

# Filled with All the Fullness of God

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[ 0 : 00 ] Take your Bibles tonight and open them to Ephesians, Ephesians chapter 3.

! This will be the last message out of this tremendous passage of Scripture.! And I'll go ahead and read once again, starting with verse 14.

Chapter 3, verse 14. For this reason, I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Again, that's how we know that the substance of what is coming next is prayer, Paul's prayer.

From whom, he said, the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, this is what he's praying for, some deeply spiritual things 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.

Let me add the next two verses. 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, to him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

[ 1 : 47 ] Amen. Amen. All right. Every prayer ought to end with an amen, don't you think? And so be it. Now, again, and you know if you've been here for the last three, four weeks, you know that I've been teaching or preaching through this marvelous passage of Scripture in Ephesians chapter 3.

And we have been doing that, or I've been doing that, under this heading, The Riches of His Glory. And I borrow that right from the text itself.

I did come across an alternate title, by the way, and see if you like it. Wealth Wall Street Would Wisely Want. How about that one? Okay.

Well, they don't have any such wisdom in Wall Street. But anyway, we'll stick with The Riches of His Glory. All right. And Paul, of course, offers up four petitions.

This is intercessory praying. He's praying for the Ephesian believers. And this intercessory prayer involves four very, very deeply spiritual.

[ 2 : 51 ] I started to say very specific, but in reality, you have to dig quite deep to find each petition's specificity. But these four petitions.

And these petitions, then, ought to be, I think, ought to be the substance of our prayers for one another. I've said that every sermon that I preach out of this passage because I want us to get that. If this is Paul's intercessory prayer for the believers at Ephesus, And I believe very likely he prayed these same prayers for all the believers that he knew.

And he knew a bunch. Then it ought to be the substance of our own prayers for one another. Now, what are these petitions? Let me give them to you again. We've looked at the first three already. To be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man.

Again, that's the first petition. Then second, to be rooted and grounded in, and we could expand it this way, To be rooted and grounded in love for God and love for one another, for others.

[ 3 : 57 ] And then third, to know the full measure of the love of Christ for us. Its width, its length, its depth, its height. And we looked at that last Sunday.

And now the fourth and final petition. That we might be filled with all the fullness of God. That comes right out of the passage. That's how Paul worded it.

And that we might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now, I may remember saying with the very first sermon out of this passage That we really have a progression of things here.

One builds upon the preceding one. And then the third one, the second one, and the fourth one is kind of the climax. It's the ultimate. It's up in the lofty places, spiritually speaking.

And we have reached that point. And so, to reach this point, when we reach this point, this passage, Causes us to have to think a lot about it. About what Paul is saying here.

[ 5 : 01 ] And so, it requires a lot of thought. It requires a lot of study. It especially requires a lot of prayer. As not only we learn to have this a part of our prayer life.

Before we can do that, we've got to understand what it means. And so, it just takes a great deal of thought. I kind of feel like the little girl who woke up one Sunday morning Complaining that she had a stomach ache.

And her mother very wisely said, Well, your stomach hurts because it's empty. And if you fill it with something, then it won't hurt anymore. So, they had breakfast and then later went on to church.

Well, after church was over, the little girl overheard her pastor say that he had a headache.

I don't even have to give you the punchline. You know. And she very promptly said to her pastor, Well, your head hurts because it's empty. If you put something in it, it won't hurt so bad.

Okay. You knew that was coming. All right. Well, in a sense, that's kind of the way I feel when I get not only to this final petition, but really I've kind of felt that way all along the way.

[ 6 : 05 ] And when you really start studying this intercessory prayer of Paul's, then it takes a lot of thought. And I, you know, you can come to the conclusion, Well, I just don't have enough up here to figure this out.

But we need more than just what might be up here. We need it in our hearts as well as we study this. And really, again, this is kind of a staircase. We ought to think of this as a staircase with each petition building upon the one that comes before.

And so Paul has been leading us through this intercessory prayer. He's been leading us to the top step, to the very top of this staircase. In fact, John R. W. Stott said this in the passage.

