

Perennial Non-Conformists

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Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 0 0] I was ordained when I was 28 years old. I'd been involved in Christian ministry for quite a few years. Obviously, I had to train to be ordained. I was ordained when I was a 28-year-old man.

And within, I can't remember now if it was the first Sunday when I went to my first church or second or third, but very early on, I met a woman in a motorized scooter wheelchair. And I discovered during coffee that she had Lou Gehrig's disease.

That's the disease where your mind is completely unaffected, but over time, you lose all of the functions in your body. And one of the very, very first things she said to me was that she wanted to die, that she was looking for someone to kill her.

She didn't want to die right then, but she knew that she was going to be going to a thing that she thought would be completely and utterly unbearable, where her mind would be completely fine and she would lose control of her body.

And she was very open about telling me that she was hoping that somebody would help her kill herself when the time came. I'm a 28-year-old guy.

[1 : 0 3] I'd been in Christian leadership for about almost 12 years. I had never come across anything like that in my entire life. I didn't know what on earth to say. I probably looked like a deer caught in the headlights as she talked to me.

To be honest, I probably always hoped after that she wouldn't talk to me at coffee time because I wouldn't know what to say to her. And in this particular church that I served at, there were a lot of shut-ins that we had to visit and there was this one shut-in in particular, this one woman who I had to visit.

She was at what we would now call the Elizabeth Breer Center. I can't remember what her illness was, but she had increasingly lost all functions in her body.

She didn't have Lou Gehrig's disease. It was something else, but her mind was still completely strong. And I would go in to visit her and she could only lie down flat in bed or if the nurses came and moved her.

And she still had just the barest control of her vocal cords. And she had to speak into this little thing that would amplify her voice so I could hear her.

[2 : 1 1] I hated visiting her because I didn't know what on earth I would ever say to her. But it was my job to visit her.

She ended up being, she was a very, very devout Christian and she didn't want to die. I mean, she didn't want somebody to kill her, I should say. She wanted to be with Jesus, but she didn't want somebody to kill her.

And her name was Diane. I can't remember the name of the first one. Her name was Diane and in many ways she was really important to me in my early years as a minister because you're dealing with somebody, you can't say, does the Lord heal you or, you know, it's going to get better.

It's not going to get better. I mean, it's going to get better when she goes to heaven, but it's not going to get better here earthly. It was very, very a hard thing. I hated visiting her, but I had to visit her and I did visit her. And I learned a lot from her.

Now this is 30 years later. Doctor assisted killing is about to become law in all of Canada. And it's very, very interesting that at the heart, even though a lot of the discourse around doctor assisted killing is dealing with an uncontrollable pain, the fact of the matter is, is that the real thing that's going on is that for most people, they fear more than pain in many cases.

[3 : 31] They fear one of two things. They fear the situation where, like with dementia, where their mind goes, but their body is completely healthy.

And we fear that our mind would go while our body is completely healthy and we could live for years and years and years and years and we want to be able to kill ourselves. And the other thing that we fear is like these two ladies that I've just mentioned.

That our mind is completely and utterly fine, but our body goes. And we're a mind trapped in a body that doesn't work. And we want to die. It's in light of that, you can see how these two deeply held fears in our culture, and it's not completely just in our cultures.

If we're exempt, every one of us has, we have to be honest, if we got that type of prognosis that we were going to enter into dementia, or if we had that prognosis that our body was going to fail, but our mind was fine, that would be a terrifying thing for us.

And it's in light of this that we can see how unattractive the gospel is for so many people. Because in the text that Abby read just a few minutes ago that we didn't maybe pick up on, at the end of the day, it appears as if we are asking God to help us give up control of our body and control of our mind.

[5 : 00] The two things we fear, the Bible asks us to do. So let's look at that text. Be very helpful. It's Romans chapter 12.

In fact, actually, you should get your Bibles in case you want to write or make notes, but Andrew, this is one of those times, I know it has to be a shorter sermon today, but we're going to say the verse. Originally, I was going to preach on Romans 12, 1 to 8, and I realized that we're just going to move 3 to 8 later on after Easter, and we're just going to look at these two verses.

