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The Affections of Christ Towards the Church

Alright. Good morning, everyone. It's good to be with you. Turn to Ephesians 3. Between the never-ending winter and the time change this morning, it's amazing to see another human being anywhere in the city.

Alright, this morning we're going to look at the affections of Christ towards the church. A couple weeks ago we looked at the beauty of God as it relates to the church and the bearing the weight and the response that the beauty of God has upon the church. As we interact with this One, this uncreated God. I mean, there's so much to see and experience and delve into as it relates to the person of God. And one of the facets of the beauty of God, again, we talked about the beauty of God two weeks ago. One of the facets of the beauty of God is the affections of Christ that He has towards the church, toward His people. It is one of the most rich and rewarding topics in all of the word of God. And for me, my personal experience in regard to this topic has, it has by far been the most dramatic thing about God that I have ever encountered.

I've encountered God in many different ways. I'm sure many of you have as well, but the way that the affections of God changed my heart and changed my life, I mean, I really got saved, really began to walk with the Lord because of this topic, the affections of God. And the affections of God toward me knowing that God delighted in me and really enjoyed who I was.

Just that simple truth alone, when it began to take root within my own spirit, within my own heart, it just, it revolutionized everything about me. It changed the way that I saw myself. It changed the way I saw God. It changed the way I saw others around me.

The affections of God is one of the most premiere topics and themes throughout the whole of the Bible. It's the emotions of God. It's what He feels and how He sees His people and how He interacts with them. It is so powerful. I love this topic. And my hope is that we, as the body of Christ, evermore and I know that we will. I'll explain that in a minute, but that we would grow in the understanding of the affections of God toward us, the great power of His heart, the great power of His delight, as it bears down upon our lives. We will get lost in the beauty of the affections of God as a people.

Well, in Ephesians 3, I'm just gonna start here. Ephesians 3, there's an apostolic prayer. Now, the apostolic prayers are the New Testament Scriptures, the prayers that the apostles prayed for the church. And we find one of them in Ephesians 3, and if you've been to the prayer room for one minute, you've probably heard this prayer 10,000 times, maybe more. And looking at this prayer, this prayer from the apostle Paul is asking the Lord that the body of Christ, the spiritual family, that's actually how he begins this prayer in verse 15. He prays that the family of heaven would experience the depth and the height and the length and the breadth of the love of God or the affections of God. That is what that prayer is primarily about.

So, let's look at this together, and then we'll pray. I'm just gonna read through it. "For this reason, I bow my knee before the Father from whom every family in heaven and earth derives its name. That He would grant you by the riches of His glory to be strengthened by His spirit in the inner man so that Christ would dwell in your heart through faith and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend" or experience "with all the saints, what is the breadth and width and length and height and depth. To know the love of Christ," or the affections of Christ, that's what we're focusing on this morning, "which surpasses knowledge, that you would be filled up to all the fullness of God." Verse 20, now to Him, now we always stop at verse 19 in the prayer room. Look at verse 20 and 21. They're such critical pieces of information for us. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly or exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we would ask or think according to the power that works in us. To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever, amen.

Father, we thank You for Your Word and we thank You for the richness of Your Word. We thank You that this morning, You've prepared a table in front of us of the richness of Your Word, this beauty of God, the affections of Your heart are spread out like a table before us, and You beckon us to come eat and to come drink of the very person of who You are, Your heart and Your delight towards Your Church. Oh, Lord, we love You. I ask that You would help us this morning and that You would give wisdom and revelation and knowledge, that we would experience the affections of Christ toward us in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Paul, in this prayer, as he's asking the Lord to expand the heart of His people to know the width and the length and the depth, to know all these facets, to know the infinite resource of the affections of God. It has just been striking me that down in verse 19, this is how Paul describes the fullness of God toward us. The fullness, the absolute fullness. Now, when we consider the fullness of God, when we talk about the fullness, we want the fullness to come. We want the fullness. Shekinah glory come. I heard you, Joshua.

