

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, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

1. This is an amazing prayer that shows how incredible the Christian experience is

- A. Paul is laying out what God desires for every believer
 - 1). To be strengthened in the inner man
 - 2). To experience the love of God that is beyond understanding
 - 3). To be filled with the fullness of God

Transition: It starts with God putting the desires in our heart through the Holy Spirit

- A. And he will enable us to live those desires out
- B. Where do we start to live those desires out? The key is v. 17

2. I believe the key to this passage is found in v. 17

Eph 3:17 (ESV) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...

- A. We spent a while looking at the Greek for *dwell*
 - 1). Saw it wasn't just Christ taking up residence in our heart
Paul is writing to believers who already have Christ in their heart
 - 2). This is deeper – this is Christ becoming at home in our heart – settling down
 - a). Having free access to all that we are – no areas closed off – idea is surrender
 - b). We saw through Gideon – that is simply saying "Yes" to God one decision at a time
 - 1a). He speaks to you and you say "Yes" – Don't make it any more complicated
- B. We chased this idea of Christ at home in our hearts through Scripture – it is in many places
 - 1). Saw the beautiful result of obedience – Christ will begin to manifest himself to us
 - 2). As he does this we start to experience his amazing love in a greater way
 - a). We won't just hear about it – read about it – we experience it – so real
 - 3). As he takes over our heart in a greater way – we begin to experience the fullness of God

Thought: So the degree he has access to your heart will determine these last two things

- A. How much you experience his love and his fullness
- B. It all starts with God – he illuminates the potential of Christianity – gives us the desire to have it
 - 1). He gives us the strength for the surrender it takes
 - 2). Then calls us to respond appropriately so we will experience what we see
 - 3). This is the way the Bible works – the promise of blessing then the call to respond
 - a). The call towards God and his will and away from worldliness and your own will

Thought: This calling to God is the solution for much of our frustration in Christianity

- A. To many try to live Christianity out in their own strength – it always ends up in frustration doesn't it?
 - 1). Because Everything God calls us to is beyond us – everything! And he loves doing that!
 - a). He tells the disciples in Matthew 14 – who are concerned about the huge crowd
"Jesus shouldn't we send them away so they can get some food?"
 - 1a). What does Jesus tell them – "Don't send them away. You feed them."
"uhhhh..... there's about 5,000 men plus women and children. We have 5 loaves of bread and two fish. This is impossible."
 - 2a). Of course it is – if they were doing it on their own – but they're not
He will be involved and they will do what they could have never dreamed of doing
- B. He does the same thing with us – every command is beyond us
 - 1). Bless your enemies – love them – pray for them = Naturally I want to get even

- 2). Love your wife as I loved the church = I like being selfish
- 3). Forgive others as I have forgiven you = but I like holding grudges
 - a). On and on it goes – one command follows another and every one is beyond us
 - b). This is why Jesus said in John 15 – “Apart from me you can do nothing spiritually”
 - 1a). Not one thing in the Bible is within reach – not one command – all beyond you

Point: To live out the Bible – to be a witness to this lost world – to our lost family – lost neighbors

- A. To effectively do the works we have been called to with the zeal we’re called too
- B. To be what Scripture calls us to be is going to take being filled with God
 - 1). We’ll see this as we move along – and we’ll see why you want this

Thought: Before we move on – I want to look at something DMLJ said – I thought was very interesting

- A. He was speaking about how people in the church are living in their own strength not God’s
 - 1). He pinpointed the problem like this

“Religion seems to be part of the unexamined and largely unused background of life”

 - a). This is the Christian who tends to push Jesus Christ into the background
- B. He said many Christians view Christianity primarily as something to be used in case of emergency
 - 1). We don’t give God much attention throughout the week – but we don’t completely forget him
 - a). We like hanging onto the thought of God in case an emergency arises

“Lord I’m good right now. I’ll give you a call if things go South”
 - 2). There is no power there! No impact! No effectiveness! Sunday only
- C. This prayer tells us God wants so much more for us than that
 - 1). He wants your lives to be filled with his love – joy – peace – power – contentment and satisfaction
 - 2). He wants you to experience him in an incredible way
 - a). To know what it means to be strengthened with might by the Spirit
 - b). To know what it means to be loved by God in daily experience
 - c). To know what it means to walk in his fullness!
 - 3). To walk through this world with a conscious awareness of God walking through it with you
 - a). To be lifted up to do things you never thought you could do