He said, And I think, When we look at this, we're going to sense that and understand that.

But having said that, Is this beyond our understanding? You know, I've made a big deal about how lofty this particular, especially this last petition is.

[ 7 : 12 ] Is it then beyond our comprehension? And more importantly, is it beyond our experience? Our experience? Well, the answer to that is certainly not.

And though we may feel that and sense that at the outset, we know that it's not beyond our understanding and comprehension and experience.

We know that because Paul prayed this prayer for the Ephesian believers. And he's not wasting his time on this. And not only that, but I think we can assume that the Ephesian believers were just everyday common people, just like you and me.

And if Paul then prayed this prayer every day for, you know, run-of-the-mill believers, then, you know, we're run-of-the-mill believers.

And if they could comprehend it and experience it, we can as well. And so that's important. And in this case, what is it? It is the fullness, to be filled with the fullness of God.

[ 8 : 16 ] That's the petition. What does it mean? What does it mean to be filled with all the fullness of God? Well, I want to approach the answer to that question this way.

First of all, to consider the principle itself, the principle that we find here in this petition, the principle of it, that is what it means.

What does it mean? Before we understand how it applies and how it can be a reality in our own lives, we need to start by understanding what it means, what it means to be filled with all the fullness of God.

So we start with the principle, and then we move from there to the practice of it. Because it's not just some cold doctrine. You know, some, again, and I'll use the word lofty, something out there, you know, somewhere that, you know, we really can't get a hold on.

And it's something to be more than just mentally grasped. It is to be very practical. And so then we'll consider the practice of it. That is, what it looks like and how it is worked out in our lives.

[ 9 : 28 ] And then finally, we'll look at the possibility of it. Because I want us all to understand here in the front end that to be filled with all the fullness of God is not beyond us.

It's not beyond our understanding and beyond our experience. Now, that's a lot to look at tonight. I hope we can make it. Well, we are going to make it, unless you decide to leave early or late, whatever the case may be.

Let's look at the principle, the principle of it. What does it mean to be, when Paul prays for the Ephesian believers, that they would be filled with all the fullness of God?

Well, this is a good way to approach answering a question like that. Let's consider what it does not mean. And some of these, you're going to think, well, of course, I don't think it means that. I'm going to give you a list of isms, okay?

All these end with ism. And so the first one is, this is not mysticism. Now, I know you know that. But when I say mysticism, what I mean is being so completely absorbed into the eternal God.

[10:44] I'm speaking with kind of mysticism language here, okay? To be so absorbed into the eternal God, losing our identity, losing our individuality, losing our personality, merging our consciousness with the divine.

That's not what he's talking about. Not mysticism in that sense. Along a similar line, it's not what they call, what we call pantheism.

Pantheism. Pantheism. First, you've got to know what pantheism is. Well, it's just New Age thought that basically constructs their theology and philosophies upon this one premise that all is God and God is all.

Now, we have that all around us. I mean, we have that kind of thought all around us, all kinds of different variations, you know, in our world today. We used to call it New Age. Now, I think it goes by other names, but it's just really Hinduism retooled for our Western culture is basically what it is. God is all and all is God. And it basically is believing that what Paul is really talking about here is salvation. That's what he's talking about. It's what true salvation is.

[12:06] It's believing that salvation takes place when you finally and fully realize who and what you are.

And that is that you are God. You are God. Because all is God. So it's not that, is it? You think that's what Paul's talking about? Well, certainly not. So it's not mysticism, not pantheism.

Let me go maybe in kind of a little different direction. It's not monasticism. That's a good ism word. You know, the idea that really to be, to really experience the, and to be filled with the very fullness of God, you've got to sell everything and, you know, and go live in a monastery somewhere on the top of a mountain and to live there all by yourself and renounce your, almost your identity as a human being on this planet and it's kind of a monastic kind of lifestyle.

Become a monk or, ladies, become a nun. Something, some extreme sense. Well, it's not monasticism he's talking about here. Also, and this becomes more practical for us because this is where we might find our thinking and that is it's not emotionalism.