Often times, what comes to our mind is the power of God, the outward manifestation of His power and glory. We want that to come. You know that we want that to come, for sure. We want the power of God, release the manifestation of His power through the preaching of the Word, through the laying on of hands, the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead, the casting out and binding of devils and demons. Absolutely, we want the power of God.

And there is a power of God that is working in us even now. Paul describes it. He says, it's the fullness of Him. But this fullness isn't only in the laying on of hands and the releasing of the hour of manifestation of His glory. It's a fullness on the inside within the heart of the believer as an individual and corporately, that is expressed and experienced as we gaze into the mystery of the affections of God. As we see and encounter and experience this Bridegroom God, this jealous heart that longs for His people, that wants them, that is pursuing them, that is after them, that demonstrates His love again and again and again toward His people with no regard of their class or society or privilege or experience or maturity. He just lavishes upon His people over and over and over again, His affections and His heart.

And as we gaze into that beauty, Paul says, "This is the fullness of God." You can hear the words of the apostle almost trembling as he says it because he says that he was caught up into the third

heaven and heard things that were inexpressible. He saw something in regard to the beauty of God and the affections of Christ that struck him and changed him. And when he came back, he moved with this apostolic power and authority from this well-spring, I think, called the fullness of God on the inside, the depths of the love of God. Who can search the depths of the love of God?

You know, scientists and those that explore the deep parts of the ocean. They go, we know more about the heavens and the solar system and the stars than we do about our own depths in our ocean that are right beyond our shores. There's such mystery. There's such knowledge. There's such pressure and power, and it's similar in regard to the affection of God. The deeper that you go into the affections of His heart and into the person of Christ, the more pressure and mystery you come under. You begin to see things that you can't express. You begin to feel things that you can't express anymore. And Paul is lost in this revelation of, "I just want to know Him and I want the people of God, the church, the beloved church of heaven to know and experience the affections of God.

He talks about going to the height of the affections of God. The knowledge and the mind-blowing mystery when we begin to behold the Man, Christ Jesus, in His splendor and who He is and what He's like and the stream of His affection begins to touch our heart and His emotions as they transform us. They fill our mind with new thoughts. Who can know the heights of His love? Who can know the breadth of His love and the length of His love? How far God will go for the sake of love?

Do you know that He left the abode of heaven and was betrayed at the hands of sinners simply for love, to demonstrate His love? He shows us how far He's willing to go for the sake of love. He's willing to be despised and rejected and crucified wrongly even for the sake of love, the overflow of His affection. He says, "There is no other way. I must have a bride with Me. I must have humanity with Me. I'll go to any length. I'll go to any depth.

And Paul says, "If you want the fullness, if you want the fullness, it's not just in power. It's not just in signs and wonders. It's not just in supernatural wealth and the multiplication of food and the healing of sick bodies." He says, "If you want to know the fullness, this topic, this vast ocean that is called the revelation of the affections of Christ. And it's free for anyone that wants. Get your boat. Get your Scooba gear. Get your diving suit. Go, get in the ocean of the affections of God."

Because this is what Christ is trying to produce within us. This is what we're doing. We're becoming more like Him. Paul tells us that we're growing up, in Ephesians 4. He says we're growing up into the stature of the maturity of Him. We're growing up into Him. You're on a journey, and the way that you grow up into Him is by being filled with the revelation of who He is. The more that we know Him, the more that we act like him. The more that we see Him and savor Him, the more that we're radically changed.

You know, God doesn't want to leave you as you are. There's all this talk about, well, just accept yourself and love yourself and just be who you are. No, I don't want to be me! Me is bad. Me is boring. No, I'm really, I'm really boring to be around. There's not that much to know. There's not

that much to experience and enjoy and even when I think about myself it's just like, "Okay. This is it? You're kinda shallow."

The apostles spoke of transformation coming by the power of the Spirit as we're apprehended by the affections of God and the emotions of God. We become like God. We're made holy. We're sanctified. We're purified, our minds, our emotions. I don't want to accept emotions and just live there for the next 50 years. That sounds horrible. I want to be transformed. I want to be fascinated by the beauty of God. I want to exhibit and exemplify the affections of God towards Him, towards one another. As we do that, we grow into maturity. We grow by gazing upon the beauty and the affections of His heart and who He is.

