

The Riches of His Glory - Part 5

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[0 : 00] Let's open our Bibles to Ephesians chapter 3.

! We've made our way through three of the four petitions and then we took this long break and so maybe we just need to read the passage again.

Ephesians chapter 3 starting with verse 14. For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So he's praying. This is about prayer. He's describing his prayers for the Ephesian believers. And I know that I've said this a number of times but let's not think that this was the only thing he prayed for.

I mean he's about to describe a prayer that is very, very spiritual. There isn't anything physical about any part of this prayer.

[1 : 15] But you know that the Apostle Paul prayed for their physical needs as well because the Ephesian believers were like all believers, most believers, the majority believers in that day, they were very poor.

Some of them were slaves and they were struggling. Most of them, if not all of them, were suffering under persecution. And the persecution would manifest itself in a number of different ways.

Not just physical persecution but Christians would lose jobs and maybe even have their homes taken away from them. And so there were a lot of material needs among the Ephesian believers without any doubt.

And you know that Paul prayed about those things. But he's describing a particular part of his prayer life for the Ephesians. And I would even go so far as to say probably he prayed these same things for all the believers that he knew in the day.

All of the churches that God used him to plant. But he's praying this very decidedly spiritual prayer. And he wants to describe it.

[2 : 20] So he says, for this reason I bow my knees to the Father. In fact, by the way, we'll get to it here in a minute. But bow is in a certain form in the Greek language, Greek grammar, that means he continually bowed his knees.

This is not just something he prayed once and, you know, that was it. He was always mindful to pray for these things for the Ephesian believers. So I bow my knees, he said, to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

That's great to have his name, isn't it? That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

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. And by the way, let me stop right there a minute. And he tags that on here after he has listed some very spiritual petitions.

And so quite often, in fact, almost always, we want to apply that verse to just some of the physical needs that we have. You know, or maybe some trouble that we're having.

[3 : 52] And we say, God is able to do exceedingly above, abundantly above all that we ask or think. Well, he is. But this is applied here. Paul is applying this here to these very spiritual requests that he's making in behalf of Ephesian believers.

So let's make sure we don't make this particular part of Scripture too narrow to only apply to those things that we like, things that we really want, you know, in this life.

God's gracious to give those things as well. But Paul is tagging this on to after the four very spiritual, very deeply spiritual petitions.

To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. So the whole point of it is what? Bring glory to God.

Bring glory to him. All right. So what's Paul saying? He's saying, I'm praying for you. And then he's describing it. But he says, I'm praying for you that God, that he, God, that's what he said in verse 16, would grant you according to the riches of his glory.

[5 : 05] So that God would give you something that he is going to take out of his treasure house in glory, the riches of his glory.

Four things. The four petitions. We've seen, we've looked at three of them. To be strengthened with might, that's the first petition. To be rooted and grounded in love.

To know the love of Christ. We've covered all that ground, although it's been so long we've probably forgotten all about it. I hope you haven't. And then the fourth one, to be filled with all the fullness of God.

Someone, in fact, I read a, didn't read it, but I saw a sermon on this particular passage, and the title kind of caught my eye.

And as I recall, I started reading the sermon. It wasn't near as good as the title, so I just didn't read the rest of it. But the title was interesting. It was entitled, The Wealth That Wall Street Would Wisely Want.

[6 : 07] Now the reason I attracted my attention is because of all those W's. You know, I kind of like that kind of thing. You don't know that probably, but I do. The Wealth That Wall Street Would Wisely Want.

But they don't wisely want it. But this wealth that God has that he grants us as our children. All right, so we've already discussed the first three petitions, and now we're ready for the fourth and final one.

And so the fourth and final petition in this prayer, as Paul describes this prayer, is to be filled with all the fullness of God. Filled with all the fullness of God. That's what verse 19 says.

That you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now I know you're looking at your notes and you're ready to write something down, but it's going to be a little while. So put your pens down. It's funny. It just kind of finally dawned on me. You're out there with your pencil bread. So you don't want to miss a word.