We're just going to meditate upon them, and if we get them at all in our mind, if you, like me, would like to memorize these verses, then that's a really good thing. So Andrew, if you could put up Romans 12, 1 to 2.

Could you folks say that with me out loud? And this version might be a little bit different than your version. Some of it's more literally translated because actually the literal translation in some ways is more helpful.

It's more helpful when you understand it. And so let's say this together. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is your rational worship.

[6 : 14] Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

There you go. It's actually a very, very funny translation. You see there where it says a living sacrifice? Another way, the word for sacrifice there is the word for the act and the sacrifice where you kill.

So we're actually saying a living killing. That's actually what you're saying here, a living killing. That's a weird idea.

So you'll notice with this, so what on earth, you can see right in here that it is talking about that, right? Present your bodies as a living killing. And then do not be, and bodies there, as we're going to see, I'll tell you right now, we don't have to see it later, bodies there means everything that makes us us.

But it's so easy for us to think, in many cultures, it's easy for us to think that the most important things about us is our mind, or spiritual things, or our feelings, or our ideas.

[7 : 26] And sometimes it can be almost as if we forget that we have bodies. And so the language here is to make this very, very concrete. It's not George in some abstract, romantic, ideal way, where I'm a legend in my own mind.

It's the George, that if you follow George around 24-7 and you see what George actually does and what he spends his money on and the books that he reads and the books he doesn't read and the good things and the bad things that he does.

That's why the word bodies is used. It's your actual life, including your body and all of the things that you do. And we see then from that big perspective, excuse me, that we're being asked to give up control.

So who on earth would ever want to do that? Like how on earth could that ever possibly make sense? Well, you'll notice that the text is actually a very, very interesting text and it begins with this, therefore.

It's going to follow from, it follows from all of the things that have gone on. And in fact, actually, if you go and look, excuse me, Romans is written in a very interesting way.

[8 : 41] In some ways, in all of the New Testament and maybe all of the Bible, there's no book that's been so carefully structured in certain ways. And those of you who have been here before, you know how I say how the first 15 verses is just, yeah, hi, I'm Paul, looking forward to seeing you, I'm doing this, I'm doing that.

And then 16 and 17, he gives you the basic idea of the whole book. And then basically, well actually, why don't you put up Romans 1, 16 to 17 right now?

Can you read this? We've read this, if you're a guest here, we've read this verse together every Sunday that we've looked at Romans because all of the book of Romans follows from this. Could you read it with me?

And so what Paul has been doing from chapter 1, verse 16 to the end of chapter 11 is he's been telling us what the gospel is.

What is the good news? He's been telling us what the good news is, he's been explaining it, and he's been defending it from certain misconceptions, and he's been defending it from certain criticisms.

[10 : 01] And what he says is that the good news, hang on a sec, sorry. I have something in my throat. I feel actually fine, but it's like just a bit of a something in my throat.

Anyway, so what he's been telling you is that God has provided something, he has provided a power that will make us right with himself.

That we are to recognize that we are helpless in terms of making ourselves right with God, but that God, seeing our helplessness and still loving us, he has provided the power that will make us right with him.

And this power that will make us right with him is something which is right, it's just, that as you get more and more deeply into the mystery of what he's done and how he's thought, you understand that everything he's done is not only just, but more than that, it's merciful, because he's seen our need and provided a power to make us right with himself.

And at the very, very heart of that power to make us right with himself is the death of Jesus upon the cross. It's his sinless life, it's his teaching, it's his perfect obedience culminating in his death upon the cross and his mighty resurrection.

[11 : 19] And this is the good news, that when you put your faith and trust in Jesus, God in his grace provides a power by which he comes into your life and makes you right with him.

And that's what Paul has been trying to defend and explain for 11 chapters. Now, if you ever look at books on how to preach, one of the things that books on how to preach nowadays say is that you have to answer two questions, so what and now what.

