

Filled With All the Fullness of God

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Please open your Bibles to Ephesians 3. Look specifically at v. 19. Go about halfway through the verse. In the English Standard Version, it reads this way: (after the comma) "...That you may be filled with all the fullness of God." "That you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Now that's what I want to deal with today. But let's back up to v. 14 because I want to take this in context. We're going to read v. 14-21, but just know that last half of v. 19 is very specifically where we're going to bring our attention. But I want you to see its setting, in the context here. V. 14, "For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being (or in your inner man) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you being rooted and grounded in love may have the strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever, amen."

And so ends the first three theologically rich chapters, and then we break out into chapter 4 where we are going to get all manner of practical instruction. Oh yes, there's doctrinal realities and truths and deep theological realities that we're going to be confronted with in these three chapters too, but it becomes full of imperatives. There's lots of instruction for how we live our life. And so this is really Paul's final words in this massive, heavy theological introduction to this before we break out into all these practical realities of the Christian life.

Filled With the Fullness of God

My objective this morning is simple. Straightforward. I want us to try to just grapple with: what does it mean to be filled with all the fullness of God? What is that? What does it look like? I want us to embrace this concept in Scripture. And you see it there. Look at it again. Last half of Ephesians 3:19. "...That you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

So, several observations. I want us to think. One - here's an observation for you. You know, we've spent a number of weeks over in the Song of Solomon, so let's just kind of get back on track. Brethren, it's important to remind you of one of the great realities of this passage. This is a prayer. Well, it's not exactly a prayer. What I mean is this, Paul isn't actually praying here. When you pray, you speak to God. He's not speaking to God here. He's actually speaking to us. But what he's doing is he's telling us how he prays when he prays. You all see that. This is what he prays for. And he's instructing the Ephesians and he's instructing us. He's letting us into his prayer closet. He's saying when I'm in there, when I'm praying to God for you, this is what I pray for you.

Here's another important reality. I find this essential. It's God-breathed. You say, yeah, we're reading the Bible. We recognize that. We understand that. No, sometimes you just have to sit back and really let it soak into your brain that this is God-breathed and what that means is

that when Paul is penning this, it's because God wants you to know this. You see what's happening here? The Holy Spirit says to Paul: Paul, let them into your prayer closet. I want them to follow you in there. Take them in there. And you show them exactly how you pray for them. I want them to see that. That's important. Why? Because the Spirit of God would teach us that whatever it means to be filled with all the fullness of God, we know this, it's something we can pray for. It's something we should pray for. It's something that it's biblical to pray for. I would ask this: Brethren, we're not being faithful with Scripture if we're not affected by this - by this reality that God is teaching us something about prayer here. Lots of you have been in lots of church prayer meetings undoubtedly. How often do you hear that prayed? How often you do hear somebody in the prayer meeting praying: Father, fill them with all the fullness of God. We should pray that way. And I think one of the reasons we don't pray that way is probably because... what is that? It sounds lofty, but what is it? I mean, typically when we pray, we're praying things that, to us, we can identify with, it's practical. Maybe we just can't identify with this. Maybe that's one of the reasons we don't pray this more.

Something else I want you to notice. If you look at the end of v. 19, you know what you find there? A period. Now, I know, there's no punctuation in the original Greek, but our translators properly recognize that these matters that Paul is articulating to us that he prays, that's the end. This is the last thing. This is where it ends. Whatever it means to be filled with all the fullness of God, this is the climax of his prayer. There's no more to ask for beyond this. This is the end.

I want you to notice something else. When Paul prays that - that you might be filled with all the fullness of God, that's not just a random thought that comes out of nowhere. It's a sequence. It's the last item in a string of requests. And I want you to look at it. Just look at v. 16 because this is where Paul's petitions for these Ephesians start. You see it in v. 14. He says, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father." So he's telling us, he's showing us that this is prayer. And then he gives us a little bit of a description of the Father. "From whom..." really the whole family "in heaven and on earth is named."