Paul says this is the fullness. Do you have a vision for fullness? Do you have a vision for fullness in your life and fullness in who God is? Do you have a high vision? The signs and wonders, those can just come and go. The signs and wonders are the easy part. When you begin to plumb the depths of the fullness of God, you know, it takes a different vehicle to sail on top the ocean than it does to go down into its depths where the pressure and the darkness and the mystery begins to surround you. There's additional pressure. Do you know what happens is that in that pressure, either God refines you or you're crushed as you grow in the revelation of His beauty and person. You're crushed. The flesh of the heart is crushed under the weight of the beauty of the affections of His heart. You're transformed. The old ways can't bear the weight.

You know what happens to a submarine if it's even just cracked a little bit? If there's just a hairline crack, and you begin to go down, down, down into the depths of the ocean, that pressure increases, and a little crack will just cause the whole thing to rip open.

In a similar way, as we grow in the knowledge of His heart and His affections for us, it begins to expose the cracks and the deficiencies in our lives. It shows us the way we're not thinking rightly about the way that God sees us. It shows us the lies that are entrenched within our own hearts. It shows us the way that we mishandle money. It shows us the way that we take advantage of our sexual liberality. It shows us the cracks and the fishers as we gaze upon Him, and yet, even as we gaze upon Him, the mercy and the grace of God undergirds us, and we grow up into the head of all things, which is Christ. He doesn't leave you as you are. He is committed to not leaving you or leaving me as we are. And this is one other thing that I love. Look at verse 20.

Verse 20, Paul says, "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond," that's what my translation says. It's the NASB that I'm looking at here. And the notes that are available online are the New King James. But to do far more abundantly beyond all that we can ask or thing, that means whatever our vision is to grow in the affections of God, God will multiply it. Whatever our experience is for delighting in His affection and His heart for us, the Lord will surpass it. Why? Because love doesn't just meet us at the standard. Love doesn't just fulfil the monthly budget. If you've ever been in love, you know that the monthly budget of time and money and affection, when you're in love, you can't budget love. You can't budget time. It just blows everything out of proportion. It's meant to.

When you fall in love, you go beyond what is humanly possible in regard to time. Time management goes out the window. Your money goes out the window. When I fell in love with

my wife, Morgan, all of that went out the window. It wasn't a thought. No one had to call me up and hold me accountable to my affection toward my, you know, soon-to-be wife. "Hey man, are you spending time with her? Did you get, you know, twenty minutes today with Morgan? You're gonna marry her, so you know, you should spend some time with her." In the overflow of my heart and my affection, you go exceedingly beyond.

Around Christmas time with my kids, the amount of money that I want to spend on their gifts goes exceedingly beyond what is possible through debt. I'm kidding. Don't go into debt over Christmas gifts. You know, Dave Ramsey shout out.

The point is, is that when your heart is captivated in love and captivated in affection, it can't be constrained to just do enough. And yet, when we think of God's affections towards His church, when we consider, how do You feel about the global church? I know how I feel about it. Right? It's not good. When we consider the church, we feel one way. When He considers the church, He feels very differently. He says, "I'm not just content to just give you enough of My love to just get by." As if He would look down from heaven at the struggling believer and just say, "Well, you have the cross. You have the Holy Spirit. You have the gifts of the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit. Just do better! You have fasting and prayer. Try that." And we're like, "Ahhh!" "Just do the stuff. Just get back! Come on!" He's kind of kicking us and prodding us along. "Come on, bride, just get mature. Just grow up. What's your problem?" And what's funny to say it like that, that's often how we relate to God honestly in our own minds and hearts. That's how we feel, that we're trying to pay back this enormous debt. We're just trying to do enough to gain His approval and His favor, and He's going, "You don't even understand. I'm able to do exceedingly abundantly more than you could ask for," which, I can ask for a lot. You ask me to ask for things. Say, "Ask for a lot." I will ask for a lot.