[7 : 15] Anyway, in fact, I might give you some words that are going to be a little hard to spell tonight. So get ready for that. Maybe I'll have to spell them for you. And they're hard to spell because I made them up. All right? We'll get to that in a little bit.

But let's think, though, first of all, let's just think in our minds about this statement. To be filled with all the fullness of God. I don't know about you, but what does that mean?

You know, that is, that's a huge thing. I mean, even if we don't really look deeply yet, we just kind of, on the surface, just read that. That you may be filled.

Just what he's praying for, that the Ephesian believers would be granted. That they would be filled with all the fullness of God. Filled with fullness of God.

Now, I've said this about, I know I said it about the third petition. Probably did about every one of them. But I know I remember saying about the third petition a number of weeks ago.

[8 : 17] That, you know, we have come, we've come to a place where we're really over our heads. I mean, this is just, this is way up here. You know, this idea of being filled with all the fullness of God.

And I've told this little story before, but I kind of feel like the little girl who complained to her mother one Sunday that, you know, that she had a stomach ache. And so she couldn't go to church that morning.

And her mother very wisely said, well, your stomach hurts because it's empty. You know, you need some breakfast. Your stomach hurts because it's empty. And so you'll feel better when you get something in your stomach.

And so they had breakfast and went on to church. Well, after church was over that morning and they were leaving, the little girl overheard the pastor say to someone, I have a headache this morning.

Now, you know how this is going to go. I'm sure. And the little girl, of course, little girls, little boys, you know, they have any qualms about saying what's ever on their mind. And she said to the

pastor, well, your head hurts because there's nothing in it.

[9 : 21] It's empty. It's empty. And you'll feel a lot better if you put something in it. Well, I use that illustration because that's the way I feel about this particular passage.

I just don't have it in here without really God granting us understanding. And he doesn't just impart it. I mean, he brings us to understand other scriptures to help us understand what Paul is saying to us here, what Paul's really praying for when he prays this prayer.

And it's a lofty subject. I don't know that I'm qualified to speak on it. But what does it mean to be filled with all the fullness of God? Well, we're going to approach the subject kind of in three ways. And I'll just go ahead and tell you we're just going to look at the first one tonight. I just like to drag it out. All right. But this is such an incredible statement.

It's going to take us a little bit of time. Now, the first thing we're going to look at is, I think, well, I don't know if I would say it's the most important thing. But you have to start with this.

[10 : 33] You've got to get this before you can get the rest of it. But that would be the principle, the principle of this. What is the principle? Now, that's number one. You can go ahead and write it in there. But I'll give you the other two, though you can't write them in because I don't have them included in your notes yet.

But there's the principle of it. That means, what does it mean? Don't you want to know that? Now, maybe you say, well, I already know what it means. Well, maybe you do and maybe you don't. I mean, there are a lot of misinterpretations about this particular passage, this petition. But we want to get to the principle of it, what it means. And then, second, the practice of it.

It has to be practical. That is, what does it look like in our lives to be filled with the fullness of God? What does that look like? What are the implications of that, the ramifications of that?

How does that change anything in your life? How would you define it or describe it in the life of a believer? So the principle of it, the practice of it.

[11 : 38] And then, third, the possibility of it. And I just add that on there because, you know, no one should ever think that the fullness of God is somehow beyond our understanding.

I mean, we look at this passage, you know, this phrase, filled with all the fullness of God. And we might just come to a conclusion, well, it's just too much for me to understand.

We shouldn't think that. Paul wrote it because he expected us to understand what he was talking about. And we can say that is true of every portion of Scripture. Even those portions of Scripture that we don't yet understand.

And we're still working on it. But God's not hiding anything from us. And so we shouldn't think that it's beyond us and beyond our understanding or beyond our experience.

All right. So the principle of it, the practice of it, the possibility of it. And we'll get to the other two next time. And we'll be here next Wednesday. All right.

