

Eph 3:19 (ESV) and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

1. We come to the climax of this prayer

- A. Here is the ultimate experience a person can have here on this earth
 - 1). To experience the fullness of Almighty God!

2. Here we see the heart of the Pastor – Paul’s heart

- A. He spoke about who they once were

Eph 2:1–3 (ESV) And *you were dead in the trespasses and sins* ⁽²⁾ in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ⁽³⁾ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.
- B. But God has rescued them

Eph 2:4–5 (ESV) But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁽⁵⁾ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—
- C. Paul doesn’t want them to stop there – when there is so much more for them to experience
 - 1). He doesn’t want them to settle for just being forgiven as great as that is
 - a). He wants them to desire more – to long for this fullness of God in their life

3. Don’t forget where Paul starts (Where this must start)

- A. Paul always starts with God and works out from there
 - 1). He begins with the Spirit – strengthening these believers in their inner man
 - 2). Because there is no way we can understand this without the Spirit’s help
 - 3). There is no way we will even want this without the Spirit moving in our hearts

Php 2:12–13 (ESV) Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, *⁽¹³⁾ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

 - a). For us to want to work this out – experiencing all this – the Spirit must first work it in

Thought: The devil is going to work hard to make you not care about this?

- A. Why? Can you imagine if the church had people walking through this world filled with God
 - 1). So filled with him they overflow onto others – POWERFUL!
 - a). People like this come on the scene and God comes on the scene through them
 - 2). We see the result of this when Paul was in jail in Philippi
 - a). Paul is in the prison in stalks – so filled with God he’s singing praise songs
While all the rest are complaining – lousy life – Paul’s worshipping
 - b). An earthquake comes – the prisoners get loose – Major crisis
Who does the jailer go too? Paul! The one filled with God!
 - 1a). The one who was so different than everybody else
 - 2a). He and his family is saved!

Transition: The devil doesn’t want that happening

- A. he’s going to work extremely hard to reduce this truth down
- B. Let me give you a couple of ways how he does that
 - 1). These thoughts about this verse are not uncommon

First reduction of this truth: it’s just a figure of speech or hyperbole

- A. Some claim that Paul was just getting caught up in the moment
 - 1). He just got excited and went over the top – maybe to many Café Americanos at Starbucks
 - 2). So don’t worry about this – don’t think this is for you – don’t long for it

- B. Don't listen to that! Paul wasn't being overly emotional here
 - 1). Being filled with the fullness of God is the logical conclusion of the flow of thought
 - a). We'll see in a minute how this fullness is logical conclusion of Christ dwelling in our hearts
 - 1a). The logical conclusion of him manifesting himself to us
 - b). This is the logical conclusion of all the theology in chapter 1 and 2
 - C. This is what God who gave you life when you were dead in sin wants for you
 - 1). To walk through this world in deep – intimate – fellowship with himself
Where this relationship becomes so real – that nothing stays the same
- Transition:** So this is not Paul getting overly excited – the result of too much Caffeine
This is not hyperbole – extravagant exaggeration to gain interest

Second reduction of this truth to watch out for: It is a general statement for all the blessings

- A. IOW Paul is just saying you can enjoy all the blessings on offer for the child of God
 - 1). The fullness of God is having prayers answered – being saved etc.
 - B. Be careful how you read the Bible – there is nothing here to indicate generalities
 - 1). Paul is speaking about very specific things here
 - C. Look at this passage see if you can find any kind of generality

Eph 3:17–19 (ESV) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ⁽¹⁸⁾ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ⁽¹⁹⁾ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, (now watch what happens – this next word in the ESV) *that* you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

 - 1). Nothing general about that at all
 - a). He prays for very specific things: The Spirit would strengthen them
Then give them understanding of the love of God – all specifics
 - b). Christ would dwell in the heart
 - c). THAT you may be filled with all the fullness of God
 - 2). We will see in a minute the flow of all that –
 - a). For right now just note – this isn't a generalization – this is a specific
 - 1a). Paul is speaking about being filled with the fullness OF GOD
- Transition:** The point I want to make – is don't let anything or anybody steal this possibility from you
- A. This is what God is offering you – to walk through this world filled with Him!
 - B. With all that said – let's dig into this amazing verse – what it isn't then what it is