This has nothing to do with emotion. Though emotions certainly are engaged and are a part of our lives at every turn, really, and you can't escape emotion, but emotionalism is something a little bit different and that's not what Paul's talking about.

[13:50] Paul's not talking about reaching some level of extreme feeling, emotional feeling where you lose all control of reality.

You know, like the old kind of expression that I think is usually wrongly applied but there is a proper application, that is to be so heavenly minded that you're no earthly good.

You know, so disconnected from the world that suddenly you just kind of go off into this emotional high. In fact, it's interesting that some liberal theologians have accused Paul of this at this point in Ephesians.

And they just kind of conclude that Paul is using what they call hyperbole, you know, some gross exaggeration that's just fueled by a hyper-evangelism, not evangelism, emotionalism.

You know, and so Paul's so carried away here that he reaches a stage where he, you know, he just stops thinking clearly. And he's writing these lofty things because he's just caught up.

[15:11] Caught up not only in emotionalism but kind of caught up in his own eloquence. In fact, liberal scholars accuse Paul of that in a number of places because they have misunderstood exactly what Paul is doing.

And I think a speaker and a writer can do that and often does that. Even preachers can be accused of that when the preacher's words become more stylistic than substantive.

What Paul is doing here is very substantive, what he's saying. We just need to understand it. So it's not emotionalism and also it's not materialism. It has nothing to do with material gain here.

It's not a materialism. The fullness of God does not refer to receiving, somehow receiving all of the various blessings that God has for us in this earth.

And you just have to get more of that. And to really be filled with the fullness of God means that you get all God has for you materially here. And what a shame that believers are missing out and all

those wonderful things that God has for them materially speaking.

[16:18] I mean, their entire, you know, whole category of churches and preachers who fall into this area.

The prosperity type of preaching. That's not what this is about at all. In fact, if it were, then it would be, not be a climax in the prayer, be anti-climax.

I mean, because you can have all the material blessings. That's what you want. That's what you're looking for. You can have it. What we ought to want is the supernatural blessing, not the blessings. It's Him we want. And then also, not perfectionism. That's number six in my list of isms that this passage is not talking about.

Perfectionism, that is in the absolute sense that somehow all that God is, we become. That's what we're moving toward and wanting.

[17:16] And I'm talking here about such things as His eternity or His immutability. What does that mean? He doesn't change. He never changes.

Or, better yet, His omnipresence. That He's everywhere, present, and nowhere absent. Somehow we can attain to that these attributes of God and His omniscience that He knows all things and His omnipotence that He's all-powerful and His glory.

Well, you know, obviously those things are non-communicable. We can't have those attributes of God. Never were intended to have them. And so the idea being that this is some almost reaching the point of the divine, if not in this life, ultimately, that we would share in these great attributes of God.

Now, you know, there are some attributes of God that are communicable, that we do share and that God does grant us. And that gets us really, I think, closer to understanding what this petition really is about.

You know, attributes like His holiness or His righteousness, His goodness, His love, His mercy, His compassion, or what the Bible calls the, you know, the fruit of the Spirit.

[18:32] This is the beginning of understanding, but this is, but getting back to what it is not, let me give you a couple more. It is not exclusivism.

Exclusivism. What do I mean by that? That this fullness, this fullness, the fullness of God, it's not just for a select few super-duper Christians.

It doesn't sound very super-duper. I guess that's okay. It's not just for them. It's not just available to preachers or evangelists or other such church leaders.

Paul prayed this prayer for all the Ephesian believers to experience. And so that's, it's for all of us. Then one more, not, it's not what I want to call ultimatism.

I know that's not a word. At least I don't think it is. Ultimate ism. In fact, some of these words are not words, are they? Just, you know, tagging ism on the end of it. But it makes a nice little outline.

[19:47] All right. And what I mean by ultimate ism is that Paul is, that Paul is talking about something that no one will experience on this earth.

We don't want to make that mistake in our understanding of this petition. That this is, that somehow this is something, this final petition is not for this world. That it is otherworldly.

It's for the next life. It's for heaven. But no, you know, this prayer of Paul's, this experience that the believer must be, you know, can experience the fullness of God.

