

The Riches of His Glory - Part 6

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[0 : 00] We're going to be starting on verse 4, page 4, that's where we're going to take up our study! of this last petition in Paul's prayer. And it's a big one. And it's a big one. And it's it is deep and weighty and we're not even really able to, I think, to plumb the depths of the meaning of this petition. But so, what is the petition? Again, just to remind you at the latter part of Ephesians chapter 3, verse 19, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. So that's our subject. Been our subject for, I guess this is probably the third installment on this particular petition. And so we're, maybe just the second one. I've lost count. I'm all mixed up, you know, for three Wednesdays in a row I didn't even get to be here. And then I haven't preached on a Sunday morning for three weeks. And so I don't even know what day. Are we sure this is Wednesday? I mean, you're here, so it must be. But anyway, anyway, we're going to wrap up this last petition. And we've already looked at what the principle of it. Did I say page 4? Is that correct? Yeah. All right. Is that right? Yeah.

All right. So we've already talked about the principle of this final petition. And now we're going to consider the practice, the practice of what I want to call the practice of it.

And so I guess you could say, and I think it's, you know, probably appropriate to say that, you know, we've looked at it doctrinally, the principle of it. And now we want to look at it practically, practically, or you might even say experientially. What this means in our experience as believers, or put it another way, what is true of the believer who knows what it is to be filled with all the fullness of God? Well, what's true about that? What could be observed? What could you sense? What would be your experience? If indeed, this prayer was being answered in your life, the prayer being, of course, again, to be filled with all the fullness of God. All right. So we're talking about the practice of it, or the practical side of this, the experiential side of this petition.

All right. So number one, we could say three things here, three truths about this. Number one, submission. Submission. Submission means that all that you are is willingly under the complete control of God. That's what we're talking about here. That's what, practically speaking, what the reality of this prayer, the answer to this prayer looks like in our lives, what we can see, what we can sense.

And that is submission, submission of the life. And that's a big one, right? I mean, is there ever a time that we 100% arrive at that? Well, maybe you have. I doubt it, though. I know I haven't.

[3 : 53] But I'm not. And so I guess, really, we can say on the front end, with all of these things I'm going to mention about the practical side of being filled with all the fullness of God, I can say very clearly that it is a process. It's an ongoing thing. It's a prayer that's being prayed and answered and continuing to be prayed and answered. And hopefully, though, as a believer, as a believer, this should be true, you are submitting your life to the Lord Jesus Christ. So submission is what being filled with the fullness of God should look like. Now, I'm talking about submission of the mind, the heart, the will. Mind, heart, and will. So first of all, God, here's what it means. God is in control of your mind. That is, the way you think about things. I mean, how do you think about things? You turn on the TV, and let's say you tune in to one of the news networks, and you hear the news for the day, and something that's happened here or there, maybe in our country, maybe in some other country, maybe, you know, like the, you know, obviously every day we hear news about Iraq and Afghanistan and ISIS and all that. And how do you think about these things? Or we have political news about things that are going on in our country with our president, with his administration, with government in general, with, you know, and maybe it's news about the moral condition of our country, of our society, our communities. And how do you think about these things? Or maybe to bring it more down to a personal level, you struggle with things, or things happen in your life, and you have challenges in life, and maybe some tragedy takes place, and we can just kind of go on with the list. How do you think, what's your thought processes about all of these things? Or you

have big decisions to make, some direction in life, or maybe it's a small little thing, you know, maybe the purchase of something, or, you know, whatever it is. I can't name every possibility. But how do you think about these things? See, is, is God in control of your mind in the way you think about things? Did you know that there is no such thing as a free thinker? No such thing as a free thinker outside of, or apart from a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Now, what do you think about this? No such thing as a free thinker for those who are outside of Christ. Your thoughts, you see, are either under the control of