[12 : 37] So first, the principle of it. To understand what the answer to this petition would mean to us. I mean, Paul expects this prayer to be answered.

He's not just kind of throwing out some lofty things. And, you know, he expects God to answer this prayer. And so we want to answer what that would look like.

But before we can get to that, we really need to understand, I think, what Paul is not talking about. Because there are some misinterpretations about this passage.

Some have taken it to mean things that Paul didn't mean and things that nowhere else does Scripture support. All right. So what does it not mean?

That's what we're going to talk about here for a little bit. And there are several. In fact, I think eight in all, as I recall. The first one is this. It does not mean mysticism.

[13 : 41] M-Y-S-T-I-C-I-S-M. Of course, you already know that. Can you spell that again? M-Y-S-T-I-C-I-S-M.

Mysticism. A mysticism. That is, coming to a place where you're just totally, completely absorbed into the eternal God.

It's just reaching this place where you, I don't know, there have been other words used. You, I don't know, what's that? Yeah, something like that.

Where you just get to a place where you, you know, and this is something you decide to do. And you kind of move this way. And you lose all individuality. And you lose your personality.

Who you are. And you kind of merge your consciousness into the consciousness of the divine God. You know what I'm talking about?

[14 : 43] Mysticism. And so, there are those who would say that this is what Paul's talking about. He's talking about reaching a place of some alternate state of mind where you just are absorbed into God.

And no longer are you who you once were. You know, your identity is not important. Your own personality, the way you're wired, who you are, those things are not important. Things you like and don't like. All those things that before identified you, those are all lost because you're just kind of consumed by God.

You're just absorbed by God. And, you know, another, there are those who believe in transcendental meditation and yoga.

You know, some of those other things. In fact, there are even Christians today. Be on your guard because even some Christians have kind of incorporated some of the techniques of yoga.

[15 : 44] And we now have Christian yoga. And it may seem very innocent, but just be careful. Because here's the idea. Clear your mind.

Just clear your mind. It sounds really so wise. Just let everything go. You know, just kind of zone out.

Forget who you are and where you are. And just let your consciousness connect with the spirit world. I guarantee you will connect.

You will connect. It won't be with the God of heaven. It will be with the God of this world. But most likely, you know, one of his demons. We are to focus our minds. To not open our minds and just kind of try to reach a place where it's totally blank.

Now, some have already reached that place. It kind of reminds me of a Rod Sterling Twilight Zone episode.

[16 : 45] Maybe you saw this one, you know, where this fella, for some reason, because he flipped the coin to buy a paper, and it stood on its edge. And it gave him the power to read people's minds.

You ever see that episode? And so he, you know, throughout the episode, he's meeting people. He knows what they're thinking. And at one point, he's walking down the street, and a blonde walks by, and she's not thinking anything.

I'm serious. All right, now, I know. I should be sitting there. That is terrible. Sorry, all you blondes out there. But anyway, Paul's not talking about doing that, to be filled with the fullness of God, that you just lose everything.

You just try to, you know, empty yourself of everything that is you. God made you and wired you, and he did certain ways. And he did so that he would work through those things for his glory. He didn't expect you to lose everything you are, so that you'd just be kind of absorbed into the fullness of God. So it's not mysticism. Second, he's not talking about pantheism.

[18 : 01] And you don't have to have me spell that, because it's pantheism. All right, pantheism. And we could talk a long time about the definition of pantheism, but probably this, and I think I provided this in your notes, this pretty much captures it.

All is God, and God is all. That's pantheism. There are several different forms of it. A lot of Eastern religions, New Age religions, Hinduism, and so forth, incorporate this belief into their religion.

All is God, and God is all. And so Paul is not talking, in this view, Paul is not talking about coming to a full realization of who and what God wants us to be.

He's talking about coming to a full realization of who and what we really are, and that is that we really are God. We're gods. And so salvation is defined this way, when you fully realize the deity that's in you, that you are God.

Because all is God, and God is all. So he's not talking about that. Be filled with the fullness of God, so that you become God, come a God.