And so for 11 chapters, there's been lots of now what's that have been implied, but now Paul is going to answer the now what question. If this is all true, if there really is a God who does exist, if he really does love you, if we really are helpless to make, oh, thank you so much, Daniel, if we really are helpless to make ourselves right with him, if Jesus and his death upon the cross, his perfect life and his death upon the cross and his resurrection really is God's power, this news is God's power that when we hear it and we receive it, we ask in faith that this would be true of us, that this would somehow get in us and that we would get in it, and that then God's power is unleashed to make us right with him.

Well, what on earth does that mean in terms of how we live? And so if you go back to the text, we're not going to read it aloud, Romans 12, 1 and 2, did you put it back on the screen? Romans 12, 1 and 2? That's the therefore.

The therefore. Because one of the things that we're going to see as we go on is that God's grace, this salvation, isn't just a moment where we're made right with him, but salvation means that our lives start to be changed, they start to be transformed, they start to no longer be conformed to certain things but transformed into other things.

[13 : 07] And Paul here is going to give in these two verses in a sense the key or the model, the basic understanding of all of the rest of the book of Romans in terms of how you live. And it's very, very counterintuitive.

It's very counterintuitive and it's very different maybe than many of the things that you hear. I've learned lots of good things on focus on the family, but one of the problems with focus on the family is that often it slides into moralism and therapy.

And moralism and therapy actually often doesn't help us change our lives. I know that's a shocking thing to say about a, for a group that many people think is like right almost up there with the Bible, but it's often just moralism and therapy.

And the Bible is going to say here, Paul is going to say that actual change comes about something different. It's not moralism and it's not therapy. Look at what it says. I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God.

By the mercies of God. It's telling us that what we need to do to begin to change is to be gripped by the mercies of God, to contemplate and think upon the mercies of God.

[14 : 32] I've gotten myself out of notes. Andrew, could you put the first sermon point up? I've sort of got out of track.

I apologize. Actually, last Sunday, it was, here's just like two confessions. You can pray for me. In my sermon, I get talking. You see, I don't have a written text. I'm talking and talking and then I realize, good grief, I just got way out of order.

And I don't know how you folks felt the sermon, but I actually spent the last three quarters of the sermon in stark terror because I'd gotten way out of order from my notes and my illustrations got out of order and I spent the rest of the time trying to get back on order.

Anyway, this is very simple. So what's the significance of the gospel and the mercies of God? It's right up here. Only through the gospel will I seek to please the true and living God who is pleased with me first.

See, that's one of the things that Paul has been trying to establish. That in the gospel, by Jesus' death upon the cross and his resurrection, every single thing that I have done wrong that breaks my fellowship with God, with the created order, with other human beings, every single thing, even those things that if I live to be another 50 years, these things that are in the future, every single one of these things with nothing left over has been taken away by Jesus.

[16 : 00] And it's not just that I have a clean slate, but that the perfect life of Jesus, his perfect life of obedience, his perfect relationship with the Father, all of that, as we saw in Romans 6, that when I put my faith and trust in Jesus, it's that what happens is he becomes my substitute and he exchanges his position for mine and he bestows upon me his perfect obedience.

And that is how I now stand before the Father in very, very traditional Anglican dress to illustrate that. The minister wears all black and on top of the all black, he wears a white robe and normally the white robe would allow some of the black to peek out.

And it's to be a walking illustration or a lesson that my sins were black and I am clothed in the righteousness of Jesus. And so that means that I don't have to worry about my Father in Heaven being pleased with me.

He is pleased with me. I mean, there's things obviously I have to do. I've done things that I have to say I'm sorry for. I mean, because I want, but everything in the Christian life flows from the fact that my salvation is completely and utterly accomplished by Jesus.

I've done nothing. And that when I put my faith and trust in Jesus, the standing of my Father, my Heavenly Father, towards me is that he's pleased with me. And so that means that the entire Christian life is not that, oh, if I just help in the nursery, then maybe God will be pleased with me.

[17 : 42] If I just sing in the praise band, maybe God will be pleased with me. If I just, you know, if I don't do naughty things, maybe God will be pleased with me. That the Christian life is not about trying to get God to please you, but that he is pleased with me.