And then He says, "I want to give you more than you can even possibly think or imagine." I can imagine a lot. I can ask for a lot. I can imagine a lot, and He says, here, He's saying, He's able to go beyond that because that's the heart of Christ in His affections. He goes far beyond what you could possibly think. All that we would drink of His affections in this life. Even if we were to drink deeply, you go to the mystic, the desert father, you know, the catholic saint, who can like levitate and have fire come out of their eyes or whatever's going on. You go to the deepest person, I guarantee, as soon as they're plucked from this age and plunged into the next, they were like, "I was only sipping from the baby cup of His affections."

They find themselves drowning in the emotions of His love, overcome with the power of His affection. And they're going, "This is the fullness. This is what I was after." He's the God of richness and generosity. How rich is God? How rich is He and as far as His affections and His heart, how far can He go? How much revelation can He give to His people in regard to the way that He feels? It's far. It's a lot.

This power works within us, verse 20, the second part. This power, there is an inner working power by the Holy Spirit that is changing and nourishing and transforming and bringing us and pulling us deeper and deeper and deeper into the things of God. That's why you get bored. The reason that you get bored is because there's a power in you that's working to pull you into the revelation of His affection. He won't let you stay where you are. That's why life is constantly this

pressure, this up and down and where am I going? And there's pressure this way, so I go this way. And there's pressure, so I go this way. This changes and life circumstance changes, and family changes. I'm plucked up from another city, and I'm put right here, smack in the middle of Grandview. Why, God?

Life is constantly changing, and you're constantly growing bored with what you know and what you've experienced. Why? Because there's a vast ocean that the Lord is pulling you down into, the revelation of His affection, the revelation of His heart. He's more committed to it than you could possibly imagine. He will have a bride. He will have a bride who is holy and blameless and glorious in love. She's an overcomer. She's a conqueror. She loves not her own life even unto death. She's faithful. She's beautiful. She's adorned. She's radiant. The apostle John in the book of Revelation, he sees the personification of the people of God as this holy, celestial city coming down out of heaven. He goes, "She's radiant with the glory of God."

The angel tells John in Revelation 21, he says, "Let me come and show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." John's like, "Alright, cool." All of the sudden, he sees this mountain city descending from heaven. Her streets are like pure gold, transparent glass. It's fifteen hundred miles high and fifteen miles wide and long. This massive celestial city, it's shining with the glory of God. The kings in the Psalms, they see the city, and they begin to tremble and quake with fear. What are they seeing? They're seeing the manifestation of the glory of the church, the people of God, radiant, brilliant, shining. As the Father manifests His glory through the Son, the church manifests glory that's given to her by the Father, and we see the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem, the bride, the Lamb's wife.

You're gonna have beauty that's so powerful that it makes kings tremble and begin to labor like they're giving birth. Some of you ladies would wish that upon a man. No, it's powerful, the fullness of God, the riches of His glory.

Go back up to verse 18. In verse 18, the apostle tells us that you can't just go get this on your own. You can't just crawl away and hide away in your prayer closet by yourself and get the fullness of God. It's impossible. Why? Because you're part of the body. You're part of His body, and whoever you are, you only make up one part of the body. You might be the hand or the eye or the foot or the earlobe, but you only make up one part of the body. And this body, the church, is the place where God will release His fullness. Ephesians 1:23 has one of the most offensive, mind-blowing verses, I think, in all of the Word of God. It says that the fullness of Him, Christ, is His body. The fullness of Christ is His body. So, the fullness of Ephesians 1 manifest in the fullness of Ephesians 3, which means the body together comes into the revelation of the affections of God.

We're on the journey. It passes from generation to generation, and it will culminate in that end-time bride, that bride that's being made ready for her husband. She will be pure and spotless in unity and maturity and intimacy with God. This is where we're going, the body of Christ. Paul says, "You can't experience this alone. You can't get this one alone. You actually need each other in the midst. You need one another. You need to bump into each other and be friends with one another and work out differences and have conflict and then resolve conflict. It's the tension

and then the release of human relationship and dynamics that causes us to be deeper into the affections of His heart.