Satan, the flesh, or the world, and really it's all three, or your thoughts are under the control of the Holy Spirit of God, that is through a transformed mind, you know, a renewed mind, like Paul said in Romans 12, 2, transformed by the renewing of your mind. See, those are the only two options. Either your thinking is controlled by the things that are apart from God, world, Satan, flesh, so forth, or your mind's control by him. So, the lost have no real freedom at all. Now, think about it. They don't have any, they think they do. They think they could be free thinkers. You know, we just, I can just think any way I want to, I'm free to do that. But they're really not free to think. The saved are the only ones who have real freedom. The saved are the only ones who have been transformed. Their minds have been renewed. And so, the saved are free to think spiritually. The saved are free to evaluate the world correctly. No one else has that freedom. God's people, and especially God's people who are in His Word, and it's difficult to call yourself one of God's people if you're not in His Word, but God's people who know His Word, and their thinking has been transformed by the renewing of their mind by the Holy Spirit, God's people can think about things in the correct way. They come to the right conclusions. Now, it may be, and usually is, contrary to the way the world, the conclusions the world has come to. You know, they can look at the same news report and come up with a different conclusion. Or they can confront the same challenge in life and think differently about it. Or they can be enlightened by or informed about some moral condition in our culture, and they'll have a different thought altogether about it. But God's people think, according to His Word, they think with a renewed mind. And so, the saved are the ones who are free. Free to evaluate things correctly. Free to make godly and righteous decisions. See, you can just have great freedom. Because your mind is controlled by truth. Truth personified. Controlled by the Lord Jesus Christ. Lost people don't have such a freedom. I heard a story about a certain pastor who had preached a sermon, a great sermon, on the sin of homosexuality. And, you know, sometimes preach on that subject. And in our day and time, sometimes it's kind of dangerous, especially if you're a high-profile pastor, and maybe your worship service is on TV or radio or something. And that was the case with this particular pastor. And he preached a sermon from the Word of God on the sin of homosexuality. And so, the next Sunday morning, the homosexual community showed up at his church, and they protested. It came right into the church. I've often thought about that happening in church while I'm preaching. I have some protest come in. It hasn't happened yet. But it can happen in our day.

Well, it happened to this one, this pastor. And so they came in, and they had signs, and they were, you know, yelling and screaming and chanting, and they were doing some other unspeakable things. I just won't mention. Well, the pastor did a most unusual thing. He kindly, very kindly, very graciously, welcomed these protesters to come and sit and join in their service and listen to the preaching of God's Word. He did it very kindly, very graciously. He didn't get angry. Well, a local newspaper interviewed the pastor on that Monday and said, you know, asked him why he didn't get angry. And the pastor, very wise pastor, he said this, and I quote, he said, I could no more be angry at these homosexuals than I could be angry at a blind man who steps on my foot.

Now, think about that. And I wonder how we would respond. Now, obviously, I think we have a duty to protect our membership. We have people come in, and they are protesting. If they won't be quiet, won't stop being disrupted, then we would have to have them move. But we can be kind to them. And what if, you know, a couple of homosexuals wanted to come and join, not join our church, but come and attend our worship service? Would we expel them? Would we hate them? Would we be ugly toward them? No, we shouldn't be. They're just doing what the natural man will always do. They're lost.

[11 : 58] They're unregenerate. They don't think correctly. They're not seeing it correctly. And if they want to come and attend our worship service, then great. Hopefully, they'll hear the word of God preached, and the Holy Spirit can take that word, apply it to their hearts, break their hearts over their sin, and bring them to salvation. All right, so, you know, lost people have freedom to think

correctly. They are in bondage. And just as soon as a person says, well, I don't want to be a Christian.

I don't want to follow Christ. I want to be free. Well, as soon as they say that, they are really identifying the reality that they're in bondage. And so, now, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, and I think I provided this verse for you. I'll put it in your notes. 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 12 through 15. I want you to listen to this. Now, we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man, that's talking about the unredeemed man or woman, does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them. Right? It's not that just that they refuse to know, or they do refuse to know.

They refuse to believe it. But because of their unregenerate heart, they have no capacity to receive the things of God. And because foolishness to them, because they are spiritually discerned, the things of God are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him. But we have the mind of Christ. It's a parallel thought. We have the mind of the Lord.

All right, so we think the way he thinks is the idea here. And that is what being filled with fullness of God looks like. What it looks like in our lives. You know, I think we ought to use this as a self-evaluation.

[14 : 26] And also it ought to encourage us, motivate us, to pray in this way, that we would be filled, and that others would be in our congregation, maybe our family members, be filled with the fullness of God. But now, submission is not the only control, is not only the control of God over our thinking.

Submission is the control of God in our feeling as well. So second, God is in control of your heart. Your heart. That is the way you feel about things. We're talking about the practical side of this prayer.

Or this whole idea of being filled with the fullness of God. And it's submission. And submission means that God is in control of the mind, but also that God is in control of your heart. The way you feel about things. The one who is experiencing all the fullness of God is the one who has deep within his or her heart the all-controlling desire to love God, to glorify God with everything.

Everything in our lives.