Like, I can't make him, in a sense, more pleased with me, but he's pleased with me. You see, it takes a while, the whole Christian faith is to flow out of gratitude, not out of fear.

When I went to first year university, I fell into the very, very trap that many, many first year university students fall into. I majored in having fun for my first term.

I minored in going to class. And the reason was is that in high school, they took attendance and they had regular assignments.

And if you didn't show up and if you didn't do the assignments, there'd be a phone call to my parents. So my compliance was basically fear-driven. You go to university, I don't know if there's any professors present, but you know, from the outside, it looks like they don't give a hoot whether you show up to class or not.

[18 : 55] It doesn't bother them, they still get paid. And nobody calls up anybody if you don't hand in your papers or don't do your midterms or anything. And so at the end of my first term, I was desperately failing three of my five classes.

And it was out of fear of failure that I started to press into my work. And a lot of people, the Christian life is a fear of failure. And what Paul is saying here when he says, I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, he's saying, you know what does the gospel told us?

The gospel has told us that God is pleased with you in Jesus. He's pleased with you. Your motivation, there's a fundamental security as you're gripped by the gospel, there's a security that you act out of.

And it's very interesting if you're looking there, it says, by the mercies of God. It's very intentional. It doesn't say mercy. Mercy's abstract. Oh yes, God is merciful.

Oh yes, God is love. Well, how has he been merciful or loving? Don't know. But the word mercies is to be concrete and historical and specific.

[20 : 08] That's why it says it. That we're not just to think of how God is love or God is mercy, that we're to think of God's mercies. We're to think about Jesus. We're to think about him when he was tempted by the devil in the wilderness.

That we're to think upon him as he feeds the 5,000, as he calls to Peter to walk on the water. We are to think about him as he heals the Gadarene demoniac, as he deals with the woman at the well, as he deals with the woman caught in adultery.

We're to think about him as we think about his perfect life. And most of all, we're to think about him as when he had the option, Joey, the hymn sang it very well, it was love that held Jesus to the cross, not the nails.

And we're to think about the mercies. And this leads us to the second thing. If you could put up the second point. I will lack an interest in holiness if I am not gripped by the gospel and contemplate God's mercies.

I will lack an interest in holiness if I am not gripped by the gospel and contemplate God's mercies. Listen to Romans 12, 1 and 2 again.

[21 : 19] Or the verse 1. I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is your rational worship.

It calls us to remember what Jesus did for us on the cross, how our Father is now pleased with us. If this, you know, I use the example over these last few weeks, if I grow this church so that it's as big as Joel Osteen's church, God's not going to be more pleased with me than he is today.

Do you know how freeing that is when that starts to grip you? But does that mean that you do nothing? No, it doesn't mean what you do nothing. It means that you relate to God from a completely different perspective.

And you not only relate to God from a perspective of not having to win his favor, but you can begin to relate to God out of gratitude because you think upon his mercies. And it's as you think upon his mercies that within you becomes a desire.

It becomes reasonable. It, in fact, becomes rational. Irrational to offer your body as a living killing. So, in fact, when we have no interest in holiness, it might very well be that what's motivating us is our fear of failure or a desire to accomplish or to try to make God pleased with us.

[22 : 38] And the Bible here is very counterintuitive. Do you want to deal with a desire for holiness? Be gripped by the gospel and contemplate the mercies of God.

And as that happens, it starts to become rational to say, I'm going to hold somebody else's crying kid. It starts to become rational to say, I'm going to give away 10% of everything I make.

It starts to become rational to say that I'm going to risk being stupid by telling somebody about Jesus or by offering to pray for them. I, the way to change is not by that old story being the little train that could.

Gotta make it, gotta make it, gotta make it, gotta make it. That just gets us tired. It doesn't go anywhere. It's to be gripped by the gospel and contemplate the mercies of God. One more thing can you put up?

The third point, please, Andrew. As I am gripped by the gospel, it is rational to present every square inch of who I am to God as a living sacrifice.