And then in v. 16, he tells us what he's bending the knee for; what he's praying for. "That..." Now did you catch that? Did you catch that word right there? Because this isn't the only time that shows up in the next three verses. It shows up again and again. It's repeated. "That." You know what that is? You know what that word means to us? It carries the meaning of: in order that. I am praying in order that you might have this, in order that it might lead to this, in order that... and you're going to see that. If you just look for the word "that." Whatever translation you have, look for the word "that." Because it keeps coming up. It's like one thing leads into the next. One thing begets the next. Just watch. "That according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner man..." There it is again. "...So 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 that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." You see, one thing leads to another. It's like they're building. It's a progression. So that when we get to being filled with all the fullness of God, that's the end. That's the culmination. You see, all these things are snowballing. They're coming together. One thing leading to another. And this - this is the end. This is the climax of the

mountain of Christian experience. Listen, brethren, even knowing the love of Christ that passes knowledge, as great as that is, notice what he says. He wants us to know the breadth and length and height and depth and to have some knowledge of this love of Christ that passes, surpasses knowledge. Why? So that... See, that's not the end. That's great! That's glorious! But that's not the end. The end is further. Further on. Onward. He's taking us deeper and deeper. Yes, that's great - Christ dwelling in your hearts. That's good. That's great. That's glorious! Being rooted and grounded in love. You may have the strength to comprehend. Yes, that comprehension - great! To dive into the love of Christ - beautiful! That is growth. That is maturity. But it's taking us, it's even so that some other reality may fully blossom and take shape in your life. That's what's happening here. "In order that... you may be filled with all the fullness of God." And the thing is, you know what doesn't happen? You don't get: In order that you may be filled with all the fullness of God in order that... something else may happen. No. Period. And what he's praying for is done. Now he goes into a doxology. He just explodes. He's so worked up, it's just: To Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond what we ask or think. It's just glory to Him in the church and in Christ Jesus. He just explodes in worship then, which is what we should do if we really are recognizing.

What Does It Mean to be Filled?

But let me just ask you a question. Brethren, if I prayed, if I said, hold it, brethren. I want to pray for you. And I prayed for you: Father, please, give these brethren the strength to comprehend the love of Your Son. And then I said, wait, I want to ask something else for you to. Lord, I pray that they would be filled with all the fullness of God. Would that seem anticlimactic to you? Like, oh man, that just took the breath right out of that prayer. Or would it actually feel like: Wow, he even went higher. I know what it feels like to me. It feels like that's higher. Brethren, the reality is think about what that means. It would be one thing to say that we're full of God. (incomplete thought) Be filled with the fullness of God. The fullness. Being filled with God. No, he doesn't stop there. Being filled with the fullness of God. What? We would never invent that. No, he goes further. Filled with all the fullness of God.

The reality is that if you just really dwell on it, it confounds the understanding. The truth is quite honestly it sounds like too much. It sounds like it must not be true. But here's Paul praying it. That's what I want you to grasp. He's praying it. He's praying it for the Ephesians, and if he prays it for the Ephesians, brethren, Scripture is profitable for the man of God whether you're at Ephesus or whether you're at San Antonio. This is for us. And you see what Paul's doing. This is a prayer. Father, according to the riches of Your glory, fill these people with all Your fullness. What is that? It's obvious he wants us to have it. It's obvious he wants us to be a partaker of it. It's obvious he wants us to enjoy it, experience it. He wants God to grant it to us according to the riches of His glory. And you know the question I have is what does that even mean? What does it look like? I don't think any of us have any problem recognizing that it sounds wonderful. It sounds glorious. But what is this? What does that look like? Look at it again. Ephesians 3:19. Second half of the verse. "That you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

How do we communicate that? Let's say one of your children asks you. Daddy, what is that? Mommy... or somebody from outside the church. Somebody you work with or somebody in the family. What is that? What do you say? And I guess the question is too, I think there's a

place just to say: do I know what this is because I've experienced it? I mean, yeah, I might look at times of revival, or you can go grab some book about the infilling of the Spirit and you can see examples throughout history where people had marvelous experiences. Is that what it is? What is this?