Transition: Let’s move on - last time we saw what this fullness of God meant doctrinally
This time what it means practically – experientially

- A. There will be some repeat – but will see it from different angles

I. WHAT IT MEANS TO EXPERIENCE THE FULLNESS OF GOD

Being Filled with God Means God Controls Us

1. He controls our thinking, feelings and actions

- A. We could call this our mind, heart, and will
 - 1). The mind = what we could call the realm of cognition – how we think
 - 2). The heart = the realm of feelings and emotions
 - 3). The will = the realm of decisions and activity

Transition: These are the things we’ll see change when we are filled with the fullness of God

- A. Why? Because the one who is filling our hearts is characterized by these things
 - 1). Logical – we become more and more like the one who is taking over our hearts
- B. Let’s look at these three areas

First: The Mind. Our Thinking Is Dominated by God

Ro 12:1–2 (ESV) I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ⁽²⁾ *Do not be conformed to this world, 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 acceptable and perfect.

1. Paul mentions the “renewal of your mind”

A. This is one of those great differences between the believer and unbeliever

1). The unbeliever is controlled by the mindset and philosophies of the world

a). It is a mentality that is inherently hostile to God and his ways

Ro 8:7 (ESV) For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.

B. But the believer’s mind has been renewed – transformed by the Holy Spirit

1). Therefore the Christian now thinks in a spiritual manner

They can understand the truth that the unbeliever can’t grasp

TURN: 1 Co 2:11–16 (ESV) For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ⁽¹²⁾ Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ⁽¹³⁾ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. ⁽¹⁴⁾ *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.* ⁽¹⁵⁾ The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ⁽¹⁶⁾ “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” *But we have the mind of Christ.*

Thought: Romans 8:7 and 1 Cor 2 show us the difficulty in witnessing – why we need God to be involved

A. Romans 8:7 – the natural man doesn’t want to hear the message that saves - hostile

1 Cor 2 – the natural man can’t understand the message that saves– it is spiritual

B. The solution is to provide a divine interpreter – the Holy Spirit

1). Without that the Bible is just a foreign language

a). It’s like handing me a book written in Russian – and expecting me to understand it

2). Why an unbeliever can read the Bible and come up with the most ridiculous conclusions

a). They are reading a foreign language without an interpreter – and getting it all wrong

C. But when God begins to draw us – the Spirit begins to interpret

1). That book that was so boring before – suddenly makes sense

2). That Gospel message that just seemed foolish before – now becomes important and urgent

a). The message becomes so clear we end up responding

b). Witnessing – Teri and I were talking on Friday night – you watch the lights come on

3). The glorious result for those who respond to the Gospel message

a). See it at the end of 2 Cor 2:16 – *“they have the mind of Christ”*

b). They had a fleshly mind – worldly mind – now the mind of Christ!!!!

4). The mind is renewed – the interpreter has now taken up residence

a). We can now understand God’s word – we now begin to think like God

2. Result: The Bible comes alive

A. The more you have surrendered – the more Christ is at home – the more he manifests himself to you

The more you experience the excitement of reading God’s Word – *the Bible comes alive!*

Martin Luther: The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold on me.

1). You are regularly amazed by how it opens up – by how it connects – this verse to that

2). You see what people mean when they say “The Bible is a living book”

a). Because God comes to us through it – He speaks to us

b). It lights up – “Wow. I’ve never seen THAT before! Amazing”

B. Those truths begin to scrub your thinking – cleansing out the lies

- 1). Your thinking continues to deepen – stabilize – you’re ideas of God become clearer and richer
E. Stanley Jones: The Bible redirects my will, cleanses my emotions, enlightens my mind, and quickens my total being.

