

Ephesians 3:17-21 by Wayne Barber

PREVIOUS [Messages on this page](#)

NEXT

[Ephesians 3:17-18: A PRAYER FOR FULLNESS, PART 4](#)

[Ephesians 3:16-19: A PRAYER FOR FULLNESS, PART 5](#)

[Ephesians 3:16-21: A PRAYER FOR FULLNESS, PART 6](#)

Ephesians 3:17-18: A PRAYER FOR FULLNESS, PART 4

by Dr. Wayne Barber

Ephesians 3:17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

Let's turn to Ephesians 3. We are talking about a prayer for fullness. Can you imagine this much in a prayer? If you will study the prayers of Paul in the New Testament, they are just overwhelming. What an individual! How he loved God, and how God manifested Him-self in his life. We call this "A Prayer for Fullness." You see, Paul is praying for the Ephesian believers. He is praying that they might live the normal Christian life, that they might learn to let Jesus be Jesus in their life, that they might learn to tap into the fullness of everything that God offers. When you see people like that, they are not frivolous. There is something that exudes out of them. There is a joy in knowing the fullness of Christ. You can know all about what Christ has done for you, but if you haven't tapped into it, you have missed the whole point of why He came into your life.

That is what this prayer is all about. We are looking at the last part of verses 17 and 18, but let's back up to verse 16 and pick it up there:

"that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge."

Verse 17 says,

"so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" or "by the means of faith."

Now I want you to know that faith is what accommodates the Lord Jesus who resides in our life. Do you want to accommodate Him? Do you want to make Him feel at home? Do you want to let Him dwell in your life?

FAITH

Faith is what accommodates Him. What do I mean by faith? Well, it was by faith that He entered your life to begin with, when faith was exercised in who He is and what He has come to do and when you bowed before Him. You see, the word "faith" doesn't mean just to mentally understand. It has the idea also of bowing before Him. The deity of Christ is built into the word "faith." The Greek word *pistis*, comes from the word *peitho*, which means to be so overwhelmed, so persuaded that you are brought to your knees. That is when worship begins. Salvation is when you bow and surrender your will to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the essence of what faith is all about. When that faith was exercised, Christ entered your life. When faith continues and you continue to bow before Him and surrender to Him, then He dwells in your life by the means of faith. You see, it is what accommodates Him.

Christ is at home in the life of a person who loves Him, loves His Word and is surrendered to His will. Christ is at home in that person, and that person is going to experience the dwelling of Jesus within him. He is going to experience the manifestation of a divine power that he doesn't have on his own.

When I surrender and say "yes" to Jesus, Christ begins to live in me. I tap in to that ability that I would not have had if I had not exercised faith in Him. So we accommodate Him. We make Him feel at home by the means of faith. If I am not trusting Him, if I am not surrendering to Him, then obviously He is uncomfortable in my life.

Well, the result of **being strengthened in the inner man with power by the means of the Spirit, letting Christ dwell in our life by being accommodated by our faith** is an amazing love that is birthed within us. That is what we want to see. It is amazing. I go to different churches and the preacher will tell me,

"Our people don't love one another."

I can't make people love anybody. If you will ever come to love Jesus and let Him dwell in your life and accommodate Him with faith

and say,

"God, whatever Your Word and Your Will says, I will do,"

then you will tap into something. That love will well up in you and you will love one another. The most incredible thing is the love that is produced when the relationship is what God wants it to be.

There are two things I want you to see about this amazing love that is the result of letting Jesus strengthen us with power in the inner man by the means of the Spirit. When you learn to surrender to Him and accommodate Him by faith, the love just exudes in your life.

First of all, this love is the result of being strengthened with power and of Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. I really believe this with all my heart. I have really wrestled with this passage. Some people will say,

"Oh no, when you were saved you were grounded in this love. You were rooted in this love."

Now wait a minute. Look with me in verse 17:

"so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love."

Are we rooted and grounded in love before we start allowing the Lord Jesus to empower us? Or is being rooted and grounded in love the result of our accommodating Him by faith, by allowing His Spirit to rule and reign in our hearts?

In Colossians 2:7 Paul says something very similar. Let's begin with verse 6:

"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude."