And so, as I'm running through my mind I'm just throwing some thoughts out about how we think about this. Here's one way to think about it. We could just chalk this up to: well, that's kind of the sort of stuff we expect in the Bible, right? Religious sounding words that have to do with God and they sound glorious and sometimes things are deep and difficult and we hardly understand them. It's hard to bring them practically into my life. They seem to have little to do with my normal everyday life. But here's the thing I'm convinced of, the more I study the Apostle Paul, if anybody's practical, he is. And if anybody's logical, he is. And one of the things I recognize about the Ephesian church, they weren't made up of a bunch of theologians. They were made up of people just like you and me. Nothing unusual. Nothing spectacular. They were made up of saved sinners just like us. Not theologians. Not a bunch of people with high IQ's. These were people that were being saved out of the occult. These were people being saved out of all manner of background. You know the situation at Ephesus there.

So, what else? I thought this. Perhaps we could view this like this. You know what this is? This is like the highest in the Christian experience. It's like way up there. But you know what? I kind of live down here in the lower regions so I'm just not going to concern myself with it. Because whatever it is, I don't think I've experienced it. And I know what I am experiencing, and that just seems like it's kind of up there. We could take that approach.

Or, we could just take the approach that maybe it's so high, it's just impossible. I can't reach it now and I don't know if I ever will. It's unreachable. So even if there is such a thing, it's up there. Plus, I don't even know how to lay hold on it. It's out of my reach. And I don't feel like I even have the machinery or the know-how to know what is even involved to make that happen.

Or, we could basically look at it this way. We could just convince ourselves that if we're Christians, we already have this. That's just true of all of us. It's just something true. It's kind of like the forensic aspect of our Christianity. You know, where we're justified by faith. We don't feel that. It's not experiential. Oh, regeneration is, but justification? It's a legal reality. Maybe it's kind of like that. Maybe it's something that, well, it happens to us. It's part of the reality of being a Christian, but we just don't really feel it. And you know what? We can go away feeling like words hardly have any meaning. You know what I mean by that? Look, if I told you, hey, I got a car I want to give you. And it's out here in the parking lot. And it's filled with all the fullness of glory. And you go out and it's like a dented up 15 year old car. And it's like, well, you know, I suppose that could be what he's talking about. But you'd have to admit he used pretty glorious language and the actual experience... (incomplete thought). Because this sounds glorious. Filled with all the fullness of God. That sounds glorious. And the truth is, (incomplete thought), if we were going to say, hey, are you experiencing that kind of thing? Are you experiencing something that resonates with that kind of glory in your life right now? I mean, maybe you'd say, well, I don't know. Those words sound wonderful, but my experience maybe doesn't resonate on par with those words. Or maybe it's not meant to. Maybe it's just hyperbole. It's just over-the-top talk. It's something of an exaggeration. I don't buy that for a second. It's Scripture. But here's the reality, we often look at the Apostle Paul.

You know this, Charles Leiter - he tries to write a book about what the Apostle Paul says true Christianity looks like and people accuse him of over-realized soteriology. And his book quotes Paul everywhere. What am I saying there? I'm saying this. If you simply go to Scripture - I mean, you step away from your own experience, and you simply go to Scripture and you try to define the Christian life by the Apostle Paul, you know what picture you get? Incredibly victorious. Incredibly glorious. Maybe we just become used to that. You know, that Paul talks in a way that quite honestly, if he was in my shoes I don't always feel like I'm living up to where Paul's at.