Look what he says in verse 18, "that you would comprehend or experience," he says this, "with all the saints." All the saints. Who are all the saints? Well, verse 15, it's the family of heaven. Well, who's the family of heaven? Ephesians 2, it's every race, every tribe, every tongue, every people group, male and female, Jew and Gentile. It is all that Christ has purchased and bought together. He goes, "You can't touch the fullness without everyone."

So, you need to get a vision. If you get a vision for fullness, it's to get a vision for the person next to you. If you get a vision for fullness, it's to get a vision for the whole body of Christ. If you get a vision for fullness, it's to get a vision for the guy that lives down the road, the guy that lives on the other side of the railroad tracks, the gal down in the city, the person in your workplace. To get a vision for fullness is to get a vision for family. He goes, "You're not gonna get there without one another. I won't let you." He won't let us. He's yoked us to Him, and He's yoked us to one another, and we all want to be unyoked, be honest. You know that you want to be unyoked, just, these people, ah, and their issues. Let me just set my face and just me and Jesus. He goes, "I like that. I like that, but you'll go further in Me. You can't plumb the depths of My affections and My heart alone."

It is not good for man to be alone. It's not good for us to be alone, but rather, Psalm 133, "How blessed and wonderful it is when brethren dwell together in unity." When we dwell together in unity, there's the commanded blessing and from heaven drips down the oil of the beauty of God upon us, and we become vessels, and He goes exceedingly, abundantly more, and the cup of our heart overflows, and the cup of this body, this spiritual body will overflow. And the cup of this city, the church of Kansas City will overflow. But we need one another. And we can't get there alone.

Look what he says back down in verse 21. He says, "To Him be the glory in the church." Where does the glory of the Man come from? It comes from the church. It comes from us. He may have made a huge mistake when He chose that, when He chose to set it up that way, but He did. He said, "The glory, that will be My glory, that will come to Me, will come when My people, when My family experience the depth of My affections in My heart."

And then He says this, "Glory in the church in Christ Jesus," and then He says, "To all generations forever and ever." See, it's not just about linking arms right now with the people that are next to us. What about our children? Do we have a vision for them to experience the affections and the fullness of God? What about their children? What about their disciples? What about our small group? What about our men's group or our women's group? What about the Bible study we lead at our job? Do we have a vision to bring others into the affection of Christ and the depth of the riches of the knowledge of God?

It passes from generation to generation. See, we inherit what our spiritual fathers and mothers labored for. We come into their inheritance. They plowed the field and the children come in, and they reap the inheritance. The fathers and mothers of this house have sown an inheritance in the riches and the knowledge of God, and we showed up with our families from Timbuktu and began

to reap that inheritance. But now we need to begin to sow, the mothers and fathers need to begin to sow to the next generation in regard to this reality, the fullness of God, the fullness of His affection.

It's not enough that we sat at the banqueting table. It's not enough that we drank from the rivers of His pleasure. We need to bring our children to the table. I'm talking about natural and spiritual children. We need to bring them to the table. We need to tell them of the delights of God. We need to tell them that there is a bridegroom whose heart is undone over them, who loves them even in their immaturity, who loves them in their weakness and broken, who's calling them and drawing them to Himself in His affection, all the generations.

Well, how are we to see and experience these affections? The affections of Christ are the way that He sees His people and He feels towards them. If you were to sum up the primary way that God sees and feels towards His people, it would be that He is a Bridegroom filled with affection towards them, a Bridegroom filled with affection. He's waiting. Hebrews 10 tells us that when He ascended to the right hand, that He's now waiting. He's at the right hand, waiting. Who's He waiting for? Well, He's waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool, and He's waiting for His bride to be made ready. He's waiting for you. He's a Bridegroom that's longing in His heart.