This is for here. This is for this life. All right. So that's not what he's talking about. I've spent a lot of time telling you that. What is it? What is he talking about?

Well, to understand that, that principle, this principle here in this petition, we really need to go back to the phrase in verse 17 that I have gone back to a number of times because it really is kind of the linchpin of this entire list of petitions.

[20:56] And it is this phrase that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. That's a key part of this entire passage.

And it's linked in some sense, in a very direct sense, to every one of these petitions. That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

You see, everything Paul says here in this passage is predicated upon whether or not Christ is dwelling in your hearts through faith. It all depends upon that.

That's the key to it. The key to it is Christ himself. To be filled with all the fullness of God, the key to that is Christ himself. Now, how so?

Well, what does the Bible say about the Lord Jesus Christ? It says quite a lot, but in regard to the fullness of God. Well, listen to, and you can turn to it if you want to, Colossians.

[ 21 : 54 ] Well, in fact, about three places in Colossians within the first couple of chapters. In Colossians 1:19, listen to what Paul wrote. For it pleased the Father that in him all the fullness should dwell.

Fullness of God. That it should dwell. Dwell in who? Or whom? Christ. And then you go into chapter 2, chapter 2, verse 3.

In whom, he's talking about Christ. In fact, the word Christ is at the close of verse 2. And then in verse 3, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

And then you go a little bit further in that chapter, in chapter 2, verse 9. For in him, again, we're talking about Christ, in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Those are profound statements. Not only the identity of the Lord Jesus Christ, but statements concerning the fullness of God in him.

[ 22 : 58 ] Dwells in him. That's what Paul said in Colossians. Now, what are these verses saying? They're saying, very clearly, that the fullness of God is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's very logical. But what does that mean to us? What does that have to do with us? I mean, Christ in him is the fullness. How then are we filled with all the fullness of God? Well, I want to have you look at another passage in John, Gospel of John, chapter 1, verse 16.

Speaking of Christ, of course, all throughout that chapter of Jesus, identifying him and so forth. In verse 16, it says, and of his fullness, the fullness of Christ, we have all received.

We being we, believers, born again believers, children of God. That fullness, we have all received and grace for grace.

Literally grace for grace for grace for grace ongoing. Now, that's it. All who trust in Christ as Lord and Savior, born again, receive his fullness, the fullness of Christ, dwelling in us.

[ 24 : 23 ] And what is that fullness? Well, according to Colossians, it's the fullness of God. The fullness of God. In him, remember, he said, in him dwells all the fullness of God bodily.

But now, listen again to John chapter 1, verse 16, the last part of it, and I emphasized it a moment ago. Of his fullness, we have all received and grace for grace.

Grace for grace. That is, literally, it could be worded this way, grace added to grace. Grace that is new every day.

And the point is this, we have the fullness of Christ, but we don't fully realize it. We don't fully realize it. That's why Paul was praying for the Ephesian believers.

We have it, but we don't know it. Not fully, not like we ought to. We're not living up to that fullness, the fullness of Christ, which is the fullness of God. We don't live up to that fullness, and we're not experiencing that fullness to the fullest.

[ 25 : 34 ] I know that's redundant. And so, by God's grace, here's the idea, by God's grace, for grace, for grace, grace, added to grace, added to grace, we will then spend the rest of our lives growing into the fullness of God in us.

And this is what Paul is praying for. We don't arrive to full apprehension of this. And that's why we need to pray for one another, that we would be filled, literally, actually, being, being always filled with the fullness of God.

Getting back to Ephesians, if we go to Ephesians chapter 4, the very next chapter, from where we're looking, Ephesians 4, verse 11, Paul said, and he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in 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.

Now, that's a mouthful. And we're not going to take that and pick all that apart, but it's talking about an ongoing thing that is occurring in our lives.

And God has given gifts to the church to bring this about. And the gift he's given to the church today is preachers and teachers, for the building up of the saints, for the work of the ministry.

[ 27 : 25 ] And this is ongoing and continuing until at some point we come to the very fullness of Christ, the stature of the fullness of Christ.