I. FILLED WITH THE FULLNESS OF GOD

Eph 3:19 (ESV) and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

1. This is not saying we actually move towards being God

- A. Last point I said – don't let anybody steal this possibility from you by reducing the truth
 - 1). Now don't let anybody tell you this is saying more than it is saying
- B. There are those who believe the Bible teaches that we actually become God
 - 1). “Look up man becoming God” – the thought is alive and well out there
 - a). You can be so filled with God that you move into godhood yourself
 - 2). Hopefully none of you think that is happening to you
- C. Unless you're Mormon then that is exactly what you think is happening
 - 1). You believe you can work your way up to being God and having your own planet
 - 2). That is what our God on this planet did

- a). He was a man of flesh who became God – like any other Mormon can do
Mormon Prophet Lorenzo Snow: "As man is, God once was: as God is, man may become"

Point: This kind of thinking is alive and well – some will use verses like this to affirm it

- A. You increasingly are filled with all that God is – until you are so filled you become God

Transition: But there are some obvious limitations to this filling that we need to see

- A. So, I don't want to reduce this down so it's not saying what it is really saying
I also want to be careful I'm not making it say something it isn't
- B. What does it mean to be filled with the fullness of God
 - 1). The theologians help us here

2. Theologians speak of the attributes of God in two categories

- A. Incommunicable and communicable attributes
 - 1). Understanding the difference between these groups
Helps us to understand what being filled with the fullness of God means
- B. The incommunicable attributes are those what cannot be communicated (transferred) to man
 - 1). God is eternal – man will never be eternal – this filling doesn't include that
 - a). We have eternal life but we had a beginning = not eternal beings like God is
 - 2). God is omnipresent – everywhere
 - a). As we are filled with the fullness of God all of a sudden we are not everywhere at once
 - 3). God is omniscient – all knowing – knowing the beginning and the end of all things
 - a). His fullness doesn't include this - I don't have a clue what's going to happen tomorrow
 - 4). God is omnipotent – all powerful – absolute power with no limit
 - a). I get winded about 5 minutes in to working out on the treadmill
 - 5). He is perfect – we will never be perfect
 - a). As we read the Word – we become less clueless – but never perfect
 - 6). His splendor – “no man can see God and live” = because of this splendor
 - a). Moses saw the after glory – faced glowed – had to bag himself
 - b). You will never have a problem looking at me!
 - 1a). Believers who are filled with God look just like those who aren't
They probably smile more – but there is no glory shining forth

Point: All of these attributes are obviously not shared with man

- A. So we can't interpret this as saying “All that God is” is dwelling in man
 - 1). That we would enjoy being omnipotent – omnipresent – omniscient - perfect
 - a). But none of these attributes are transferred to us

Question: Then what do we experience when we are filled with the fullness of God?

- A. We experience those communicable attributes – those attributes of God that can be transferred

3. The communicable attributes

- A. The first one would be holiness – God is holy and commands us to be holy also
1 Pe 1:16 (ESV) ... “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”
- B. He is righteous – we are commanded to live righteously
God is just – we are commanded to be just
- C. Love, goodness, mercy, compassion, kindness, long-suffering and faithfulness
 - 1). Those are the fruit of the Spirit that grows naturally when we are filled with the Spirit
Which is the same as Christ making himself at home in your heart = in control

Ga 5:22–23 (ESV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...

- 2). Incredible – we can live our life filled with God’s love, joy, peace patience.....self-control
 - a). Living life in his power – his life flowing through us

Point: So it is not God’s fullness filling us to the point we become god’s ourselves

- A. It is this real – genuine experience of the character of God filling us – living through us
 - 1). Heaven’s love – Heaven’s joy and peace
 - 2). It is living to a degree like God does – not shaken by the things of this world
 - a). He is joy-filled – joy saturated – there is nothing that bothers him
 - b). The more we are filled with him the more we will experience that Friends THAT is victorious living – His PEACE JOY flooding our lives