[23 : 47] As I am gripped by the gospel, it is rational to present every square inch of who I am to God as a living sacrifice. See, one of the problems with the sexual revolution and how it's bent lots of churches out of shape and the heart of the sexual revolution began amongst heterosexuals and now it's moved into, you know, in terms of how we deal with those who are same-sex attracted and now how we deal with those who believe that they were meant to have a different gender than they are, than their sex, is that it's bent churches out of shape because there's a fundamental part of the person who says, oh yeah, okay, God, you can have my emotions, you can have this, you can have that, but this thing is perfect already and I'm holding on to it.

You have no right to define it, no right to limit it, no right, you can't say that you have to make this whole. To a heterosexual man who wants to find every third woman he sees attractive, that there's no right for you, Father, to actually try to curb that in me.

For a man who sees another man and wants to sexually know him, there's no right for you to change that in me. For a man who actually thinks he's a woman, there's no right for you to change that in me.

But this text is saying something very counter-cultural. It's saying that as you're gripped by what Jesus has done for you on the cross and as you're mindful of the mercies of God, as that deepens within you, it becomes rational for you to understand that every square inch of who you are, every square inch of who you are is to be offered to God as a living sacrifice.

See, one of the ironies, if you could put up Romans 12, 1 and 2, we're going to read it. The second part would be quick because I'm very conscious of my time here. Oh yeah, actually we're doing pretty good.

[25 : 49] Just before we all read this together as a thing, you know, one of the deep ironies in our culture, it's a very, very deep irony. I don't know how to talk about it in public. You know, maybe by me saying this it will help you think about it publicly.

But what are the two deep fears in our culture? I began this sermon with this, this move to have doctors be able to assist people to kill themselves. And that it's a right that we force people over against their conscience to do this, which is what the law wants to do.

And force nurses to refer or participate or at least participate by referring. Force doctors to do it. And as I said, it's not often as much worried about pain, but underneath this is this loss of control.

This fear that the mind can be perfectly fine and the body loses its control. And the fear that you could have a body that's fine, but the mind loses itself.

And because of this deep fear, it's deeply ironical that the culture's response to it is to kill both. Like, how's that a win?

[27 : 01] Like, if you have a mind that's still fine but your body's going and your fear of losing control, how is it a win if you lose control of your mind and your body in death? And the opposite.

Like, how is that actually, like, you're going deeper into losing control? And what we desire by going deeper into losing control in a way that's crazy, if you understand there really is a God that does exist, who loves you so much that he sent his son to die upon the cross for you, that he's pleased with you when you put your faith and trust in him, that everything that you need to do to make yourself right with God has been done by him because you can't do it for yourself.

And then he asks you to lose control of your body and your mind. This is a losing of control of your body and your mind that actually gives you proper control of your body and your mind. It's sane.

It's an outline of moral, intellectual, emotional, and relational sanity. Some other time we'll have to talk, I mean, I, you know, obviously, and there's people in this congregation who have to live with people, their loved ones who are losing this type of control or we all have friends like it and I, there's obviously lots of other things that need to be said about the nature of community and how to help people who are going through such unbelievably tough times.

But you see that, look that, our culture never seems to dawn on them that they're actually seeking an irrational solution to the problem. And at the same time that they don't recognize their own irrationality, they look at a text like this that actually is rational.

[28 : 55] It makes sense. This is only half of the verse. Could you read this with me again? And by the way, I mean, I give you little points to try to help to ground what the text is saying, but my hope and my prayer is that when you leave from here, you want to memorize Romans 12, 1 and 2, not my words.

If you go away thinking about my words and you forget about the Bible, I failed. I failed. Because my words are just my words. These words are God's words.

Could you read it with me again, please? I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is your rational worship.

Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

And now, here's the big countercultural idea in the second part of the text where it says, do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

[30 : 05] Andrew, if you could put up point four, I know I have to go quicker. My mind is renewed as I walk in God's will. My mind is renewed as I walk in God's will.

See what it says here? It doesn't say your mind is renewed as you think great thoughts, as you work on increasing your IQ, as you work on your reasoning abilities or any of those things.

It actually doesn't tell us that. You know, if you think about it, you just think about your life a lot. A lot of times, the mind follows the will. I want to have that.