Or maybe it's just mystical. You know what it says in the Proverbs? It says it's the glory of God to conceal a thing. So maybe that's what we've got going here. Maybe we've just got a concept that God has kind of hidden. It's meant to be mysterious. Obscure. Ambiguous. Like something we're really not supposed to ever figure out. Well, look, even when God conceals something I would say He still intends for us to dig and find it. If we look for it as for hidden treasure, He gives us promises that we're going to discover. So I don't buy that either, that it's just mystical and it's beyond our ability.

Who Is This For?

But I would ask this question: Okay, if this is within our reach, who has it? I mean, who's experiencing this? I am filled experientially - I am filled with all the fullness of God and I feel it and it's my experience. Are you ready to raise your hand and say: Yep! I do. And maybe you can raise your hand and say that. Maybe you should. Maybe we all should be able to do that. But, I guess the question I have is are we experiencing it and we don't know it? Could something as great as being filled with all the fullness of God be something that we're actually experiencing, but perhaps we don't know it? I mean, how do we experience this? What does it feel like? How do we obtain it? What's happening? These are the questions I'm asking when I come to something like this. Look, I've been reading this portion of Scripture over and over and over as I've been preaching through this whole section, and you get to that, and it sounds glorious! It's like all through my Christian life, I come to those: "filled with all the fullness of God" and it's like whoa! What is that? I mean, it's glorious and it's like I want that, but what is it I really want?

So what's the meaning? Let's just try to tap into that. This isn't going to be exhaustive, but as I thought through it, I went different places in Scripture just trying to feel for perhaps what we're dealing with. You can tell me after we look at these different things whether you feel like there are massively practical and applicable other portions of Scripture that apply here. But these are the ones that just seemed to resonate with me as I was contemplating this.

Brethren, here's the first thing I want you to notice: When you talk this way - "be filled with all the fullness of God" - you need to remember something. There's a context here. Now, go back to the end of chapter 2. In v. 19, Paul said this: "You're no longer strangers and aliens." Why? "We have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then, you're no longer strangers and aliens. You're fellow citizens with the saints, members of the household of God built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the Cornerstone." Now notice this, v. 21-22. "In whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him, you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the

Spirit." And you want to catch that thought right there. Why? Because Paul has in mind a temple. A dwelling place for God. Now you think about the concept in 3:19. Being filled with all the fullness of God. What was unique about the temple? Look, one of the places I often think about when I think of the temple is when that temple was being dedicated by Solomon. And the glory of God filled it. And the priests had to run from that place. Why? The fullness of this glory inhabited.

Now, remember something. When you hit chapter 3, remember the words there? "For this reason..." And most of us at the end of v. 1 have the double-dash. Why? What does that mean? It means that there was a digression. You remember this? When we looked at this? Paul was ready to dive straight in. He told them, you are the temple of God. You are the dwelling place of God. And he was ready to jump in right then and said, for this reason, I bow my knees before the Father and pray the way I do. But he digressed. There was a little parenthesis because he said something. He called himself a prisoner for the Lord. And he recognized - and you see it in v. 13 - he recognized that they might be discouraged. And he said "I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you." Basically, v. 2-13 were a pastoral aside. But take that out. Take that out and watch the flow. The flow is basically this: You are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. "For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father from whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named that according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being." Why? Why would we be strengthened inside? So that Christ may dwell. You see that dwelling place? That idea of dwelling is very much on his mind. Christ dwelling in you by faith. "Being rooted and grounded in love you might have this ability to comprehend this love of Christ; that you be filled with all the fullness of God." This is the temple imagery here. And you don't want to miss that. Brethren, this is key. This is essential. Hear me.

You know what? When you're in the Old Testament, Nadab and Abihu. Where were they killed? I'll tell you where they were killed. They were killed in the tabernacle and they were offering strange fire and they dropped dead. That's where God's glory showed up. Or think about this - think about Uzzah. Uzzah died doing what? What did he touch? The ark. The primary piece of furniture from the temple. He touched it. He died. Nadab and Abihu are in that tabernacle. They're offering strange fire. They died. Think with me. When you come into the New Testament, and Ananias and Sapphira died, where were they? You know where they were? They were where the church was meeting. There's a shift. The place of God's presence in the Old Testament: the temple. The place of God's presence in the New Testament: the church.