Transition: I want this – so how does this happen in my life

- A. There is going to be some repeat from what we’ve seen in our studies before
 - 1). Because Paul has given us a road to run on for all this
 - 2). So what allowed you to understand God’s love also leads to being filled with him
- B. There is a flawless logic in this prayer – how it builds
 - 1). Each verse leading to the next – each verse building on the next
 - 2). Each verse necessary for the next verse to be experienced

II. HOW WE EXPERIENCE THIS FULLNESS

Let’s read it again: Eph 3:16–19 (ESV) that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ⁽¹⁷⁾ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ⁽¹⁸⁾ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ⁽¹⁹⁾ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

1. The flawless logic of this prayer – leading to this experience

- A. Paul prays that the Spirit of God would strengthen us in the inner man
 - 1). Strengthen us to understand the truth in this prayer
 - 2). Strengthen us to want what this prayer is offering
 - 3). Strengthen us to be willing to do what is demanded to experience what this prayer is offering
- B. What is required? That Christ would dwell in our hearts by faith
 - 1). Greek = to settle down – be at home – full access to our heart – no “no-go” areas
 - a). That requires surrender – and surrender requires the Spirit’s strength
 - 1a). Strengthened against my own flesh that doesn’t want to surrender
 - b). That surrender also requires faith – believing that surrendering is worth it
 - 1a). That God really does want this for me – I can have this
 - 2). Watch the process here when we do begin to live for God obediently – surrendered life

Turn: John 14:23 (NIV) Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. *My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*

Look at the result of living like that: John 14:21 (NIV) Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, *and I too will love him and show myself to him."*

- a). When we allow Christ to be at home in our hearts – giving him full access
Reading his Scriptures and obeying them – whatever he is saying to us
- b). He promises we will begin to see him in incredible ways in our life

Transition: This leads to the next experience of this prayer – understanding his great love for us

- C. As Christ and the Father are manifesting themselves to us – we begin to understand their love
- 1). We are no longer just hearing about it – reading about it
We are experiencing it – He is alive in our life and showing himself to us
 - 2). We are enjoying that conscious awareness of Christ that we spoke about earlier
- Transition:** That brings us nicely to this last point – again the logic is flawless
- D. When he is at home in our heart – no “no-go” areas – full access to our lives
- 1). He starts to fill that heart – every area – more and more and more
 - a). He does housecleaning – this has to go – as it does he moves into that area sin occupied
 - 2). We begin to experience his presence more and more
 - a). We are aware of him in our life – we are being touched by his love
 - b). This is a growing experience with God that is very real
 - 1a). Cold religion is left in the dust – replaced with this incredible intimacy

Thought: Do you see how beautifully Paul weaves this together

- A. From the strengthening by the Spirit – that enables us to surrender
To Christ making himself at home and manifesting himself to us when we surrender
To experiencing his fullness as he takes over more and more of the totality of our heart

2. This is God wants for you – what the Bible points too

- A. Romans 8:29 let’s approach this a bit differently than we’re used too
Ro 8:29 (ESV) For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...
- 1). That is more than just acting like him – that is experiencing what he experienced
 - a). Walking in the power of the Spirit and being filled with the fullness of God like he was
Col 2:9 (NIV) For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,
 - b). Experiencing that same power that he did – that same life
- B. Listen to what Paul said in Eph 4
- Eph 4:11-13 (NIV)** It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, (12) to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (13) until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, *attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*
- 1). Again here is the height of Christianity – what Paul is asking for us in this prayer
 - 2). It does not stop at being converted and knowing your sins are forgiven
 - a). It means entering into this process of being strengthened by the Spirit
 - b). So that Christ can be at home in your heart
 - c). The more of your heart he conquers the more you’ll experience the fulness of Christ
 - 3). I can’t think of a greater reason to want him to deal with my sin
 - a). The way the Bible works – tells you the incredible potential
Then calls you to the response that will realize that potential

Transition: We have seen what this isn’t – and what it is

- A. We have looked at incommunicable and communicable attributes
- B. We have seen the flawless logic of how this moves from the Spirit strengthening us
To surrender – to Christ being at home in our heart – to knowing the fullness of God
- C. I want you to see it is all about staying intimately connected to Christ
- 1). I am saying what I’ve already said – from a different angle – I want you to get this
 - 2). This is what the Bible does – a handful of truths taught from many different angles

