

Part 3 – God’s Fullness Leading to God’s Glory

Ephesians 3:14-21 (READ)

Make no mistake about it

The church of Jesus Christ is under attack

The world the flesh and the devil all want to destroy it

The devil hates it because it is Christ’s creation

The world hates it because it runs counter to the world’s philosophy

The flesh hates it because the flesh hates anyone who wants to control it

Now the church in the U. S. isn’t under attack by armies – yet

The church is under attack spiritually

The attack is not to immediately eradicate the church

But to make the church ineffective, irrelevant and useless

When that happens the church will slowly fade away

And it is under attack using the tools of the enemy

The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the boastful pride of life

This attack is only successful when Christians have their feet in both worlds

Most of us have heard the phrase – so heavenly minded no earthly good

But that is really not the problem

The problem is people are so earthly minded they are no heavenly good

Many Christians no longer have an other worldly mentality

They like what Christ has to offer – salvation

And they like what the world has to offer – pleasure and prestige

They

give Jesus five minutes a day and a few hours on Sunday

They give Him control of all the situations they can’t handle

They let Him know when they need Him

In the meantime they just hope He doesn’t mess it up for them

You have met people like that – perhaps your one of them

But Christians who are not completely Christ’s cannot control their fleshly appetites

Christians who are not fully consecrated fall prey to false doctrines

Christian who are not well grounded in the Word are led astray

Christians who are not completely Christ's lack Holy Spirit power

Paul wants none of this for the church of Jesus Christ

Paul would laugh at the term "radical Christianity" – or "sold out:" Christian

True Christianity is radical – it is sold out

It is so different from the world that it is impossible to call a truce

And if it isn't then it is something less than authentic Christianity

The Christian life has been designed by God to change the world

Not fit comfortably in

The attack on the church today states that you can have Christ and the world

But when we try to live for Christ and be part of the world

We find that it is the world changing us – not us changing the world

Paul greatly desires fully committed - 24 hours a day

Seven days a week Christians

Jesus Christ as Lord – 24/7 - that is authentic Christianity

Everything else is a pathetic forgery

Paul won't settle for anything less than that for himself

And he doesn't want you to either – he knows the danger

That is why he bows his knees in deep heartfelt supplication

And offers this prayer

He wants you to experience all there is in Christ Jesus

For when you experience God the way Paul prays for us

The world will dim by comparison

John Stott has called this a prayer staircase

Each step leading upward to God

We have looked at three steps of this prayer - let's do a little review

The first step in Paul stairway to heaven is power

Paul prays for the Spirit's power to strengthen our inner man

This is not some extraordinary event where we are given extra power

We are the habitation of God – His dwelling place

God's power is already in us – we need to appropriate it

Any difference you have seen in your Christian life

Is caused by the Spirit of God displaying His power in you

For your inner man to change – for the who your are to really change

Is supernatural – it is God's work

And any upward progression to God

Must begin with the power of the Holy Spirit

The second step in Paul's stairway to God is Christ's indwelling

Remember this request is not about salvation

This letter was written to the saints in Ephesus – those already saved

What Paul desires is that Christ would settle in your inner man

And control you as your rightful owner

That means every part of your life

Under the control and authority of Christ

Jesus at home in your life and in control is the Christian life

This is not Christ plus – not some ideal - it is the Christian life

When Christ has settled in and made Himself at home

You will experience the third step in Paul's prayer staircase

When Christ is at home in us His love will be displayed through us

When Christ is Lord

You will consider others as more important than yourself

You see - it is the very nature of love to deny self and give to others

Now we can say that this love is not a matter of deep feelings - but it is

Agape love is not calculating – it doesn't make measurements

Agape love is love that sees a need - the need touches the heart

And the touched heart responds with sacrifice

Real love is sacrificial

It doesn't happen only at convenient times

Or only for convenient people

It doesn't always have to cost you something but it often does

We cannot fulfill any of Jesus' commands without Christ doing it through us

Least of all His command to love

Try it on your own and you will only glorify self

Loving is the supernatural attitude of the Christian because love is the nature of Christ

