It's like I'm going to suck this air out of this bottle. Suck, suck, suck, suck, herrrr (out of breathe sound)...the air rushes back in. You can't get rid of the air. You can't get rid of this er... love for this world because your heart is filled with the love for this world. The only way you can get rid of it, is when your heart is changed. It's filled with this love for God. And these things will fade in your life. This world will look strangely dim because you'll be filled with the love of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That's the only way. There is no other way. There is no other way, where you can loosen the grip of this world in your heart, until you have experienced and received the love of God in Jesus Christ.

If you today are here and you do not know Jesus, you love this world and you say, you know this world is meaningless, it's vanity. I... I do not want to live for this world but I found it so difficult. I say to you, come to Jesus Christ. He's the only way, the truth and the life, for you to know the true and living God for whom you are made for. And find your rest in Him.

I say to all of you who are parents. We who are...majority, many of you here are Chinese and I know how we Chinese teach children. We teach them don't do this, don't do that because... or study harder, don't waste your time, because you'll be a scholar. You earn enough money and you tell them about these things. Don't love this world, but it will never work until his heart is filled with the love for God. Our Sunday school ministry, our children ministry, should not be about, oh kids should be filial. Oh, kids should obey. Oh, kids should love one another. Oh, kids should be kind. Don't get me wrong! I'm not saying we don't teach these things but we must not teach these things without telling them the love of God in Jesus Christ, in the Gospel. Because if you tell them to do these things but their hearts is not filled with God's love, you produce moral children but they are not spiritual children. You are just teaching behaviourism, moral education. Their heart is not changed! So what we need to give our kids? What we need to give your children is that they will know the

love of God in Jesus Christ, so that their heart is now filled with God's love. Then their life will really change. They will really obey their parents because they love God. They will really be kind to one another because they love God. They will be gracious to people because they love God. Why do they love God? Because they know God loves them.

Some of us have youths and your youths have plenty of problems. I think teenage years are the worst years, all the problems surface. Sometimes struggle with this computer addiction, sometimes porn addiction, sometimes relationship issues and there's so many problem. You say, so difficult to deal with them one by one. You know why it's so difficult? Because they are merely the manifestations of a heart problem. They love this world. And your cure is to get right at the heart. That they may know the love of God. That's what Yu Fei's job is all about. Leading these youths to a Gospel-centered obedience to Jesus Christ. This is what parenting is about. Helping your children see the love of God in Jesus Christ. And when they are really experiencing that, their lives would changed. Some of us, however, we already have this love, we have known Christ, we have believed in him, we've turn from our ways, but we find that our journey is lots of up-and-down. Sometimes, we are on fire, sometimes we are cold. Sometimes we love God, sometimes we love the world and we hate to admit that, but it's true. Well, I think it's because sometimes, like this bottle of water, if I... if I uncapped this and I leave it in the sun. After a few months, I think the water level drops. I need to what? Top it up! If I don't top it up, the world comes...or the air comes right back. So how can I grow in this love for God? How can I top up? Because there are times when it runs dry and I begin to be cold in my relationship with God. I begin to love this world and I don't like it. So what do I do?
0:32:31.6

I end with these 3 things that are practical outworking of what you can do to fill your heart with the love from God, so that you may have a genuine love for God.

Number 1 - I suggest that you need to ponder.

The word 'ponder' means to think, to meditate, to reflect, to consider. You see, the Bible already tells us, the love of God is shown in the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that's why we need to be thinking the Gospel regularly, at all times. Not just an intellectual thinking, oh God saves me, but to...to really reflect in Scripture how God has presented His love to us. How we are steep in sin and how amazing His love is. And that's why you read the books of the Bible, Romans and so on, is it technical theological alone? No, it's...it's healing of the heart. It's love language. That's why we

read the Bible! It's God's love letter to you and to me! Some of you, you have BGR problems. You argue, you quarrel with your girlfriend, your boyfriend and...he doesn't love me, he doesn't love me, he doesn't love me anymore. Then you go back and you take out your love letters that he has written to you. Oh he loves me, oh he loves me, oh he really loves me and you look at all the presents he has given you and you look at all these tokens. And you reaffirmed to yourself, he really does love me. Sometimes in this life, we think God doesn't love me. Or His love is really not that great. Go back and read His love letter. Read the Bible.