[19 : 25] All right, we know he's not talking about that. So I'm really not talking to a group of people that needs to be corrected about that. Third, it does not mean monasticism.

I told you there would be some interesting words here. Now that really is a word, monasticism. And that is just being so full of God.

Reach a place where you're so filled with God, that you sell everything you have and move up into a mountain and spend the rest of your life praying. You know, become a monk.

Or ladies, I guess, a monkette. Well, I'm just going to get myself in big trouble.

I'm already there. You know what we're talking about. We talked about monasticism. The monastics, they just felt like the height of devotion was to deny everything, everything, everything in

this world, even yourself.

[20 : 33] And some would even take vows of silence. They would deny themselves of even speaking words, and they would pray always or read scripture always. Paul's not talking about monasticism.

Fourth, he's not talking about, it does not mean emotionalism. Emotionalism. Or certainly he's not talking about this in connection with reaching a place of emotion, out of control emotion. He's not talking about a hyper level of emotionalism where you just lose all control of yourself. You know, there are many who believe in that sort of thing.

You can go back in our history, even in our own country. You've heard of the shakers. Why were they called shakers? Because when they were in their deep worship, they would shake.

And then, you know, you had way back in the first great awakening and also manifestations of this in the second great awakening. Some of this is still going on today.

[21 : 45] You had the barkers. They would just begin to bark. So full of God, that they start barking. And not too long ago, in the early 90s, and I think this kind of stuff still goes on in some places, but in the Toronto revival, you may have heard it, they had this kind of thing going on.

This manifestation, supposedly, of the spirit of God in person that got down on all fours and were barking. And howling.

And there were the laughers. And there were the jerkers. And believe it or not, the ointers. They would oink. Now you think, oh, that's just, you know, Pastor, where did you come up with that?

That's some urban legend out there. Well, you know, I watched the video. And I watched about enough of it, as much of it as I could. And I don't know where this was taking place, but it was an example of this so-called revival, worship service, and these revival meetings.

And there was a group of people. They were on the floor. Some of them were rolling around on the floor. Most of them were crawling, and they were barking and howling, just like dogs.

[23 : 05] And not just those on the floor, but those out in the crowd were doing the same thing. And at some point, I was watching this and just listening to this. I thought, this is absolutely ridiculous. And the pastor is standing kind of in the midst of all this kind of commotion, chaos, and absurdity.

And he's praying. And here are his words. He said, Lord, we want all that you have. We want all that you have. And Lord, if it blows our minds, let them be blown.

Really? All right? Is that what Paul's talking about? Paul's not talking about anything like that. In fact, a little later in this worship service, they had a woman who stood up and she testified.

And I just wrote down her words. She said, I said to the Lord. She was just testifying to the people. She said, I said to the Lord that I would do anything for him. And the Lord spoke to me, will you howl for me?

And she said, Lord, please don't ask me to do that. She was just giving this in testimony. And she said, the Lord told me, if I can't ask you to do this for me in my own house, how can I expect you to do anything for me out there?

[24 : 18] And then she said, so? And then she started howling like a dog. We're talking about, well, actually this goes way beyond just simply emotionalism.

This is insanity. This is, not only is there nothing whatsoever biblical about any of that, Paul certainly is not talking about anything like that when he says to be filled with all the fullness of God. Fifth, it does not mean materialism. Materialism. That is, the fullness of God does not refer to the receiving of earthly blessings.

You know, that, you know, I think that would, by the way, that would make this final petition kind of anticlimactic in my opinion. I mean, we, you know, I mentioned that these petitions are kind of, they're progressive like a stair step.

I mean, one is the foundation for the next one and we'd go higher and higher and this is the ultimate to be filled with all the fullness of God. To say that this is talking about material things, material blessings would be anticlimactic rather than the climax of the prayer which is what I think it is.

[25 : 41] Number six, it does not mean perfectionism. Perfectionism. That somehow all that God is, we should become.