I want to go out and I want to go drinking. And then your mind comes up with reasons as to why that's reasonable. I had a hard day at the office. I'll feel so much better. I can be with my friends.

It'll help me forget my, you know, whatever it is, you know? So yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. You know, you want to cheat on your taxes. Well, the government is corrupt. The government is evil. Civil servants just waste all their time.

[31 : 06] You know, whatever it is, you'll just come up with reasons to lie on your taxes and cheat. The mind often follows the will. We don't think about it, especially in a city like Ottawa with very high IQ and lots of well-educated people.

But the Bible here is pointing to a different way to have our minds changed. And it begins with the will. Obviously, the mind is at work here because the mind has to help understand what God's will is.

But what really brings about transformation is walking in God's will. If you could put up the next point, Andrew, as well. I usually need to obey my way to mental clarity.

When I refuse to obey God's will, I lose mental clarity. I usually need to obey my way to mental clarity.

When I refuse to obey God's will, I lose mental clarity. See, it's very, very interesting. It says here, do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.

[32 : 09] And the two words conformed and transformed, they have the different sense. It's not as obvious in English, but in the original language, it's very obvious. They're in the passive tense. So what it means is it's saying, like if you've ever been to a cottage and you're on a cottage that has a very, like a river with some flow, if somebody tells you just go put the canoe out at the end of the dock, if you put the canoe at the end of the dock and you don't tie the canoe down, the river will take the canoe away.

You have to tie the canoe or it will go. And the word here is that if we don't do anything, we'll be conformed to this age. It's like putting a canoe at the end of the dock and not tying it down.

The canoe will be taken away by the current. And the text is saying if you don't do anything, if you just sort of go with, if you just live, the age, you'll conform to the age.

But if you want to be transformed, it's also in the passive. It's implying that God does the transformation. But in this case, you need to give God permission. You need to say, God, I give you permission to transform my mind and renew me.

And it's God who does it. And the means by which is as we hear the Bible and we think about the mercies of God and we begin to understand who God is and what his will is, that we try to obey it.

[33 : 29] And so it is that I usually need to obey my way to mental clarity. And when I refuse to obey God's will, I lose mental clarity. Sixth point, here's the good thing for the Christian.

My mind always needs more renewing. It doesn't matter if you're here and you're 90 years old. It doesn't matter if you're here and you're 18 years old. Your mind always needs more renewing.

The very, very heart of the Christian faith is that there's this call to constant renewal for the rest of our lives. It's going to look a little bit different if you're 96 and you're walking around like this.

This is racing down the hallway. I don't know. If I'm 96 and I can do that, I'm just going to still be glad that I can be vertical and move at all. Let me tell you, that'll be fast for me and I'll be happy.

Hopefully, I'll give God praise and glory for it. So, could you put up Romans 12, 1 and 2 one more time? We're going to read it one more time and then we're just going to say something in closing to summarize it for us and then we'll, I think we're going to sing a hymn and go.

[34 : 33] I'll say a prayer, we'll sing a hymn and go. Here it is. Say it with me, please. I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, which is your rational worship.

Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

Final slide, Andrew, please. The gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ crucified is the power of God for salvation. The Christian life begins when I receive the gospel by faith alone.

The Christian walk is grounded on the gospel, shaped by the gospel, pushed by the gospel, and pulled by the gospel. Let's stand. Father, you know right now some area in every person's life here we're struggling to obey.

Father, maybe it's a wife who's struggling to obey, to try to respect her husband. Father, maybe it's a husband here who's just really controlled with some anger or willfulness and we don't want to obey.

[35 : 59] Maybe, Father, it's some of us that we want to try to cut corners at work or cheat at work in some type of way. Or, Father, maybe some of us we're hanging on to bitterness and we're refusing to forgive.

And, Father, you know that every single one of us have obedience challenges before us. And we ask, Father, that in your mercy you would pour out your Holy Spirit upon us, that you would make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel, that you would help us to think upon your mercies.

And so, Father, instill and grow within us a desire for holiness, a desire to walk in obedience. Father, we ask that you would pour out your Holy Spirit in such a way upon us.

And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.