Now understand something. I am firmly rooted into Christ the moment He comes into my life. That is a plant nobody can rip up. I can't lose my salvation. I am firmly established in Him the moment I exercise my faith in Him and He comes into my life.

Let's go back to Ephesians 3:17, and I am going to ask the question again: Is "being rooted in His love, being grounded in His love" the same thing he is talking about in Colossians 2? I don't think so because here in Ephesians he changes it. I know I am firmly established in Christ, but to be rooted and established and grounded in His love requires faith on my part. When I begin to accommodate Him, when I begin to obey Him, when I begin to yield to Him, then I become rooted and grounded in love. The difference of the construction here and the construction in Colossians 2 is he uses the perfect tense twice in Ephesians. Now, what does that mean? It means a state of being based on something that has taken place.

Look at the verse carefully. It appears to me that being rooted and being grounded hinge off those first little words of verse 17,

"In order that Christ may dwell in your hearts and so that you, being rooted and grounded in love."

In other words, I am not going to know this love we are talking about until I am willing to die and yield to Him and accommodate Him in my life. Being rooted and being grounded in His love is a result of a personal surrender of my heart unto Him.

What does it mean to be rooted in love? The word is *rhizoo*. It means "to be strengthened, to be firmly fixed, to be stabilized by the roots." Now think with me for a second. I remember planting some trees in our front yard about two years ago. One night I had to dig one of them back up. It was too heavy for me to move, so we had to protect those roots on that tree during the night. There was a big bag on the bottom of it. I was noticing that tree the other day. It has been two years now, and I have been watching it go through the seasons. I am watching something happen to that tree sitting out in my front yard, the one I had to dig back up and put back into the soil. It had such a tremendous root system. I mean the ball on the bottom of that thing was huge. I could hardly move it. I had to get some help to even drag it over to the hole. Those roots somehow have taken hold and have gone deep into the soil. Somehow they are finding the nourishment that is necessary for that plant to grow.

I get that same idea when it says "you are rooted in the love of Christ." Listen, when I begin to exercise my faith in Him, I get the idea that He is saying the roots of my life are reaching out for the divine ability that I can't produce, but that He will give to me to go deeper and deeper into the soil of His unconditional love. He says we have a divine ability. Folks, the greatest divine ability God can give you or me is to love Him and to love one another unconditionally. The roots that dig deep into the soil of His love begin to saturate my life. You don't know that if you are not letting Christ be at home in your heart. You haven't got a clue. Sure, you are trying to live the Christian life on your own strength. You have not yet understood. If there is a room of your life that you are renting out, then you are not yet cooperating and accommodating Christ by faith. As a result of that, you are missing out on the love that He wants to be rooted deep into your life. He says you are rooted in love. That love springs forth in your life as you draw on the divine ability that He has to feed you and to give you in the inner man.

Paul also says, **"to be grounded in love."** What does it mean to be grounded in love? It is a different idea. Not only are we rooted, but we are grounded in His love. The word for "grounded" is a word that refers to a foundation, a firm foundation. Again Paul uses a word that helps express the firm foundation that love becomes. In other words, I am not only rooted into it, I am built upon it. Not only does everything spring forth from it, but everything is built upon it.

If you understand what love is, which we are going to do in a minute, then you will begin to realize that this is not of man. This has to be of God. This has to be coming out of the nutrients of the soil of His love. What God is and who God is has to be drawn out of that. What is this love?

It is agape love.

First of all, let me share with you that it is unconditional. What is the difference? Apart from Christ all you know is conditional love. I love you because you please me or do something for me. I want something out of you. That is all anybody does. You may be coming to church day by day, week by week. I might be doing the same thing. If I am not reaching out to that divine ability that He has within me, then what is happening is, I am not tapping into His resource. The love that comes out of me is nothing more than conditional, humanistic, colored-up love. That is all it is. It is self-seeking. It is totally selfish. God's love is not. Agape is not. It is unconditional. It is not "I love you because..." Well, it is in a sense. I love you because He loved me. That is about the only "because" you can put in there. You don't have to do anything to please me. You don't have to do anything to get my love. You don't have to earn it. It is just yours. It is something I haven't even really chosen to do. It is something He is doing in me. Yes, there are choices made, but it is something that is welling up in my life. It is unconditional. It is selfless, sincere, a servant's love. It is a love that is so committed to the welfare of the individual that you would do anything that it cost you to make sure that this other person is loved the way God would love them. That is this kind of love.