You know, these people that, they get engaged and it's like this nine-month engagement, two years engagement, and they're living apart. It's terrible. The pain that you feel, the distance, the separation. They're way over there, and you're looking at that save the date thing that's hanging on your refrigerator, and you're longing for that day, the day of your wedding to finally come. You can't wait. There's so much anticipation. There's so much joy that's welling up in your heart.

That's what we see in the day of the Lord. The day of the gladness of His heart, it's welling up with joy, and because He's a jealous Bridegroom, He's welling up with wrath against His enemies. You see the welling up of both joy and delight and wrath and judgement, as He will unleash His affection upon His people and unleash His judgements against His adversaries. Because He won't have His bride love anyone else or see anyone else. He is a jealous Bridegroom. And when you start interfacing with jealous bridegrooms, you find yourself on holy and terrifying ground. The fury of a jealous husband is not anything to be trifled with. And when He's the Genesis 1 God, you really don't wanna mess with that Guy. You really don't want to mistreat His bride. You really don't want to speak ill of her because He can hear you. You really don't want to carry things in your heart wrongfully against her because He knows and for every Christian, you is one. You are the bride. People that have the biggest problem with the church are the church! They're like, the church is so messed up! It's like, brother, you are the church! You is you. "These people, these Christians..." "Are you a Christian?" "Well, yeah, but I'm different. I'm a different Christian. I stand on mountain me." You know? That thing's gonna melt on the day of the Lord.

He tells us that He touches the mountains and they smoke. I don't want to be standing alone on the mountain when He touches the mountain of me and it melts like wax before the presence of the Lord. Bridegroom God. I believe that the affections of Christ will be the primary fuel for the present and eschatological church, His affections, His heart. Because the power and signs and wonders and the prophecy, that won't keep us enduring the deep pressure and the great trial that's

coming upon the earth. It won't be enough! Look throughout revival history and ask yourself, "Was the power and the signs and wonders that these men and women walked in, was it enough?" Was it enough to keep them from temptation? Was it enough to keep them from tragedy and crisis? Was it enough to keep them from persecution? The fact of the matter remains that it was not enough, that there is a greater inheritance, a greater richness in God to be had called the affections of His heart, the fullness of God.

As the people of God encounter the affections of His heart, they begin to walk in great joy and confidence before Him. Nothing is better than knowing that the person you're talking to actually likes you. I mean, just at the most basic, human level, if someone that you're talking to is interested in you being there, they're actually looking at you, they're actually asking you questions, and curious about you, and talking to you, and there's eye-contact there, you just know that the disposition of the individual is one of just genuine affection, delight. It's amazing to be around people like that. It's horrible to be around people that are faking it. If they're just faking it, you just want to run the other way. I mean, I'd rather them just be angry and cut me off, you know? But just at the most natural, human level, we just have a propensity, we just lean in, anyone that likes us. We're like, "Ahh."

That's what makes it so hard being a teenager. Why is it so hard? Because as soon as someone gives you attention, you're like, these teen girls, y'all girls, "Okay, I'll go over..." That dude is a loser, man. "But I just know he likes me." Okay, that's baseline good, you know?

The point is this, we have a natural mechanism in our heart to respond to people that like us. And a natural mechanism in our heart to run away from people that we think dislike us. We avoid them. We avoid eye-contact with them. We avoid them entirely. I mean, I've walked in this room and seen some of y'all dive out that door. Don't think I'm blind. I'm kidding, I'm kidding.

You know you've done it, though. You know you've been walking down an aisle at Lowes like, trying to find some plumbing, you know, thing, and then somebody walks by the end that you don't wanna see, and you're like, hiding in one of the closet shower doors. I'm just here to tell the truth.