You see, this is the essence of true Christianity. It's not just being converted, saved. It's a whole lot more than just having your sins forgiven.

That's about as far as some people's thinking goes when it comes to their relationship with God through Christ.

Forgiven. Sin's forgiven. Saved. Converted. But Christianity is all about entering into the fullness of Christ. That's a daily ongoing thing and developing into the full measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, as Paul put it.

And we go back to Ephesians chapter 3 in our text and looking again at verse 17 and this phrase that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. This puts it all together for us.

[ 28 : 29 ] Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Dwell through faith. And so in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Bible says, dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and where does Christ dwell?

In us. in me, in you, in every born-again believer. And so the one who has the fullness of God dwelling in him dwells in me.

How? Through faith. Through faith. So you see, faith does not end at the salvation experience. that's where it begins. Faith continues on and on and on. The Bible says, according to your faith be it unto you. So, look, here.

When the believer, by faith, yields, begins yielding to the Lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ, yielding daily to his indwelling presence, then and only then will we be filled or again be being filled with all the fullness of God.

[ 29 : 48 ] It's an ongoing thing. Paul was praying for that. We ought to pray for one another. And so the fullness of God comes through yielding to the complete mastery of Christ in our lives.

That's what it is. I could illustrate it this way and I didn't bring a balloon with me. I would have embarrassed myself anyway. I might not be able to blow it up.

But if I were to have a balloon up here and blow that up, you know, say this big, you know, and then if I were to ask you, is it full?

You'd say, well, I guess so. And then I could blow on it some more and it'd get bigger. I could ask the question again, is it full? I could keep blowing that up.

I'd have to stop at some point and blow up in my face. But the point being is that a lot of people, a lot of believers, have, you know, we reach places in our lives where we have all the fullness of God we want.

[ 30 : 56 ] We just kind of, you know, settle in to a certain place in our spiritual growth, our understanding of God, and we just have all we want.

We don't really want any more. And that is why this prayer is so important. That we would be filled with all the fullness of God.

That's the principle. Then, the practice of it. That's where it gets real practical. And I want to give you three truths about the fullness of God that I think will help us understand how it is or can be and should be worked out practically in our lives.

This is very important to us. See, you know, we've looked at it doctrinally. Fullness of Christ. The fullness of God in Christ. Christ dwells in us.

All that's very doctrinal. But now what about looking at it practically? Experientially? You know, what is true of the believer who is growing in his or her knowledge of what it means to be filled with all the fullness of God?

[ 32 : 14 ] What's taking place? What does that look like? For a believer who is actually being filled with all the fullness of God, what does that look like? Well, three things.

It looks like submission to God. You want to take a pulse on whether or not you are growing, being filled with all the fullness of God.

Take a pulse on that. Then where are you in submitting your life to him? not just for salvation, not just for when things get tough and you need things from him, but I mean every day.

Your submission to him, to his word. That's the first thing it looks like. All that you are, see, this is the idea, all that you are is willingly under the complete control of God.

To be more specific, God controls your mind, that is the way you think, your thinking. God controls your heart in the sense of the way you're feeling.

[ 33 : 29 ] And God controls your will, that is the way you're acting. Mind, heart, will, your thinking, your feeling, your acting.

All of it, under the control, submitted to the control of God. That's what being filled with all the fullness of God looks like, submission. The first one, your mind.

Let's just think about that just a minute. Your thinking. Your thinking under his control. Did you know there's no such thing as a free thinker? No such thing as a free thinker apart from a relationship with Jesus Christ?

You know, people like, they want to be free thinkers, you know, there's whole societies built upon that. You know, free thinkers. There's no such thing apart from Jesus. Have you ever considered that?

Because your thoughts are either under the control of the world, your flesh, because of sin, corruption, or your thoughts are under the control of the Holy Spirit through a transformed mind. [ 34 : 33 ] And so the lost unbelievers have no real freedom at all. Not in anything, really. And not in their thinking. The saved, born again believers, are the only ones who have real freedom in this.