You see how big this prayer is. How important this prayer is. This is a big deal. Let me give you an illustration from the pages of Scripture. Deacon Stephen. I don't think I put this in your notes.

But think about Deacon Stephen. You know, and he is preaching God's Word, and he's not afraid for his life. And what happens to him? He is stoned to death. You know, the Jews, the self-righteous Jews, and the Apostle Paul, one of them, then Saul, not an apostle, and he's looking on.

[16 : 23] And they condemned Stephen unjustly, and they took up stones, and they murdered him in anger and in indignation and hatred for him.

And yet, even while the stones were crushing the life out of Stephen's body, what did he say? He lifted up his eyes to heaven. He prayed for his murderers. He prayed for his accusers.

He prayed, by the way, the same way Jesus prayed for his murderers. He said, Lord, do not lay this to their charge, this sin to their charge. See, that is a God controlling his heart the way he feels about things, thinks and feels about things.

That's what we're talking about here. This is the fullness of God. When the fullness of God comes in, the love of self goes out. I think it would be a good way to put it.

So, submission. God is in control of your mind, the way you think about things. God is in control of your heart, the way you feel about things. And third, God is in control of your will.

[17 : 31] Your will.

God is in control of your heart, the way you feel about things.

He is bound in the spirit to Jerusalem. By the way, that's an interesting way of putting it. Bound in the spirit. It's like his spirit is chained. He is a prisoner in spirit to the will of God.

And so, He says, I'm going down to Jerusalem, not because anybody is forcing me. Not any man is forcing me. But I'm bound in the spirit. He said, I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there.

and Paul really didn't know what would happen to him. He probably had some suspicions, but it didn't really matter because he did know this, that the Holy Spirit, he said in this passage, the Holy Spirit testifies in every city saying that chains and tribulations await me.

[19 : 17] But none of these things move me. Now think about that. You think any of those things would move you? Well, probably it would move me away from Jerusalem.

I'd try to find some dark, unknown, obscure corner of the world and try to live out my life there. That would be what Don Coleman would want. But that would be evidence that I'm not filled with the fullness of God.

But evidence of being filled with the fullness of God is right there before us in the life of the Apostle Paul. He said, none of these things move me, nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

His will was completely captured by the control of God. And Paul's prime example of a man filled with the fullness of God.

Complete submission to God. Complete submission of his mind, his heart, and his will. He had no will of his own that did not perfectly align with the will of God.

[20 : 28] In fact, in Acts 21, did I put Acts 21 down there? Okay. Paul's friends were pleading with him not to go to Jerusalem. And they knew what was in store for him.

They knew that it would likely result in imprisonment and possibly death. Very likely death. And what did Paul say about that? Well, verse 13 of Acts 21.

What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isn't that amazing? I put this hymn in here. You certainly recognize it, this old hymn. Very old. 1874, when Francis Haberdahl wrote this.

And she has an interesting story. If you've got one of those, you know, books that tells you some of the stories behind some of the hymn writers, you might read it sometime. But this really captures it all, doesn't it?

[21 : 33] Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee. What does consecrated mean? Completely captured. Completely dedicated. to the Lord.

Take my moments, even the moments, and my days, let them flow in endless praise. And then, you know, she just goes on to list every part of us, you know. Hands, and feet, and voice, and lips, and, you know, take my silver and my gold.

Not a mite would I withhold. Take my intellect. There's the mind again. And take my will, let it be thine, and make it thine. It shall no longer be mine.

Take my heart. It is thine own. It shall be thy royal throne. Take my love, my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure store.

Take myself, and I will be ever only all for thee. That's a tremendous hymn. And, and we, you know, we have sung that before. I'm sure he had.

[22 : 39] Probably been a long time. It's an old, old hymn. And we've sung that, but, you know, even as you, even reading it right now, I think, man, I'm just a long way from there.

Really. You know, it's, this, this is deep stuff. This is, go for broke. This is all in for Christ.

And, I hope, though, it's our testimony that we're moving that direction. And it is God's intention to move us in that direction. Alright, so we're talking about the practice of it, of being filled with the fullness of God.

So, number one, submission. And, number two, satisfaction. Satisfaction is also what this looks like. And, satisfaction means all of your spiritual desires and ambitions, are being satisfied.

All of them are being satisfied. You say, well, not all my desires and ambitions are being satisfied. Well, you need to check out your desires and ambitions.

[23 : 49] Remember everything about you, everything of who you are, and everything is under the control of Christ. So, that includes your desires and your ambitions. and so, all of those are being satisfied in Christ.