Thought: This happens when we are surrendered to God – When Christ is at home

A. But I’m sure you know – when we take our life back – the Bible becomes silent – a closed book

- 1). God stops speaking to us through it
 2). The cost of maintaining ownership of our life is far to great

3. This is what we want – we want the Mind of Christ don’t we

A. We want our thinking to be lifted above the philosophical and political foolishness of this world

- 1). Being able to step out of the swamp and look back on it with a spiritual mindset

B. This is what being filled with God does – we begin to view the world with his mind

- 1). We walk through this world as a heavenly citizen
 a). To a degree isolated from the insanity – PRAISE GOD!
 1a). I am a citizen of heaven – serving a King from heaven – obeying the commands from heaven – and pushing forth the agenda of heaven
 2a). We have his mind – his mindset – we can live above the nonsense

C. We will know by experience what Paul said in Romans 12

Rom 12:2 (NIV) Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--*his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

- 1). His will becomes our delight – we have tested it by living it – it has proven to be good

Summary: As we are filled with God our thinking is changed more and more to reflect his

A. The mind of Christ becomes more and more dominant

Transition: That’s the mind – let’s look at the realm where are feelings dwell

Second: Our Emotions Are Brought Under Control

1. When we are filled with God we will sense him controlling our emotions

A. I know when I’ve taken control – I see it in my emotions – angry over the stupidest things

“Why am I acting that way?” – it is because the flesh is in control and it is manifesting itself

Gal 5:19-20 (NIV) The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; (20) idolatry and witchcraft; *hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions*

- 1). Oh there I am. I’m controlled by the flesh and my emotions showing me that

B. When I’m walking in the Spirit – enjoying more of the fullness of God

- 1). My flesh starts to flare up with anger or worry - and immediately there is a calming
 a). The Spirit is helping me – taking control of my emotions – stopping a sinful reaction
 b). It is his fruit being formed into me

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

Thought 1: All of those would be indicators of being filled with God

A. Those fruits are simply the character of Christ being formed into us as he fills us

- 1). Doesn’t it make sense – the more he fills our heart the more we will act like him

B. That is the example we see in Scripture – Stephen in Acts 7:60

Acts 6:8 (NIV) Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power... = *Filled with God*

- 1). See such Christlikeness in him – when he was being stoned
 - a). He is loving them and praying “Lord do not hold this sin against them”
 - 2). That is the result of being filled with Christ
 - a). He was simply displaying Christ’s love and self-control over his emotions
 - b). What did Christ say as they were nailing him to the cross
“Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”
- C. I see people who are so upset about everything
“They said this about me – they did this too me.” Me, Me, Me
- 1). But it’s not all about you – it’s about Him – his glory – his honor
 - 2). It’s being like him – “I want to be like Christ” Great! Let’s see what he was like
1 Pet 2:22-23 (NIV) "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." (23) When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.
 - a). The only truly innocent one – the only one who deserved none of what he received
Was beaten – mocked – spit upon and murdered
 - b). But he didn’t strike back – didn’t threaten – slander – even hold grudges

Thought 2: How great is this! What a blessing to be unaffected by others – to live for God *and rest*

- A. To have self-control – to be able to leave those offenses against you with God
1 Pet 2:23 (NIV) When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.
- 1). To not be so defensive – so irritated – so ready to strike back
 - 2). To in a sense – not care – because we’re accepted by the only one that counts
 - a). Therefore if you like me or not – accept me or not – doesn’t bother me
 - 1a). If you roll your eyes when I tell you about Christ – that is fine! Don’t care
 - b). Doesn’t mean I’m going to live like a jerk
 - 1a). I will live for Him in holiness – I will love you because he wants me too
 - 2a). And I will rest if you don’t love me back – not a big thing at all
- B. This is fantastic! The freedom of not having to be at the center of everything
- 1). The freedom to not have to get upset at every little thing other people do
“Did you see the way they looked at me. I bet they were thinking...”
 - 2). “They dissed me....” Oh really? You dissed Christ and he forgave you
Col 3:13 (NIV) Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.
 - 3). *But you’re going to have to be filled with God to do that! Controlled by him*
 - a). You are going to need his love – his patience – his kindness and self-control
 - 1a). All the things that are produced when you are filled with him

Transition: You want your thinking and your emotions controlled by God – one more