And, you know, we're saved. The saved have been transformed. Our minds have been renewed. And so we are now free to do what no lost person can do.

We're free to think spiritually. spiritually. Which is the only thing that really counts. We have that freedom. To think spiritually, to think, even to think strictly biblically.

And to think eternally. Lost people have no such freedom, no such ability. I heard about a pastor who was preaching against the sin of homosexuality and he was preaching kind of a series on that. And word got to the local gay community and they decided they would protest the church. And so they came into the worship service one Sunday morning and they were holding signs and doing all kinds of other very vulgar things.

[ 35 : 42 ] And the pastor instead of calling the police or having them escorted out, he welcomed them. He said, you're welcome to come and stay and be a part of our worship service. And someone asked him later why he did not get angry.

Why he did not throw them out, rebuke them and so forth. And the pastor, this wise pastor said, he said, I could no more be angry at them than I could be angry at a blind man who stepped on my toe. Now think about that. They don't have any clue. He said, they can't even think the way that pastor thinks. When we're filled with all the fullness of God, we have the mind of Christ.

We think the way he thinks. He is in control of our thinking. But not only our thinking, but our feeling. So our hearts as well.

Not just the mind, but also the heart and very importantly, the heart. Now, the one who experiences all the fullness of God has deep within his or her heart an all-controlling desire to love and glorify the Father in everything in his or her life.

[ 37 : 02 ] To love him and glorify him in everything. In effect, see, that becomes our heart's desire. And hopefully, every one of us are growing in that, progressing in that spiritually.

This is part of the reason for the importance of this prayer. One of the best illustrations of this from the pages of Scripture will be the case of Stephen, Deacon Stephen, remember?

I mean, they condemned him unjustly. They took up stones and they murdered him out of anger and hatred. And yet, even while the stones were crushing the very life out of Stephen, what did he do?

He prayed. Prayed for them. He prayed, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. That's a perfect example.

That's it. That's the fullness of God. When the fullness of God comes in, then the love of self goes out and we can even love and pray for our enemies and even our active enemies, aggressive enemies.

[ 38 : 14 ] So, submission of the mind, the way we think, the submission of the heart, the way we feel about things, and submission of the will is the third thing, the way we act.

Jesus said in John 6, 38, for I came down from heaven not to do my will, but the will of him that sent me. And so, everything Jesus, everywhere Jesus went, everything he said and everything he did was determined by the will of God, the Father, his Father.

And this same Jesus dwells in us, lives in us. And not only Jesus, but Paul also knew what it was to be filled with all the fullness of God.

The Apostle Paul was 100% lost in the will of God. Let me read Acts chapter 20 and verse 22.

These are Paul's own words.

In verse 20 he said, how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you and taught you. That's starting with verse 20.

[ 39 : 24 ] Publicly, house to house, testifying to the Jews and to the Greeks also. Repentance toward God and faith to our Lord Jesus Christ. And see, now I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

But none of these things move me, nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy in the ministry which I receive from the Lord Jesus to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Who was in charge of Paul's life? Whose will was he seeking to fulfill? Not his own. In fact, on one occasion in Acts chapter 21, we'll not look at that passage, but the friends of Paul were pleading with him, even in tears, not to go to Jerusalem.

Sounds very similar to those who, apostles, didn't want Jesus to go to Jerusalem. And they were pleading with Paul not because they knew he would be imprisoned and that he would very likely be put to death and so forth.

And what did Paul say about that? Well, I think it's in verse 11, somewhere around there. He said this. Now listen to what he said to them. He said, what do you mean by weeping?

[ 40 : 49 ] Weeping and breaking my heart, he said. He said, I'm ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

Wow. That's dedication to the will of God. His whole life was lost in the will of God. In fact, after he said that, the Bible says his friends knew that he would not be persuaded and they said, the will of the Lord be done.

So they understood exactly what Paul was saying. He got through to them. He was going there because of the will of God. And Paul was in submission to God's absolute control of his will.

His will. The very actions of his life. So we're talking about the practice of it. Submission to God. That's the first one. And that's what it is to be filled with all the fullness of God.