Now think with me. Do you know there when Solomon was dedicating the temple? And what happened? The presence of God was there and the priests ran from the place. But what does it say in the book of Acts when Ananias and Sapphira were put to death? Where were people running from then? KJV - No man durst join himself to them. That is the place that became fearful then. In the Old Testament, over the tabernacle, a pillar of fire. The dedication of the temple - fire came from heaven. Come into the book of Acts, the fire is over the head of the 120 in the upper room. There's a shift. Do you see that shift? You see, in the Old Testament, what was the temple? The temple was the place where God dwelled. One thing have I desired

of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell where? He wanted to dwell in the temple that he might see the face of God. Why there? Because that's where God met with men.

But when you come to the New Testament, it's not like that anymore. Brethren, brethren! What happened in the old dispensation? What happened? The place shook. The temple. The curtain was torn in two. You come into the New Testament, you get fully engaged under this new covenant. Now, what shakes? Not the temple. The prayer meeting. Acts 4. That's the places that God shakes now. Because that's where God's people are. You see, you've got to capture that imagery from the end of chapter 2 if you really want to get an idea about the fact that Paul is praying that the Spirit of God would strengthen you - or that God would strengthen you through His Spirit in your inner being that Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith. And he moves on through this. And that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. This is a picture of the temple. John was dealing with it in the first hour. Your body's are temples of the Holy Spirit. This idea that God dwells in us. God dwells with His people now. He meets with His people now. This is all temple language. God's people are the primary contact points for God in this world. It is in us that He manifests Himself most uniquely.

The Christian is the Temple Now

Listen to this. We can cross over texts like this, but you don't want to miss this. When you think of the New Testament church, Christ said this: "If anyone loves Me, He will keep My Word and My Father will love him, and We will come to Him and make Our home with him." Now hear me. God is everywhere. Even when Solomon dedicated that temple he said, "Heaven and the highest heavens cannot contain You. How much less this house that I've built for You." But nothing can contain Him. When we talk about God dwelling somewhere what we mean is that that is where God manifests Himself. That's where He shows up. That's where He appears. Now, of course, the temple wasn't the only place that God was, any more than the church is the only place that God is. But my point is this, when we think about being filled with all the fullness of God, we need to recognize this for what it is. It is temple language, and when we're talking temple, we mean that in all the places in this world there is one place that is unique above all other places where God shows up.

May God give us an expectation there. We need an expectation. We need to not give God rest. Tozer said it. When there stops being something mysterious about the church, she's lost her power. Why? Because this is the place God's supposed to show up. (incomplete thought) It's not like we want people to drop dead, but I'll tell you, brethren, when our church first started, we had one person after another dying. People that came into this church that made false professions - God killed them. We had some preacher from the East side come and try to take our money, and God killed him. You could say, well, is that really what happened? Well, if God's in control of death, and we had one after another take place... There should be something mysterious in the church. A sense of the presence of God in our midst. May God give us more of that.

But here's another thing, you've got this temple connection from the end of chapter 2, but then there's this. Many of you know if there is a synoptic book to Ephesus it would be Colossians. You often find the same kind of verbiage - not exactly spelled out the same way, but you often find similar ideas in the letter to the Colossians. There's something similar. Let's turn

over there. This may help us as well. I'm going to cross reference with Colossians 2. Look with me at v. 9. This is the closest thing we find in the Colossian letter to what we have happening over there in Ephesians 3. And you'll notice similarities, similar words, and yet, some profound differences. "For in Him..." that's Christ from the end of v. 8. "In Christ, the whole fullness of deity..." Or, it's "all the fullness of the Godhead." Filled with all the fullness of God. This is filled with all the fullness of the Godhead. It's the same idea here. But, you see what's happening. "In Him, the whole fullness of deity," or, "all the fullness of Godhead dwells bodily" in Him. And then notice v. 10. "You have been filled..." So we've got this idea of all the fullness of Godhead and being filled, just like we do over there in Ephesians. But here it's different. You've been filled. It doesn't actually say what we are filled with, but it's in the same context with this reality that Jesus Christ - in Him all this fullness of Godhead dwells bodily. You have been filled. And what I really want to pick up here is just those last two words: "in Him." You have been filled in Him. Union. That's the key.