That's different than pantheism. It's not that we become God but we somehow can reach a place where we have all of the attributes of God, the fullness of God.

That would include his eternality, his immutability which means he never changed. His omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence and glory.

The problem with these is these are non-communicable attributes of God. They're not passed on. They can't be given to anybody. God doesn't grant anyone eternal, eternality like God's eternality. Those are non-communicable attributes. Now, but I would add and you can jot this down, I don't think I put this in your notes but there are some of the attributes of God that are communicable. [26 : 51] And I think this is what gets us closer to what Paul is actually talking about here in this petition. I mean, such attributes as holiness and righteousness purity goodness and love and mercy and compassion and those kind of things those are all attributes of God and God does communicate those, does give those to us.

That's what the Bible calls, by the way, the fruit of the Spirit. Remember. Fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith and meekness and temperance. The fruit of the Spirit. And this really would get us closer to, I think, Paul's true meaning here. Let's go on with what it does not mean. Seventh, it does not mean exclusivism. Exclusivism. This is not the idea. You know, that is, this fullness that he's talking about is not just for select, you know, super Christians. A select few. An elite kind of group. An exclusive group of, maybe it's just for pastors or, you know, deacons and, or maybe other church leaders.

[28 : 06] It's not, not exclusive in that way. Paul prayed this petition for all of the saints at Ephesus. This is for everyone that he's praying this, offering up this petition for.

One more. Eighth, it does not mean ultimateism. And I did make that word up for sure. Ultimate ism. You know, have you ever noticed that when you put ism on the end of the word, it's always wrong. It's always bad. There's probably an exception to that, but I can't think. Usually, ism means this is not good. All right, so, ultimateism.

And then Paul was talking about something that no one will experience this side of heaven. So maybe, you know, the idea is that Paul is praying and some of these will be granted in this life and maybe this last one is the ultimate something that we will not realize until we get to heaven. There may be some truth in that in the sense that the finished product of that, the absolute end of that petition is something we'll experience when we get to heaven.

[29 : 17] An entire sanctification which we will not experience in this life but will when we leave and go to heaven. A glorification where we're perfected.

But Paul's not talking about that, so it's not ultimate ism. That somehow, you know, this final petition is otherworldly rather than thisworldly. But clearly, Paul is talking about a present tense answer to this prayer.

He's praying for something that would be granted right now. And so this is a blessing for this life.

Alright, so having said all of that, what exactly is Paul talking about?

Well, let's consider the petition again, just in our thoughts in verse 19, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul is talking about being filled with something, right? I mean, obviously. And that something is, Paul says, the fullness of God.

[30 : 25] That's what the petition, if you break the petition down, that's exactly what it says. Filled with the fullness of God. And it's safe to say, as we look at some other passages, even in this very chapter, that the fullness of God is specifically Christ Jesus himself.

That we would be full of Jesus in our lives. Now, there's more to it than that. I mean, more to be explained about that.

But this kind of points us back to verse 17, again, part of this prayer, where Paul says that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

So it's connected to that in some way. Paul also tells us in Colossians 2.9 that Christ dwells, in Christ rather, dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

So, in Christ, the fullness of God is in him, dwells in him. Right. And then when you connect that with what Paul said earlier in this prayer that Christ dwells in us, and you begin to understand what it is we're to be full of.

[31 : 39] When it says the fullness of God, we're to be full of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. God and so the Bible then tells us that all believers have received this fullness.

All right, so in one sense what Paul is praying for, we already have. We already have that. All believers have received this fullness.

John 1.16 And of his fullness we have all received in grace for grace. So it's very clear. if the fullness of God, if that means actually Christ himself, because in Christ the fullness of the Godhead dwells, if that's what it means, then we have that because that's what John said, that the fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

So all who trust Christ as Lord and Savior, been born again, all true born again believers receive his fullness. Every one of us.

And not just gradually in one day, but from the get-go, at the very beginning, the moment you believe and are regenerated and saved, you have the fullness of Christ.