When the people of God encounter the affections of Christ, they lean in. They go, "If He really likes me, if He really enjoys me, yeah, I'll bring my brokenness to Him. I'll bring my fear. I'll bring shame. I'll bring addiction. I'll bring all my junk. If He really likes me and He demonstrated it on the cross to pay for my sins and bear the wrath of God for me, if that Guy likes me, I'll go straight to Him every time. I've seen in the Word how He dealt with the broken, jacked up people like me. I see how He dealt with the sinner and the tax collector and the prostitute. I've seen His kindness and the affections of His heart, but I thought that was just for someone else. I thought that you had to have a really messed up testimony and a really bad past and have to go through a lot of trauma for God to accept you. I don't have that type of testimony so maybe God doesn't accept me. Maybe He doesn't actually delight in me. Maybe He actually delights in people that are more broken." And the fact remains that our God is a Bridegroom that is coming for a bride from all walks of life, from all degrees of trauma and pain and sin and brokenness, and He goes, "I want them all. My heart is big enough to fit them all in, for them all to drink of the river of My affection."

And when the body of Christ and the believer that's been the faithful church attender for thirty years, when they begin to touch the affections of God, they begin to see them in the word and begin to go, "There's something more here." They begin to lean in. They begin to say, "I want this. I want more of this. I want more of You. Tell me again the way You feel about me. I feel like a dull, bored Christian going through the motions. I've got a dry prayer life, a non-existent Bible-reading life. My marriage is in turmoil. The relationship with the kids isn't good. Tell me again the way You feel about me. Do you delight in Me? Oh, God. Is there place for Your affection to just drip down one more time upon my weary soul? Just tell me one more time. Don't go. Stay. Be present to me. Be near to me, oh God."

Scripture is replete with the revelation in both Old and New Testament that our God is a Bridegroom God. He's betrothed to us. He's betrothed to us, but it's not an arranged marriage. He wanted it this way. He wanted you. He wanted us. He wanted Forerunner Church. He wanted the church in Kansas City. He is the Bridegroom God. He marries who He wishes. He goes, "I want them. I want them." We go, "But, oh. We've got some dysfunction." He goes, "I want them." "We've got some deficiency." He goes, "I want them. I want them in spite of their deficiencies." You think the Genesis 1 God who shed His blood on Calvary can't break the power of sin and compromise can't override the effect of devils and demons upon our soul and bring us into glory and bring us into His affection? He spoke the worlds into existence. He upholds all things by the word of His power. You think that our issues are greater than God?

He's a jealous Bridegroom who's filled with emotion and affection. Listen to what He says in Song of Solomon 4:9. He looks at His people, He says, "You have ravished My heart. You've ravished My heart." You've moved the heart of God, just one glance of your eye, one turn to Him, one whisper, one prayer, one act of devotion before Him. He goes, "My heart is overwhelmed. It's undone." Because He knows no one is forcing you to do it. No one's forcing you to do it. The Lord will have volunteers in the day of His power, Psalm 110 tells us. He'll have a bride that willingly lays down her life, that willingly pays the price and pays the high cost of what it means to live with single-minded devotion before Him. He knows the price. It moves His heart.

The ravished heart is defined in Webster as being filled with emotions of joy or delight. His heart is filled with emotions of joy and delight over you and over His people, the church, overwhelmed. Think about that. His primary attention, His primary thought, His primary step is one of affection and this deep, longing, this deep desire, this deep delight. We don't have a God who just tolerates us. We have a God who enjoys us. He goes above and beyond to lavish us with His affection, and He's constantly wooing and beckoning and calling to our hearts. He's saying, "This is how I feel. This is how I feel." And we're going, "No, it's not true. It can't be true." And the only reason it's not true is because we tell him it's not. But even our confession isn't more powerful than the truth of His word. If He really feel this way, then we should consider believing it.

John 15:9, Jesus makes this unbelievable statement about the worth of His people, His bride. He says, "As the Father has loved Me, I have loved you." How does the Father feel about the Son? How does He feel about the perfect, blameless, holy, spotless, begotten, full unity, full power

within that God-head Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? There's no hinderances. There's one hundred percent agreement of will and desire. That's how much the Father loves the Son. He says it audibly three times throughout the Gospels, "This is My beloved Son." That's what the Father wanted the world to know about the way that He felt about the Christ." He says it three times. This is My beloved Son, the One that I have set My affections on."