III. THIS IS ALL ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

1. This is only for those who are “In Christ”

- A. That is who Paul is writing too – those who have turned from their sins to embrace him
- B. That is a definition of the Christian – listen to Peter’s Words

Acts 3:19 (NIV) Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

- 1). We turn from our sins in repentance and turn to God by faith = we are forgiven
- 2). All these blessings Paul is praying for become a possibility
- 3). If you haven’t done that yet – then none of this is for you YET – they can be

Transition: But for those who are in Christ let’s see how this works itself out

2. The promise of receiving fullness

John 1:15-16 (NKJV) John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'" (16) And of **His fullness** (There’s our word) we have all received, and grace for grace.

- A. This is where this idea of enjoying the fullness of God begins
 - 1). When I embrace Christ by faith – he enters my life through the Holy Spirit
- B. if Christ is in me the fullness of God is in me – thought I might not be experiencing it

Transition: So that fullness is definitely there – but how do I experience it?

3. The vine and the branches

Jn 15:5 (ESV) I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

- A. This is the picture of the life of the vine flowing into the branch to produce life and fruit
- B. As I **abide** in Christ – as I **obey** – not allowing sin to sever that vital connection of fellowship
 - 1). His life – that fullness naturally flows from him to me – I experience it
- C. But if I don’t abide – If I’m not obedient – If I allow sin to break that fellowship with God

- 1). V. 16 says I start to wither – I dry up

That fullness of God fades and is replaced by a fullness of the flesh
- 2). Christ is no longer at home in the heart – he is no longer the center of my life
 - a). I have taken his place!
 - b). The result is he is no longer manifesting himself to me

Isa 59:1-2 (NIV) Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. (2) But your iniquities have separated you from your God; **your sins have hidden his face from you**, so that he will not hear.

Thought: This whole thing is amazing! What is on offer here is incredible!

- A. God wants you to soar as a believer!
 - 1). To be able to rise above the cares of this world – to stop being so burdened
 - a). But the only way is to have Christ filling your heart

So his life is being poured into you like that vine into the branch

 - 1a). So his joy, peace, self-control, love is being produced in you
 - 2a). When this is happening – you’ll know that peace that passes understanding

Peace that is so great – you don’t fully understand it – you just have it

You don’t fully understand it because you’re the branch receiving it from the vine

It is God’s peace given to you
- B. This is what Paul was assaying in Galatians 2:20 – the exchanged life

Ga 2:20 (ESV) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- 1). See what that's saying – that life of Christ – that fullness is already there
 - a). We aren't waiting for God to do something new – he has done it
 - b). We are just abiding – staying close – obeying – trusting so we experience that life
- 2). So that exchange is made – Christ pouring his life into us – that exchange is made
 - a). I exchange my weakness for his strength – my hatred for his love
My defeat with sin for his self-control – my anxiety for his peace
My sorrow for his joy.....etc.

Transition: We're out of time – we'll dig into the experience of this next week

- A. Today just whetting your appetite

CONCLUSION AND CALL

1. We've seen the flawless logic of Paul in this prayer

- A. Beginning with the Spirit's empowering – then flowing to our response
 - 1). As we work out what he has worked in
- B. As Christ settles into our heart – becomes at home – he begins to manifest himself to us
 - 1). We start to experience his love in a very real way
 - a). We move from hearing about how great his love is to knowing it by experience
 - 2). The more he takes over those areas that were given to sin – the more he fills our heart
 - a). We begin to experience his life flowing into us and through us
 - b). We start to live that exchanged life that gives us victory in this world
 - 1a). We face life with his power and his peace!
 - 3). Paul writes about how this enables us to overcome anything that is thrown at us
Rom 8:35-37 (NIV) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? (**Now he goes on to list those things we think could separate us**) Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? (36) As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." (37) *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*
 - a). That is the result of knowing the fullness of Christ
That is the result of him living his life through us
 - 1a). We stop being defeated by life – we become conquerors – YES PLEASE