[33 : 01] You're not getting some of him and hopefully some later. You have all there is to get of Christ. You have him. actually dwelling in you in the person of the Holy Spirit.

So you're not missing anything of Christ. So that's from the very beginning. That's the fullness of God. In Christ dwells all the fullness of God bodily. Listen to John 1.16 again.

Grace for grace. Now this helps us understand how we can have the fullness of God at the very beginning of salvation and yet still need the prayer to be prayed that we be filled with all the fullness of God.

How can we be filled with all the fullness of God if we already have all the fullness of God in the person of Christ? Well that little phrase there in John 1.16 grace for grace or grace upon grace meaning grace added to grace.

It means grace that is new every day. This is the gradual answering of Paul's petition. Not that we would get more of Christ but here's the point.

[34 : 12] We have the fullness of Christ dwelling in us but we do not know it yet. We do not know it. We do not know that we have it. Not really.

Not in the fullest sense do we know it. Because we're not living up to that fullness. Are you? I'm not. I assure you I'm not.

Living up to the fullness. We're not acknowledging that fullness as we should every day. Otherwise you know we wouldn't struggle with fear.

We wouldn't struggle with pride. We wouldn't struggle with you know other things we struggle with if we knew that we had all of Christ there is to have.

We have him. All of him. God's grace and we're not experiencing all that fullness as we should. So by God's grace upon grace upon grace upon grace as added grace added to grace we'll spend the rest of our lives growing into the fullness of God.

[35 : 21] That is the knowledge that we have the fullness of God in us. To be so full of God that there's no room for anything else. Ephesians in fact let me I didn't I think I put that in there did I put Ephesians 4 did I even list it there for you?

Might jot this down Ephesians 4 11 I've got to hurry on. You know happens doesn't it? Ephesians 4 11 and he himself gave some to be apostles some prophets some evangelists pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints that that's all of us so God gave me to you to equip the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

So there's Paul mentioning fullness again. It is a process that we're going through. Go go you start to say razorbacks.

I'm sorry. That's not the razorback fight song. I'm not a razorback fan. Anyway it doesn't matter. All right there it is again.

This fullness of Christ that is continually developing in our lives. Not more of his fullness but the understanding and knowledge and activation of that fullness of God in our lives.

[37 : 16] Christianity is more than just conversion. Here's the point. It's more than just getting saved. It's more than just having your sins forgiven. The essence of Christianity is to enter into the fullness of Christ and being transformed into the full measure of the stature and the fullness of Christ.

So we put all that together. The one who has the fullness of God dwelling in him. Who's that? Christ. Christ has the fullness of God dwelling in him.

The one who has the fullness of God dwelling in him dwells in me and you. And this takes place through faith. Through our an ongoing faith.

Through our yieldedness to God. We continue to yield to him. The fullness of God comes through yielding to the complete mastery of Christ in your life.

I hope my balloon won't blow up and I'll give you an illustration. I'm going to blow this up. I can't do it. I'm just kidding.

[38 : 29] Alright, is this balloon full there? Yes, it is. There's nothing else in there. All right, how about now? Is it balloon full there?

I thought you said it was full of air while ago. It's full of air now too. And I could go further, probably pop in my face. How about now?

Did you know that many believers have all of Christ they want? Christ? That is, I don't mean, they don't, you know, they have all there is.

If you're a true believer, you have all there is. But in terms of how that's working out in your life and your devotion and the activity of your life and you know, in terms of the practical side, there's much of Christ that you could have active in your life but you don't want it.

So the more we yield to Christ, the more full we are, the fullness of Christ. You know, some people treat Christ as an emergency 911 just whenever they need it.

[39 : 49] So the fullness of God comes through yielding to the complete mastery of Christ in your life. That's what Paul is talking about.

Not talking about getting more of Christ, you have all there is to have. He's talking about yielding to all of Christ who is in you.

I guess we really could say that it's not more of Christ that we need. It's more of us, Christ, wants, and we submit our lives to Him.

Thank you. Thank you.