How Are We Filled?

Well, how are we filled? I believe what's implied here is we're being filled with all the fullness of God. I mean, you can compare Scripture with Scripture. Ephesians and this. This is what's in Paul's mind here. What he sees is us being filled. With what? With all the fullness of God. But it's not separate from Christ. It's never separate from Christ. It's in Him. And see, in Him, and all of this fullness of Godhead is in Him bodily. And it's like Jesus told us, "I am the Vine. You are the branches." And we're connected. It's in Him. Union. He's the source. From Him, all the fullness of life and all the fullness of this Godhead, all the fullness of this reality flows out of Him. It flows into the branches as well. All the fullness. There's this vital union between Vine and branch. This is critical. Because all the time, people want to feel full of some religious experience. They want to feel full of God. And they don't think they need to be a Christian. You know, people want to go out into nature and they're just looking for God or they want to get into yoga or some kind of meditation.

When I was in high school, I had a friend and his mom got terminal cancer. Now, I wasn't saved at the time, but I often think about that. She and her husband - she's dying. She only has weeks, months to live. They bought plane tickets and they flew from Michigan out to California. And they went up to the mountains somewhere where there was some guru. It's like she knew she was dying and her conscience, like John was talking about, she had a conscience and her conscience was accusing her: Guilty! Guilty! She knew she wasn't ready to die. And so where did she go look? On a mountain in California. You don't want to miss this truth. Jesus said: no one - no one knows the Father except the Son and to whomever the Son is pleased to reveal Him. That's it. There's no fullness; there's no being filled with the fullness of God at all aside from in Christ.

Here's something else. The term "filled," - go back to Ephesians. Ephesians 3:19. "That you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Now, here's something I want you to think about. Sometimes when we hear that idea of filled we can think like water. Okay, you look at this and you'd say up to here it's filled. This part's empty. So, you know, I could go to the water faucet and fill it the rest of the way and we would say it's filled. You don't want to think like that. Because, although the term filled can be used that way, that's not typically how it's used in

Scripture. Just listen to these examples. "The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." Colossians 1:9 talks about being filled with the knowledge of God's will. John 16:6, "Sorrow has filled their hearts." Or Acts 5:28, "you have filled Jerusalem with all your teaching." Just think right there. We've got sorrow, joy, the Holy Spirit, teaching. Paul says, "I'm filled with comfort." Philippians: Filled with the fruit of righteousness.

Now here's what I want you to see about the term "filled" in Scripture. It carries the idea of being permeated by an influence. What I mean is this. If I went and filled this all the way up to here, you would say, yep, that's filled with the fullness of water. I mean, it's filled up. And I would say is there any room for any more? And we'd say no. Technically speaking, could we put it under pressure and squeeze a little more in there? Well, we could, but it's filled. But see, when we talk about joy or sorrow or teaching or comfort, that's not what we mean. If somebody says I am filled with sorrow, that doesn't necessarily mean that they can't be taken to deeper levels and depths of sorrow. Nor is that the case with: you've filled Jerusalem with your teaching. Well, does that mean that everybody has been exposed to the teaching in Jerusalem? It just means it's in a lot of places. If somebody's filled with comfort or they're filled with joy, that doesn't mean that they couldn't be more comforted. It's that kind of thing. I want you to feel this. When we're talking about being filled with the fullness of God, it doesn't mean that you have all that you can have and there's no room for more. In fact, what we absolutely know is whatever condition the Ephesians were in Paul was definitely praying that they would have more; that they would have this. He's praying. He's not just saying, well, this is a useless prayer because you already have all that you can have, so there's no sense to pray this. No, he's praying it because he recognizes they can go further in, deeper in. They can know this and experience this in a greater way. Brethren, what I want you to feel here is this: This thing can blossom. This thing can grow. This thing can flower into something far more wonderful than it already is.