Third: Our Will Is Controlled by God

1. We’ve seen if Christ is filling our hearts we will in a degree live like him

How did he live? Jn 6:38 (ESV) For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

- A. Jesus willingly set aside his own will to do the will of another
- B. See the same thing in the Apostle Paul – his will completely surrendered to God
Acts 20:22-24 (NIV) "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. (23) I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and

hardships are facing me. (24) *However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race* and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

- 1). His will was entirely lost in the will of God – God's will was his will
- 2). See it later in Acts – friends trying to dissuade Paul from going to Jerusalem – to dangerous
Ac 21:13 (ESV) Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? *For I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.*"

Transition: I know teaching like this is not always easy to hear

- A. Surrender – God controlling mind, emotions, and will
- B. I know that our flesh hears this and clings to what it wants – you feel the tug the resistance
 - 1). But the Bible doesn't tell us things like this without saying why responding is worth it
 - a). God could just say – I'm God, you're not. Surrender or be sent to hell
He gives reasons why surrender is so reasonable – so logical – so worthwhile

II. THE SATISFACTION OF A GOD-FILLED LIFE

1. This is the life where we start to see our desires fulfilled

Ps 37:4 (ESV) Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.

- A. Put him first – put him in the center of your life and you live out your desires!!!
- B. Watch the way this builds – as he fills us more and more we naturally become more like Christ
 - 1). As we become more and more like Christ we begin to desire what he desired
Jn 6:38 (ESV) For I have come down from heaven, *not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.*
 - 2). Our DESIRE – what WE WANT – what DELIGHTS us will be to do God's will
 - a). That is not a burden – it becomes a desire – a delight – a joy
 - 3). THEN God will start to fulfill those desires that are now ours
- C. Check this out! What is one of the most exciting things about Christianity? Answered prayer!!!
 - 1). We will start seeing our prayers answered again and again
1 Jn 5:14–15 (ESV) And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ⁽¹⁵⁾ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.
 - a). We will be asking according to his will because his will is becoming ours
 - b). Therefore we know he hears us and WILL give us what we ask for

Point: Is there anything greater than this?

- A. You live a life where you regularly see the deepest desires of your heart being regularly fulfilled
 - 1). You pray and it gets answered! That's the norm rather than the exception
- B. Now we get a better handle on some of the scriptures – how this works out
Mt 7:7–8 (ESV) "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁽⁸⁾ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.
 - 1). He is talking to his disciples – those who are following him
 - a). Who after the resurrection will be filled with him
 - b). They are going to ask and receive – seek and find – knock and see doors open
 - 2). I think of George Mueller who said
"I pray as I walk, when I lie down, and when I rise," he said. *"The answers are always coming. Tens of thousands of times have my prayers been answered."*
 - a). He was a man who was surrendered to God – filled with God – enjoyed God

Thought: This is the way you want to live – this is what God is offering you

A. This will take surrender

But God in his grace – love – mercy paints such an enthralling picture – makes it so attractive

1). That it makes us want to live for him! We think surrender is worth it! Yes Please!

a). I wish we were talking about these things more in the church today

Transition: Let's close this up – I had a lot more but ran out of time

CONCLUSION

1. This is Christianity that is exciting - enjoyable

A. This is our spiritual experience elevated above the rut – the routine – the boredom

2. The call is to not be content with anything less than this

A. To not settle for a superficial knowledge of Christ

1). Where you rarely feel his touch – where answered prayer is the exception NOT the rule

B. To not settle for just being forgiven – that is just the beginning of this most excellent adventure

Lloyd-Jones: Press on, give yourself neither rest nor peace; offer this prayer for yourself, the whole of it, and go on doing so until you know something of this blessed satisfaction and have realized something of this fulness.

1). Go to God and tell him you want this

a). Ask him to strengthen your desire for it

b). Ask him to remove anything that would hinder it – any weight that would hold you down

2). What will happen when you do that?

1 Jn 5:14–15 (ESV) And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that *if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.* ⁽¹⁵⁾ *And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*

a). Are you asking according to his will? Yes!

Then will you have it? Yes!

b). Then will your Christianity ever be the same? No!

LET'S PRAY