I was reading the Bible with my son and that... the picture Bible and we started from the beginning and the Bible... the picture Bible opens with this statement: the Bible is a story...that's a nice way to start. Story about what? Goes on to say, the Bible is a story...about God. You see, sometimes we think that the Bible is a list of commands and instructions. It's primarily a story. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. It's a story of how God reveals himself to sinful man. It's a story of how God is on the move to redeem and to restore us. It's a story of God's infinite, unchangeable love for you and for me. So go, read God's love letter to you. Ponder, meditate. I say to you: ponder and meditate on God's love in the songs we sing. Do you know that the Bible commands us to sing to one another, in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs? It's so sad when people come for Worship Service, 'swee swee' (Hokkien dialect words meaning just nice) 11:20. I know your timing, very 'juen' (Hokkien dialect word meaning very accurate) one, you all. You know when I'll step up to preach and you just want to hear the preaching of God's word. I tell you, you miss out on the first segment of singing to God and singing to one another in Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Those are opportunities for the Gospel, by the spirit's help to go deep into our lives and into our hearts. You watch so many movies, you watch so many TV programs, it tells you about the world. Don't you think you should ponder and meditate about God's love for you? That's why we observe the Lord's supper. Do this in remembrance of Me. It's a topping up process. It's getting low, top it up. How? Ponder through Scripture, through songs, spiritual songs, and in the observance of the Lord's table. So, Number 1, you've got to ponder. I guess you can guess the second one, the pattern all 'P' one. That's easy for you.

1. Ponder.
2. (Number 2?) Pray.

That's so simple, right? And this is not just because it's all 'P' but because the Scripture says so. In Ephesians 3, one of the great grand passages of the Bible, earlier verse I think in verse 15 or 16, Paul says, "For this cause I bow my knees before God."

So what is Paul praying for? Paul is praying for the Ephesians, for the church at Ephesus, "...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith - that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 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..." (Ephesians 3:17-19, ESV) You say what does Paul pray for? He prays for the church to be filled up with God's love. He prays for the church to be filled up with the Gospel of love. That's what he prays for.

You know what we pray for? Orr...pray for my son to get good results, pray for my flu to go away, pray that my job will 'soon soon lee lee' (Hokkien dialect words meaning smooth sailing), very smooth. Er... pray that I will have a good day. I'm not saying that you don't pray for these things or that is necessarily sinful to pray for these things. But the balance of prayer in the Scripture and what we are praying today is just so different. And I'm not saying this in a condemning way at all, I'm just encouraging you to... to think scripturally, what is really important? Here, this heart. This little heart of mine that has room only for one. It was filled with the love for...for this world. Today, it should be filled with the love for God. And the only way it can be filled, is when I know the love of God to me. And I therefore need to meditate on Scripture. I need to ponder, I need to remind myself through the means of grace and I not only must do this on the intellectual level, I must pray that God will bring it really to my heart and fill it up. That's what you should pray for, for yourself. Because some of you today are tired in your spiritual life. You're cold, you're lethargic, you...you feel so weary of living the Christian life. I say, you need to be topped up with God's love. He goes on to say in Philippians... Philippians 1, "And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more..."(Philippians 1:9, ESV) Again he prays that they will grow in God's love. 0:39:15.0

Finally, the 3rd 'P'. Anyone wants to guess? Someone actually gave, I think a better word than what I came up with, so I thought it's great. But anyway what's the 3rd 'P'? Think about it, how can I know the love of God more? Well, scripturally, I know I need to ponder, I need to think, I need to meditate, I need to read. Two, I need to pray. That's Scripture. Prayer – that's obvious. The 3rd one? The 3rd one is...

3. Provoke.

Wah...this kind of word also can ah? (Laughter in the congregation) Yeah, because in Hebrews 10:24, by the way, Hebrews 10:24, in the King James version, I...I grew up on King James, that's why. "And let us consider how to... provoke one another to love and to good works." That's why I have the word 'provoke'. Actually, someone said,

“Participate.” I thought that’s quite good. ‘Participate’ means you are part of this community where you stir up one another. Christian living is never in isolation. The Gospel calls us to community life. The world tells you to live individualistic lives. The Gospel calls you to a community life and this community is necessary for you to be filled up with God's love and for you to help fill other people with God’s love. It’s a dynamic that Scripture tells us of in Hebrews 10. And I want to encourage this church, each and everyone of you. Are you really serious about living for God? Are you really serious about having your life changed? Are you serious about discipleship to Jesus? Then repent and go back to your first works. What are your first works? Scripture, prayer, community.