That means when we are Spirit empowered we naturally

Or should I say we supernaturally - love

We don't have to work it up – it just flows

Jesus said that out of your innermost being will flow rivers of living water

That living water coming out of you is Jesus expression of His nature

And His nature is to love

So when you are in Him and He is living through you

Love will flow out of you

Remember salvation is not heaven later and now you are on your own

God saved you now so that you might experience Him now

And in the experience display His glory to a dark needy world

And the display of God's glory has mainly to do with love

When the Spirit's power is in you – the love of Jesus shines through you

Love is in every Christian because Christ is in every Christian

We are told to study God's Word and gain knowledge

We have been given gifts to help the body and glorify God

But it isn't the use of gifts or how much knowledge you possess

That displays Jesus to the world

The greatest evidence that Christ is living in and through you is love

Everything else - everything else - is in second place

In his staircase of prayer leading ever upward to God

Paul prays that you would experience the power of the Holy Spirit

That Christ would dwell in your heart by faith

That you would know the love of Christ

And that brings us to the fourth step

Paul prays that you would be filled with all the fullness of God

Filled with all the fullness of God – almost seems impossible

The apostle Paul doesn't think so

Paul is not praying that the Holy Spirit indwell us

He already does

Paul is praying way past that

Paul is praying that we have all that God has

I think we get something of the idea from Elisha

Who requested a double dose of Elijah's Spirit

I compare this request with Paul's prayer for us in Colossians

Col 1 – I ask that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God

Increased knowledge of God leads to a holy life

That leads to an increased knowledge of God

That leads to a holier life that leads to knowing God better

And up and up and up you go

Closer and closer to God's fullness

Before I was saved I could see a vast difference between me and others

I knew they had something I didn't and it wanted it

That is one of the reasons I became a Christian

But when I got saved there was still a difference between them and me

I decided that it had to do with personality or personal feelings of security

They were just nicer people that's all – but I still wanted to be like them

I thought that when I was saved – I had all that God had for me

As I grew in the Lord

I began to realize that I hadn't even broken the surface of all there is in God

I have been a Christian for about 35 years now

And I still haven't achieved all that there is in God or all that God has for me

But I want to

A W Tozer put it this way - I thirst to be made more thirsty still

Paul who had already written several Books of the Bible wrote this

Phil 3 - I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus

He sums up his desires with - **I want to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus laid hold of me**

I don't care who you are or what experience you have had with God

There is so much more to God than you have currently experienced

A man gave this testimony – I lived as a tramp, and for a year I begged on the streets for a living. One day I touched this man on the shoulder and said, “Hey mister, can you give me a dime?” As soon as I saw his face, I recognized my own father. I said, “Father, father, do you know me?” Throwing his arms around me and with tears in his eyes, he said, “Oh my son, at last I have found you. You want a dime? Everything I have is yours.”

I was a tramp. I was begging my own father for a dime, when for 18 years he had been looking to give me all that he had

That is a picture of what God wants to do for His children

We beg Him for dimes and He wants to give us all that He has

God's supreme goal in bringing us to Himself

Is to make us like Himself by filling us with Himself

So that we might experience all that He is and all that He has

In order to grasp the magnitude of this truth

We need to think about who God is

We must consider every characteristic – every attribute

We must think of His power majesty wisdom love patience kindness

All of that is what Paul wants us to experience – in fullness

Fullness is a theme in this Letter

In Chapter I it is the fullness of Christ – **The church which is His body is the fullness of Christ who fills all in all**

Here in chapter 3 it is the fullness of the Father – **That you might be filled with all the fullness of God**

In Chapter 4 it is the fullness of the Son – **He who descended is Himself also He who**

ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things

In chapter five it is the fullness of the Spirit – **Do not be drunk with wine for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit**

In each case the word translated filled means - to be completely dominated

A person filled with rage is dominated by rage

A person filled with joy is dominated by joy

A person filled with God is dominated by God with nothing left of self

By definition then – to be filled with God means to be empty of self

It doesn't mean to have much of God and little of self

It means all of God and none of self

Paul puts it a different way in Galatians chapter 2 – verse 20

I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who lives(that is dead to self), but Christ lives in me. – that is filled with God

Paul wants you to live the crucified life

That's the full life

The crucified life means that you are dead to self and sin and controlled by Christ through faith – completely

This is God - who loves us – this is God - who sacrificed for us

This is God - who called us to Himself

This is God - who blessed with every spiritual blessing

This is God – who wants to fill us

This is God - who will not stop until we are completely like His Son

Job describes God this way

**What a help you are to the weak! How you have saved the arm without strength!
What counsel you have given to the one without wisdom! What helpful insight you have abundantly provided! He stretches out the north over empty space and hangs the earth on nothing. He wraps up the waters in His clouds, and the cloud does not burst under them. The pillars of heaven tremble and are amazed at His rebuke. By His breath the heavens are cleared. (Now listen to this) Behold, these are only the fringes of His ways.**