Okay, let's look at something else. Look at chapter 3. What we really need to grasp is the connection between being filled with the fullness of God and the things that Paul said right before this, immediately before this. Because here's what jumped out at me. As I was just pondering this, I thought, you know what's interesting to me, when I think about being filled, I'm thinking it's something that happens inside me. Right? I mean, filled. You fill something on the inside. Not on the outside. When somebody throws you into the ocean, you don't say I'm filled with water. No, I'm drowning in this water. I'm immersed in this water. I'm submersed in this water. You don't say I'm filled with water. Now, you would say that maybe if you gulped in a bunch, but now that water is where? It's inside. You see, that's the idea, being filled - it's the idea of inside.

Where Does the Holy Spirit Dwell?

And I just went back to v. 16 and I started thinking. "That according to the riches of God's glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner man." I'm thinking this all is snow-balling. It's that, so that that, so that that. One thing is progressing into the next here. One thing begets the next. And I'm recognizing - maybe it should be obvious to us, but it's like the Christian life is lived on the inside. It's the inner man. You see, it's like there's this temple, and God's going to come in, but you know what? The Spirit better strengthen you in

your inner man or you can't contain this. That's basically what's happening. He's praying: May that Spirit strengthen you in your inner man. Why? Because Christ is coming in.

And where's He coming? That He may dwell where? Where? What's next? "In your hearts." Where's the heart? You see, the heart is kind of an ambiguous term. It can have all manner of latitude of meaning. But typically, when you think about the heart, you're thinking about the inside. The inner man is strengthened so that Christ might dwell. What's the heart? We believe with the heart Scripture says. It's where we think. It's where we feel. It's perhaps where the emotions are. It's not disconnected from where thinking and thought and knowledge occurs. But then you keep moving through here. "That you being rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend." See, now we're dealing with comprehension. We've got the inner man. We've got Christ in the heart. We've got comprehension in the brain. See, and this is all snow-balling. Comprehension in the brain, so that what? We might know the love of Christ. You've got knowledge. "...Which surpasses knowledge, so that..." or "that," "in order that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Listen, when we think of being filled with all the fullness of God, I don't know what you think. But we don't want to think strange things like your eyes glow or that there's a halo over your head. What you need to recognize is this: This has to do with the inner workings of the Christian.

What this is talking about is this: To be filled with all the fullness of God means that God has moved in to your mind, to your will, to your affections, to your thoughts, your knowledge, your comprehension, your memory. He's at work inside. The inner man is under the power, the transformational power of this influence of God. He's causing us to will - doesn't Scripture say that? He causes us to will and to do. Doesn't Scripture talk about us hungering and thirsting after righteousness? It does that.

Aren't we told something about our consciences? Our consciences become alive to God. His Word. His Word. I've hidden His Word in my heart that I might not sin against Him. You see, what's happening on the inside is His person - God's person - is in our affections. His Son is the focal point of our faith. His love moves us and constrains us. We think about it. We view the cross. The love - the breadth, the length, the height, the depth. And it's influencing us where? On the inside. It influences our thoughts. It influences our love. It influences our thinking, our comprehension, our joys, our hunger, our thirst, our affections, our feelings, our emotions. We're moved on. The conscience is wired to the Word of God. That Word of God resonates in us. His sheep hear His voice. There's such things happening within us. Brethren, this is it. This is what we're talking about here. We're talking about what happens on the inside.