That is what this world has been looking for. It is not fabricated. You can't work it up. It only comes as you and me and all of us begin to learn to tap into the fullness of what God has offered at salvation. When we begin to accommodate Christ by faith in our life, when we begin to allow His Spirit to strengthen us with power in the inner man, then and only then do we realize we are being rooted and grounded in love. Everything that springs out of us and everything we do builds upon it. All of it is housed with that marvelous agape love. We are saturated with it, and it begins to exude out of us. We accept people. We don't try to make them like ourselves. We don't walk around taking our convictions and beating somebody else over the head with it. God in us just reaches out and causes us to love the people around us.

Look over in Galatians 5:22, where Paul says a very similar thing. He talks about fruit. You know fruit is that which is produced, not by the branch, but by the sap and all that is inside the vine. The vine is like a root, and when you tap down into the soil of Christ, what is produced and what flows out, the fruit of that is love. It says in verse 22 of Galatians 5,

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love."

Maybe we need to understand why he says, "But the fruit." Let's back up a little bit. Let's find out what it is like when you don't tap into it. Let's find out what our flesh is really like. Now folks, you are either tapping into Christ by accommodating Him in your life, or you are tapping into self which is going to do nothing but give you a dead end street.

Let me show you. If you tap into self, here is what is going to come out of it. Galatians 5:19 says,

"Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

That doesn't mean that somebody cannot slip and fall, but this is what is resident in the flesh.

Now in verse 22, it shows you what is resident in the Spirit, when you tap into Him, when He strengthens you with divine ability in the inner man.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love,..."

Paul then shows you the manifestations of that love. Joy is the first one he mentions. Joy doesn't mean frivolity. It is talking about something on the inside that is so deep and untouchable by any human hand that nobody can take it away from you. Folks, the world could be falling apart around you and you would be filled with the joy, the fruit of God's Spirit, the manifestation of His love. You have tapped into it. You have surrendered. You have allowed Christ to dwell in your life and by doing that, the roots of your life have dug deep into the soil of the nourishment of His love. Joy is the overwhelming by-product of that love. Paul goes on to say,

"... peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

Almost every one of them have something to do with relationships to somebody else. Folks, I want to tell you something. Your church will be a loving church only to the degree that all of us individually come to Christ and say, "I want to accommodate you in my life. I want you to be at home in my heart. Lord, I don't want to do anything that would offend you. I don't want to say anything, listen to anything, or think anything that would offend you. Lord, I just want to live my life focused on you." When we do that, knowing how desperate our flesh is, and reach down into the soil of who He is, that which flows out is agape love.

You don't have to tell somebody you love them. They will know. They will see it by that which God is doing in your heart and in your life. It is the result of being strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit. It is the result of letting Christ dwell in your life. Everything we do springs from it. Everything we do builds upon it. It houses all the gifts. It houses everything else. It is this love that God gives to us. It is overwhelming, amazing love..

Secondly, it is the reason why only those who surrender to Him can understand the fullness of God's love. You will never comprehend it until you have tapped into it. I want to show you this. He says in verse 18:

"may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge."

Let me just see if I can get a little bit out of this. It ought to be obvious to us by now why there are certain people in the body of Christ who don't have a clue about what it means to love God or one another. They are people who don't surrender to Him and aren't living with consistency in their life. Now that doesn't mean perfection. Listen, when the Holy Spirit is in your life, He convicts you of righteousness but He also convicts you of sin. When He convicts you of sin, you deal with it. It is a lifestyle of simply letting Him control what is going on in your life. We won't reach perfection, but when you have somebody like that, they can comprehend the love of Christ. People who don't do it have no clue as to what we are talking about.

The verse goes on to say,

"the breadth and length and height and depth."

Let me just show you something. I don't really believe Paul means to make dimensions on it. I believe what he is doing by using those terms is just to describe its vastness. If you would put some dimensions on it, let's give it out of Ephesians. Look in 2:11-18. That is the breadth of it. I won't read it all to you, but the whole gist of it is found in verses 14 and 15.