That's what it looks like. Not only submission, but satisfaction. Satisfaction. That's the fullness of that's what the fullness of God looks like.

[ 41 : 50 ] That is what I mean is that all of your spiritual desires. And spiritual ambitions. Are being satisfied.

In your relationship with Christ. Christ. And there are a number of them. Like the desire to know God intimately. Like Paul said. We quoted this passage a moment ago in Philippians 3.

To know Christ. To know him. The desire to know him intimately. I like what David wrote in Psalm 42 verse 12.

And this is that famous passage in the King James. It says as the heart panteth after the water brooks. A heart is a deer. It means he's thirsty beyond anything he's ever experienced.

He's thirsting. The deer. As the deer pants after. Thirsts after the water brooks. So pants my soul after thee, O God.

[ 42 : 51 ] That's a marvelous psalm. He said my soul thirsts for God. Thirsts for him. For the living God. That's how we ought to have.

desire we ought to have. Can that be satisfied? It can be. That's what it looks like to be filled with the fullness of God. And not only desiring to know God but also our desire to love him.

Do you have that desire? And so I do love him. Don't you have a desire to love him even more? I hope so. Someone wrote these words long ago.

Lord it is my chief complaint that my love is weak and faint. You ever feel like that? You know it's kind of to look at the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians the love chapter and say Lord I long to be just like that.

In regard to you in regard to those around me. The desire to love. To love God and to love God's people. The fullness of God is the satisfaction of that ambition.

[ 44 : 03 ] To know God. To love God. And let me add a third one. The desire to be right with him. To be right with you. You ever get sick of sinning? You ever get sick of doing that?

You ever thought of it in those terms? I'm sick of this. Now sick of sinning. I get. You ever get tired of failing God?

We all do you know. You ever get tired of it? Just sick and tired of it? You know it's within every true born again believer spirit filled believer that there is a desire for holiness.

For purity. Before God. Righteousness. Jesus said in Matthew 5, 6 blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after what's the word?

Righteousness. For they shall be filled. What does that mean? Satisfied. That's a description of every believer.

[ 45 : 13 ] The problem is we can sometimes lose sight of it. I mean I think Jesus in the Beatitudes is describing what a believer is not what a believer ought to become.

It's what we are but we can lose sight of it and other things can cloud our vision and other things can be allowed to creep in to halt at least temporarily that desire.

But if we truly when we truly desire hunger and thirst for righteousness then we will be filled. We'll be satisfied. That's what it means.

That's what it looks like to be filled with the fullness of God. And let me give you another one. The desire to serve God. You have that desire to serve Him? And to serve Him in power?

Effectiveness? I like the way J.B. Phillips translates Colossians 128. It's Paul of course speaking in Colossians.

[ 46 : 13 ] He says we proclaim Christ. That is what I'm working at all the time with all the strength that God gives me.

I tell you there's nothing and you know it to be true. There's nothing like the experience of serving God. No matter what it is you're doing. Nothing like the experience of serving God in His strength and His power.

And you know that. There's nothing like it. Alright so we're talking about the practice of it.

Submission? He's in control. Satisfaction? He satisfies all of your spiritual desires and hungers and thirsts.

And then this is a big one. insufficiency. Sufficiency. That is every sense we have of want.

Every feeling of emptiness and insufficiency. And we feel that don't we? Don't you? Feelings of insufficiency to strive for and desire a place that place in your spiritual growth where all that feeling of emptiness and insufficiency is gone.

[ 47 : 39 ] Gone from your life. And that Christ has truly become your sufficiency. I'm not talking about sinless perfection. There's some who would associate that with some level of sinlessness or perfection or perfect love as John Wesley articulated it.

No, I'm talking about reaching the place in your life when Christ is all. He's all. And not only that, He's enough.

To find all of your sufficiency in Him. That's what being filled with the fullness, all the fullness of God is all about. You know, I know a good many Christians including myself who need to be freshly acquainted or reacquainted with what Jesus said in John 6, 35 where He said, He who comes to me, that's present tense, continuous action, He that keeps on coming to me again and again and again keeps on coming, he or she shall never hunger.