And then Jesus says in John 15:9, He says, "As the Father has loved Me, I've loved you. I want the world to know something. I want principalities and powers and devils to know something. I want the angels and the seraphim and the highly exalted ones to know something. In the same way the Father has loved Me, I have set My affection upon My church." He will not be swayed. He will not be taken off of His course and His plan. Psalm 110 tells us, "The Lord has sworn, and He will not relent." Some translations say, "He has sworn, and He will not repent." He will not turn back from His mission, from His purpose to have this bride that is adorned with beauty and glory, drinking from the fountain of His delight.

The Lord doesn't just state that He loves us, He demonstrates it. He gave Himself into the hand of sinners to be betrayed and mocked and scourged and publicly humiliated by capital punishment, by hanging on a Roman cross. He demonstrated His love, Romans 5:8. "God demonstrates His love," or His affection towards us, "in this, that while we were still sinners," there's the key phrase, "while we were still sinners," while we were still jacked up, broken, messed up, "Christ died for us." He laid down His own life in the highest picture of love. What higher picture of love could there be than a perfect, innocent God bearing the weight of sin and the guilt of sin coming under the wrath of God for those that stood in front of Him guilty. There's nothing more noble. There's nothing more heroic. There's nothing more like it. The cross stands alone as the ultimate demonstration and declaration that His people are His beloved ones. You're His beloved one. Nothing can stop it. No demon, no devil. There's no power in heaven or on earth or under the earth that can separate you from the affection of God. You're more than a conqueror. He set His love upon you. Drink from that well.

We grow in the affections of Christ. We'll have the worship team come out. We grow in the affections of Christ by sitting before Him. The Song of Solomon depicts this poetically as coming to His banqueting house in Song of Solomon chapter 2:4. It's a poetic description of how we grow in the affections of God. Because when we're a baby Christian, we have a baby revelation of the affections of God. And the Lord doesn't want us to stay there. He wants us to grow up in the understanding and the revelation of His heart, His emotions toward us.

The bride says this in Song of Solomon 2:4, "He brought me to His banqueting house, and His banner over me was love." He brings us, He's made available to the Christian this place of encounter and delight called the banqueting house. What is the banqueting house? I have no idea, but I'll tell you when I get there. We go eat. If it's a banquet, there's gonna be food. I think it speaks of the richness and the delight as we banquet, and we enjoy and we celebrate.

See, the ultimate picture of the banquet house is the marriage supper of the Lamb in Revelation 19. It's the bride coming out victorious of all of human history, rejoicing with the Bridegroom King as He destroys His enemies upon the earth. A feast of meats and wine. You know there's gonna be wine in the age to come. That's gonna be new for some people at IHOP. It's gonna

flow, the joy of God, the richness of God in that day. I mean, we are going to laugh our heads off in joy, reunited with loved ones, reunited with one another, seeing people through all the ages and eons of history together, fellowshiping with Him in the banqueting house. See, she goes, "He brought me to His banqueting house to tell me what He thinks about me, how He feels towards me, the declaration of His love. He fills me with glory." And then she says this. We'll end with this. She says, "His banner over me was love."

The thing that God has written over His bride, over His people, over you. He says, "It's love." It's affection. It's the affection and the delight of His heart. That's what's the story over your life. It's not disappointment. It's not hypocrite. It's not dull. It's not useless. It's not, it's not, it's not. She says, "The banner over me is love." Do you see that? The banner was the symbol that the army marched in confidence unto the name of their king and their lord. It gave them confidence to know that we march under the banner of a God that is filled with affection and delight over us.

And He's got our back, and if you touch me, He's gonna touch you. If somebody messes with His people, God is going to give them what they deserve. He is a righteous Judge. He will take vengeance on His enemies. Beware, enemies. Beware, wicked. Beware, unrepentant. Beware. If you touch the apple of His eye, He will strike the apple of yours. The banner over us is love and affection and delight, and we march with confidence before Him. "You delight in me." Let's stand.