You know one of the things that happens? This kind of language, it'll resonate with a brand new Christian. But you know what? We forget. We forget how dark we were in the inner man. We forget how our thoughts were not on God. And our faith was not in Christ. And the operations of the Spirit were not at work. And the Spirit was not forming love - not true love - and joy and the things of Christ and the death of Christ, the things of God. Our consciences were seared and they were dead. We loved sin. The things we hungered and thirsted for were wretched and debauched. We forget that. We forget this is altogether glorious - the transformation occupation of God inside the Christian. What we are becoming is absolutely glorious and supernatural.

Brethren, one of the big reasons that Paul speaks so gloriously, is because it really is that glorious. Our problem is not that we're not living at the height that Paul would describe for us. The thing is, oftentimes, yes, there's higher. It's just like with this idea of being filled with joy. You can be filled with more joy. We can be filled with greater manifestations. Obviously, he's praying that that would happen. He calls us further in all the time. But you know what Paul constantly is doing as well? He's just reminding Christians of who they are, what they are, what is real about them. Because the thing is we tend to have clouded vision. We tend to not see the glories sometimes for what they really are.

But brethren, I'll tell you this, just to have a brain that wakes up in the morning and begins to think of God and Christ almost before anything else, what's that? That's not what you did in your dark days. That's not what you did in your lost days. You woke up and you were thinking about getting money, you were thinking about sex, you were thinking about hanging out with the guys, you were thinking about whatever. You woke up thinking about those things. You went to sleep thinking about those things. You went to sleep constructing some kind of plan to accomplish the things in your life that you felt like you needed to accomplish, and they didn't include God. Well, they may have had a religion in there.

Brethren, I'll tell you this. This is everything. This is what salvation is all about. This is what a perfect man is. This is the highest achievement of mankind. This is what God saved us for. God has saved us to take up residency within man to basically fill man, for man to be God's temple. This is the significance. A dwelling place for God. God in us.

And then look at the doxology. "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think..." You know one of the problems when we quote that? And I know I'm guilty of this all the time. I like that. I like that text. And I often think about it when I'm praying. And it's not that it's totally disconnected from what goes before, but what you don't want to miss is that when he's talking about asking, what do you think he's got on his mind? He's just been asking for a bunch of things.

Sometimes we quote this in a prayer meeting and we're asking for all manner of things, but if you want to be pinpoint accurate, you need to recognize what's on his mind is this: what's going on inside God's people. And when he talks about praying and he talks about thinking and asking, and God able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond this, he's talking about these very things. He's talking about God at work in His people. People - the church of God. His temple. And that God would come in in such power and strength and Christ would settle down, deeply dwell. That we would have strength to comprehend the things that surpass knowledge that have to do with Christ and the love of God in the cross. Being filled with all this fullness of God. That's what he's got in mind. And when he talks about: God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly - he's saying beyond what I'm asking for you.

And you know what else we don't tend to include? Is what's said next: "According to the power at work within you." You see? That's exactly what he's thinking about. God able to do these wonderful things all in accord with this power of God at work within you. When you quote that, you don't have to always bring it out, because I would say God being able to do exceedingly, abundantly beyond what we ask or think, that has application in other places. But you don't want to forget that here when Paul gives it, he's got in mind a power at work within us. And he seems by that expression to think something pretty glorious is happening within us. "To

Him be glory..." Where? Over there at the temple? "...Glory in the church." You see? That's it. That's it. New covenant. New Testament. Where is the glory? Yeah, it may not seem like it to the world. That warehouse over there on Hedges St. But I'll tell you, if you've got eyes to see, this is where the glory is. And other places where God's people are gathered. This is where the glory is today. May God make it so! May God make such wonderful things happen that we sit up and take notice and say yes! It is so! I mean, wouldn't you think that whatever some of their greatest experiences were in the Old Testament with regards to that Old Testament temple, shouldn't we expect that if this is the reality - that was only the shadow - this is the fulfillment, wouldn't we expect greater things now? I would.

Father, may it be so. To Him, glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever, amen.