Never hunger. Can you imagine reaching that place in your Christian life and growth? That's what Paul was praying for, for the Ephesian believers.

Are you hungry? Are you thirsty? Well, right now I'm thirsty, but that's a different kind of thirst. Are you unhappy sometimes?

[ 49 : 06 ] Dissatisfied? Discouraged? About anything? Depressed? Facing insurmountable things? Are you down in the dumps?

Ever feel like that? Ever have those experiences? Some of you are right now. Do you find, you know, yourself lacking something?

There's some insufficiency? Do you have, have you ever experienced a sense of emptiness and purposelessness and, and, you know, kind of a hopeless type of feeling?

Then that's a sure sign that you've not kept on coming to Jesus. See, those very feelings, those very experiences of emptiness and insufficiency and discouragement and, and all those other things we could say, those are flags.

Those are, by the grace of God, God allows you to experience those things so that you can know that you have stopped coming to Jesus and you have kept, you have stopped believing in Him.

[ 50 : 17 ] Not believing in Him in the sense of losing your salvation, but keep on believing and trusting Him because He said, if you keep on coming to me and believing in me, you shall be satisfied.

You will never thirst. That's sufficiency. consistency. We might learn something from the Apostle Paul about this. We learn a lot of things from him.

Listen to what he wrote in Philippians 4, 11, and I'll give this to you also in the Phillips translation because I just like the way he put it. He said, and this is Paul speaking, I've learned to be content whatever the circumstances may be.

I know how, now, how to live when things are difficult. And I know how to live when things are prosperous. In general and in particular, I have learned the secret of facing either poverty or plenty. I'm ready for anything through the strength of the one who lives within me. That's what Paul said. Can we experience the same as Paul? Well, of course.

[ 51 : 22 ] Of course we can. And by the way, where do you suppose Paul was when he wrote those lofty words and confident words? Where was he? In prison. I mean, that adds a whole other level to the amazement of what Paul wrote.

He could sense that. In fact, Paul could go on to say in verse 18 of that same chapter, he said, I have all and abound. He's in prison for crying out loud.

And he says, I have all and abound. Or again, as J.B. Phillips put it, I have everything I want. In fact, I have more than I ever wanted. Yes, I am quite content.

It brings out the emotion of what Paul was saying. That's what it looks like to be filled with all the fullness of God. The practice of it. What is it? The submission.

Submission of all I am. Satisfaction of all I desire. It is sufficiency of all I need and want.

[ 52 : 32 ] And then the last thing, that's the practice. One more very quickly, the possibility of it. Because right about now, if you're like me, you might be thinking, man, this is impossible.

This is beyond me. How could I ever experience that? You know, pastor, you don't have any idea what's going on in my life. Well, maybe I do.

Maybe I don't. That doesn't matter. And yet, we can't help but feel that way. You know, I'll never make it. Well, not only is that why we should pray for one another in this, but also we ought to look at what comes next.

How Paul wraps all this up, concludes this in Ephesians. And it's right there in verse 20. Now, to him who is able.

You say, I'm not able. I mean, we just, you know, we just kind of put all this, pastor, you just put all this out here about being filled with all the fullness of God.

[ 53 : 43 ] And you've described what that is, what it ought to look like. And I'm thinking, man, that's beyond me. And you're absolutely right.

And that's why Paul concluded with this, now to him who is able. Able to what?

Do. Exceedingly. Abundantly. Above.

I mean, he just piles it on here. Above all that we should ask or think. According to the power that works in us.

To him be glory. That's why if we ever get to thinking that somehow we can achieve this fullness by our own self-discipline.

[ 54 : 43 ] There's nothing wrong with discipline. But a total reliance upon self. If we ever get to thinking that we can reach this place being filled with the fullness of God through self-discipline or some special Bible study or if we ever, ever get to thinking that we can lay hold of this because we're smart enough or determined enough, then who gets the glory if you get it?

You do. Of course, you're not going to get it because you're not able. It's to him who's able to do exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or think.

To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. Amen. Thank you.