The fringes of His ways - doesn't that just nail it

God has revealed Himself in His creation – His Word – His actions and His Son

But from our human earthly perspective

We can never see more than the fringes of God's ways

It's no wonder that David said that he would not be satisfied

Until he awoke in the likeness of God

Only when we see Christ face to face will we know fully as we are fully known

But now – here and now

We can experience the fullness of God

As he finishes his prayer about God's limitless provision for His children

Paul gives this great doxology

READ 3:20-21

Paul finishes his prayer thinking about the Lord's glory

When the Holy Spirit has empowered us - Christ has indwelt us

Love has mastered us and God has filled us

God's power in us is unlimited

There is no situation in which the Lord cannot use us

His working in and through us is unlimited

When this occurs then God will be glorified by our lives and our words

God's glory is God's desire

He is jealous for His glory

And does all things to bring glory to Himself

The main reason God created the church is to bring glory to Himself

The Father saved you to bring glory to Himself

Presenting the church spotless before the host of heaven

Will bring glory to God

If your desire in life is to bring God glory

You can be sure the Lord will find a way to do that through you

And it begins with God's fullness

Finally

Jesus said – Truly, truly, I say unto you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he shall do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to the

Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.

It is as though Paul knows this prayer is overwhelming

So Paul finishes

By telling us that absolutely nothing is impossible with God

Your children straying – don't stop praying

Your husband or wife disinterested in spiritual things - don't stop praying

Your friends think your faith is dumb and a nothing but a crutch

Don't stop praying – why

God is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we dare to ask Him **God is able to do even beyond what we dare to think He might do**

That statement ought to affect your prayer life

Give God grand requests – don't hold anything back

Don't think I won't pray for this – it is not possible for it to be answered

With God all things are possible

He is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or even think

Now if you ask most believers if God is able to more than what they ask or think – they will say yes

If you then ask them – has He ever done it in your life

Too often the answer is no

Too few Christians experience God's abundant doing

Because too few completely give themselves to God

It is those who are completely and totally God's who see

God work in such a way as to amaze them

And the rest of us envy their stories

But we won't surrender – we won't die to self

We won't be crucified with Christ so that we can experience it also

Paul declared that his own ministry wasn't because he was smart

Although he was

It wasn't because of his persuasive words – although he writes pretty good

Paul's ministry wasn't life changing because of what he brought to the table

His IQ his persuasiveness – his never quit attitude

Paul's ministry was successful

Because it was a demonstration of the power of God

But that is God's plan – that is how it is supposed to work

1Cor 4 – the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in – what – power

Paul writes – I give no cause for offense, but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in hunger, in purity, in knowledge, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, in the word of truth,- in the power of God

Everything he did was in the power of God

And in the power of God there was nothing in the Lord's will

That he could not see accomplished

That very same power of God that Paul experienced

Now works within you

The only thing inhibiting God's power in you - is you

It is by our yieldedness

That God does exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think

Only then are we truly effective and only then is He truly glorified

God deserves the glory in the church and in Jesus

Not only now but in every generation forever and ever – amen

Now when Paul describes this power he says it is in us

We have just spent three weeks studying what activates that power

If you are not experiencing the fullness of the power of God

Follow Paul's prayer advice

Step 1 - Let the Spirit's power strengthen your inner man

Any upward progression to God must begin with the power of the Spirit

Step 2 – Let Christ settle in your inner man and control you as your rightful owner

Let Christ clean the house of your inner man

Let Him show you what needs to be trashed and then let Him do it

Step 3 - When Christ is at home in us His love will be displayed through us

Remember Love is the attitude of the Christian because love is the nature of Christ

Step 4 - When you have given Christ complete control of your life

You will be filled with the fullness of God

To be filled with God means to be empty of self

That is the pathway to power in the Christian's life

And when you are there

You will be surprised how much you see God at work in your life

And you will be surprised at how little power the world has over you

I just want to add this

Sometimes praying for someone to receive or return to the Lord takes years

My grandmother prayed for me for years

By the time I became a Christian she was already home with the Lord

Were those prayers wasted – I think not – none ever are

So never give up in prayer - stay steadfast

And always go to prayer as an empty vessel

Seek the Lord's will – pray for the Lord's glory

And it will amaze you what your praying can accomplish

Turn your eyes upon Jesus; look full in His wonderful face

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim

In the light of His glory and grace