1. Ponder
2. Pray
3. Provoke

And I love the word that you guys used, ‘practice’. Hehe... it is so appropriate today. Because I tell you, I fear that all of us who have heard this message, walk out of this place, “Thank you Pastor. I understand that you use a bottle. I remember the story. I remember this three ‘P’s and thank you very much.” And then for the next year, your life has no change. You’re still as cold. You still love this world. You’re still dreaming about your BMW and there's no change... you know why? Because you're not practicing this.

My challenge to you, my challenge to myself, is that we will not just walk out of this place with an intellectual knowledge, “Oh, this is the way to do it.” But we will practically take the bottle of our lives, to ponder, to pray, to provoke and regularly be topping up the heart of our soul, the heart of our life. Would you do that? That’s why we encourage you to read the Scriptures. To...to go for means of grace. That's why we encourage you to pray for spiritual things. That's why you need to be in community.

O:42:17.1

The real and only solution to this heart is to have our hearts set on fire by the love of God. That we’ll pray and we’ll sing and we’ll say to ourselves, a passion for you, God, not just to serve but to love you with all of my heart. And this is the beauty of the Gospel. When at the end of life’s journey, we turn up before God. We appear before Him and we could say, “Lord, we kept Your Word, we love not the world.” Why? Because your love has fill up our lives. Jesus is the hero who has captured our hearts and we live for Him because He first loved us. You know, that brings glory to God?

And that is the real antidote to the sweet poison of your soul today. Let's bow for a word of prayer. 0:43:20.4

Love not the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. This is one of the evidence of a life that truly has been changed by Jesus Christ. If you're part of this church, you've attended our services, we want to affirm to you that you are a follower, a disciple, a believer of Jesus not because you came to church, not because you have a Christian name, not because you do this and you do that. You are a child of God and you can know it because you love not the world. Just like John has told us earlier on, you obey His commandments, you love one another. If you in your life today, could not say honestly to yourself, "I obey His Word. I love my brothers and sisters in Christ and I love not the world." If you cannot say that, my friends, this is not a bad time at all, for you to come to God and say I need to be born again. Because I see that there is no glimpse of real life and this may be the most glorious day for you, that you would see your own lack of change. That you'll see that your heart is still the same heart and you cried to God, "God, change my heart!" And I know you can, because you sent your Son, Jesus Christ to die on the cross, shed his blood, to save me from my sins. The best I know how, I would turn from my sins and I will receive, I will believe in Jesus to be my Savior. Today can be the day your heart is changed. Today can be the day your heart experiences the love from God, in the Gospel. But you've got to make that choice. You've got to say "No" to sin, you've got to say "Yes" to the finished work of Jesus Christ. You've got to say, "Lord, I want to come to you and Jesus is the way, the truth and the life." Would you do that? Today, right here, right now?

There is hope for your soul. There is life from the cross of Calvary. There is love you've never experienced, that comes through Jesus' perfect sacrifice. Your life that is like the bottle filled with vain air, clutching at anything this world has to offer, can be absolutely filled up with the red love of God, the warm love of God. It can be yours today. I speak today to brothers and sisters in Christ, you have believed. You have repented. You have followed Jesus, but sometimes you follow erratically. You follow a day or two, you drop off a day or two. There are peaks and troughs, there are mountains and valleys in your spiritual journey. You struggle, you are dry, you are tired, you are frustrated. You got to need...you got to have a top-up. You got to have a re-charge. You got to have a filling up again with the Gospel of love. So maybe it's time for you to stop being like a 'Martha'. Running around, praying for everything around you, but neglecting the need of your heart - to know His love, to be filled with His love. Maybe, that's what you need to cry out to God today. It is a time for you to commit yourself to say, "Lord, I'm going back to my first works. I'm going to be like a

'Mary' who will sit at your feet. I will ponder the Scriptures. I will sing songs of praise. I'll be part of a spiritual family. I will... I will consider to provoke one another because I want to be topped up, I want to be filled up with Your love, because that is the only way I can be rescued from the clutches of this world. I want to love You God and I thank You that Your Word tells me how, to go back to the Gospel to be filled up with the Gospel." Would you make that choice as well today?

Father, we thank you for this morning, and how we could consider, a glorious theme of the Bible. The Bible is the story of God and His love for sinful men. God, this is Your love, this is the power of Your love, not just to save us from hell to heaven, but to save us today from the world unto Yourself. Glorious power in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, fill our hearts today, answer our prayer. Even as we right here, right now, will sing a song unto You. Hear us, make this church a glorious church, glorious with the love of the Gospel, glorious to bring many more to this same love with which You have love us. So be with your people today, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.