And, we can just name a few of them. The desire to know God intimately. I hope you have that desire. To know God intimately.

David wrote in, you know, this famous verse from Psalm 42, as the deer pants, or some versions have longs, and that's really the idea, as the deer longs for the water brooks, so pants, or longs, my

soul, for you, O God, my soul, thirsts for God, for the living God.

Also, a desire, the desire for the love of God. It's a, like a little known hymn written by William Cowper, I think is how you pronounce it.

Hark, my soul, it's the Lord. I looked at all of our, I've got several copies of all the years of hymn books that we've had as Baptists not in there. It, well, John Bacchus Dykes did the, composed it, and we have a lot of his, but I couldn't find this anywhere, but, and you ought to, you know, maybe look it up sometime, and get all of the lyrics, it's really quite amazing, but it's the last stanza of this hymn, and it goes kind of like this, Lord, it is my chief complaint, that my love is weak and faint, yet I love thee and adore thee, or, yet I love thee and adore, oh, for grace to love thee more.

[25 : 40] Beautiful. And, and the truth of that, that's our desire and our ambition, and to be filled with the fullness of God means those desires and ambitions are what are satisfied.

Our love for him, our knowledge for him, and the desire to be right with God. The desire to be right with God. You ever get sick of sin?

I'm not talking about other people's sin. You know, yours, mine, you know, struggle with it and temptations and, you know, and, you ever just get sick of it?

Almost despairing of it. Well, we should feel that sometimes. I don't think God wants us to always be in the doldrums of, you know, sickness over our sin to the point that we can't function.

You know, I don't think that's it. And that, that really, I think, is to a point a slap in the face of God's marvelous grace. But, you get sick of it and you get tired of failing God.

[26 : 53] You know, within every true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a desire for holiness, for purity, for righteousness.

Jesus said in Matthew 5, 6, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be, what? Filled. Alright, so you see, to be filled with the fullness of God means satisfaction.

To know God, to love God, to be right with God, those are the kind of desires and ambitions that we ought to have. And everything else that we desire and have an ambition for should be in line with that, should be complementary to those things.

They certainly should never distract from and get us off course for these desires. and they're all satisfied in God. And then there's a fourth one, the desire to serve God, to serve Him with power, effective or effectual power.

Paul wrote in Colossians 128, Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

[28 : 05] That's a great goal, isn't it? Ought to be the goal of our service because all of our service is some part of that process, that ministry of the church.

And I'm not talking about this building, I'm talking about all of us. That we should have that same desire, that we would warn every man and teach every man in all wisdom to present them, this is the desire, to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

That's a great goal, discipleship. But he goes on, verse 29, to this end, or this goal, I also labor. He said, this is what, this is all about my goal in serving the Lord, striving according to his working, which works in me mightily.

Now, what does that mean? Well, he's obviously giving God all the credit. I like J.B. Phillips' translation, not always, but I like it here, where Paul said, we proclaim Christ, that's early on in that passage, this is what I'm working at all the time, with all the strength that God gives me.

Alright, so who is it that's really working? Well, it's obviously God, as we're yielding to his strength. So, this is our desire, to serve God, to serve him better, to serve him more effectively, to serve him in a way that's void of any pride or any self-promotion, which is a difficult thing to do, to serve the Lord without any thought of self.

[29 : 49] We like to get kudos from people. don't we? We like to get pats on the back. Sometimes we kind of get our arm at a joint patting ourselves on the back.

But that's not what it's about. His satisfaction is that we know that we're realizing that we're serving him and it's all for his glory and all in his strength.

All right, so Paul says here in the text, I'm praying for you that you may be filled with all the fullness of God, the practice of it, that is what it looks like in our lives. And it is this, it's submission, it's satisfaction, and number three, sufficiency.

sufficiency. Sufficiency, sufficiency in this sense means that all feelings of emptiness and insufficiency have gone from your life.

Christ has truly become your sufficiency. This is something that God wants us to experience, to realize in our lives that Christ has truly become our sufficiency.

[31 : 02] This is what it means, to be filled with all the fullness of God. And, you know, we just constantly need to turn, return to this truth in our lives.

John 6, 35, And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. That is, I am your satisfaction. I'm your satisfaction.

He who comes to me, and that's a present tense verb, meaning continuous action. So, literally, he who comes keeps coming to me again and again and again.

And what does Jesus say about the one who keeps coming to him? He or she shall never hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. We're not talking about food here, or water, or Coca-Cola, if that's your choice, or whatever.

we're talking about the sufficiency, the satisfaction that we need in our spirits as a result of our hungering and thirsting.

[32 : 10] And we keep on coming to him, and we will be satisfied. Sufficiency. This was the Apostle Paul's testimony in Philippians chapter 4, verse 11.

I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. King James says in whatever state I mean. Oklahoma, Missouri, Arkansas, whatever state.

No. It means my circumstances, set of circumstances. I've learned no matter what the circumstances are. That's Paul speaking. Don Coleman hasn't quite come there yet.

I love Oklahoma, I love the state. I'm talking about sometimes circumstances, I'm not always happy in those things. Paul said, I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

I know how to be brought low. I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

[33 : 15] I mean, these are extremes, extreme opposites. And Paul experienced all those things. And we can read, you know, the account of his life in the book of Acts and some of his own self testimony and some of his letters.

And we know that he experienced the rock bottom as well as the height. And he said, I've learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Or, again, I'll cite the Phillips translation, latter part of that. He said, he translated this way, I am ready for anything through the strength of the one who lives within me.

That's what it means to be filled with the fullness of God. That's what it looks like. And so, submission of all that I am, satisfaction of all I desire, sufficiency of all I really need.

All right, so the principle of it, the practice of it. And then one more, thirdly, real quickly, the possibility and purpose of it. Did I put both those blanks there?

[34 : 27] Okay. Because I originally had the possibility of it, but I was leaving off the very final verse in this chapter, so I call this the possibility and purpose of it, rather than having a fourth point.

Just put the two together in point number three. Now, if you're like me, and probably in this way you are, because we're all very much alike in this, you might, you know, you could find yourself thinking, you know, how could this ever be my experience?

The things that we've been talking about here tonight. The things that Paul prayed for and what we now understand the answer to those prayers would look like, would be, then we might think it's just beyond me.

I mean, how can this ever be my experience? I'll never make it. I haven't yet. Well, we have verses 20 and 21 to answer that uncertainty.

And so, as to the question of possibility, or the possibility question, that is, is being filled with all the fullness of God really possible? Then we have what Paul said in verse 20.

[35 : 39] He said, now to him who is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us. Now, I know we apply that to kind of carte blanche to anything and everything, and that's okay because he's talking about who God is.

And this is true of God no matter what the context is. But Paul is using this in the context of what he's just prayed for. Really, in the context of the answers to these prayers, God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above everything you think he can do.

Everything that you would think or ask. Now, Paul's asked doing the asking here in this prayer. And, you know, these verses really are kind of comprised of doxology here at the end of the chapter that

Paul's kind of tagged on after this description of prayer life for the Ephesian believers. And one commentator says it's almost as if Paul had, that the thought had crossed his mind that he had asked too much. Asked for too much in these prayers.

And we could come to that conclusion. But really, I think what he's doing is just reading the minds of those who are reading this. His original readers as well as all of us and everybody in between.

[37 : 00] Because, you see, Paul reminds them of the infinite resources of God. The infinite resources of God and the power that he's placed in us to bring these things about.

These things he's prayed for, that he's praying for here. And then as to the purpose, the issue of purpose, for what purpose would God grant us his fullness?

For what purpose? Well, we can guess that, that Paul tells us, so we don't have to guess. Verse 21, to him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

Amen. So that's an amen to a doxology at the end of this chapter. Now, literally, it is in the church, that is, to him be glory in the church, and though New King James and King James both follow that by Christ Jesus, really it's the same preposition, it's in.

So, it should be in the church and in Christ Jesus. So God's glory, then, this is God's intention, through the answer of this prayer, all these prayers, that God's glory would be exhibited in the church and in Christ Jesus.

[38 : 21] Now, in the church is where the trouble is, I think. But really the idea here is, in the church, in the sense of time, and time is right now.

So, he wants his glory to be exhibited through the answer to these prayers. He wants his glory, his desire is that his glory would be exhibited in the church, in time, in this time, and also in Christ in the sense of all eternity.

That's how he ends it. In the church, in Christ Jesus, all generations, forever and ever, ever, that is, without any end. So, he's talking about the glory of God being magnified here in the nasty now and nows, here, through the church, in the church.

And then he's also talking about it, of course, being magnified in the, you know, the sweet by-and-bys. I guess that'd be the opposite of the nasty now and now, the sweet by-and-by, forever and ever and ever and ever without daddy.