"For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two (Jew and Gentile) into one new man, thus establishing peace."

Now folks, if you want to see the breadth of it, how far it reaches out, it touches Jew and it touches Gentile. Is there anybody else on earth? No, there are only two people groups, Jew and Gentile. It makes them both one in the body of Christ. That is the breadth of it.

If you want to see the length of it, look in 1:4-5:

"just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will."

He chose us before the foundation of the world. Folks, that's the length of it!

The height of it is in chapter 1. Look at how high our blessings are stored. It says in verse 3,

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

It reaches all the way to the throne of God. The blessings are in Christ, and now we can tap into them.

To find the depth of it look in 2:1-4. How far did He have to go to reach man? How depraved was man?

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God,... "

That's the depth of it. How far did God have to reach to get you? Folks, listen, it is a vast love that we only can begin to comprehend when we have surrendered to the One who is the embodiment of it, the Lord Jesus Himself. As we are nourished by

that love and sustained by that love, it springs up out of us. Everything is built upon it. It is the house that wraps up all the gifts. It is the wrapping. It is the house. It is whatever you want to say. By that we learn to comprehend the length, the depth, the height, and the vastness of God's love.

Then Paul goes on in Ephesians 3:19. He says,

"and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge."

The word "know" there is the word that means to know by experience, the love of Christ. Who are the people comprehending the love of Christ? The people who are experiencing it, the people who are living in it day by day, the people who are allowing His love to be received into their life, the people who, when they confess, understand that His love has so provided for them in the blood that He will cleanse. The people who are experiencing it are the people that are comprehending it. You don't experience it until you let Jesus dwell in your hearts, until you learn to let the Spirit have control in your life. That love begins to transform us.

Ephesians 3:16-19: A PRAYER FOR FULLNESS, PART 5

by Dr. Wayne Barber

[Return to TOP of page](#)

Ephesians 3:17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.

This prayer sums up what Paul says in chapters 1-3 and sets up what he is about to say in chapters 4-6. The prayer is the key, the pivotal point, the hinge of the whole book. This is a Prayer for Fullness.

Paul starts the prayer in 3:1,

"For this reason I, Paul,..."

Then he stops and for 13 verses he puts everything in a parenthesis. Paul is so overwhelmed with the mystery of how the Jew and the Gentile can be made into one new man in Christ Jesus. He was overwhelmed with the mystery of the church, the mystery of the new creation, the mysterious union of Christ living in us and of all men being equal in Christ. No one receives more than the other. All of us receive the fullness of what God offers. Paul was so overwhelmed. He talks in chapter 3 of how the mystery was revealed to him, how he explained it and how he proclaimed it.

Then he starts his prayer again in verse 14. I think the Ephesian church needed a dose of encouragement from Paul on how to tap into what they already had in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the very essence of this prayer. I think we all need to be encouraged. Remember, we are to be strengthened with an ability that is beyond ourselves. This is what Christianity is all about. It is not living like Jesus. It is Jesus being Jesus in us. He lives in us, wants to be at home in us and dwell in us. I think the reason we need to be encouraged, just like the Ephesians, is because many times we forget what we are like apart from the ability of God that He has now given us in the person of His Spirit. We forget what our abilities are like compared to God's abilities in us. Many of us are trying to live like Jesus. You know that doesn't work. You can't live like Jesus. But Jesus, in your cooperating with Him, can live out through you His character and His life.

Perhaps many of us are a little frustrated. Perhaps we need to go back and look at what our ability is like apart from being strengthened in the inner man through the means of the Spirit of God.

I was reading in Romans where Paul said to the Roman church,

"You know, I've got a few things to share with you. I am going to remind you of some things. I have said them to you before, but I really believe you need to hear them again."

I think that is the hour we are living in. We need to understand, folks, not only what we have in Christ, not only how to tap into it, but we need to realize what we are like apart from His strengthening in our life. Some of us have forgotten that. Perhaps you have strayed away from the Word of God. You have been so busy **doing** that you have stopped **being**. You have not been in the Word of God. Maybe it has been weeks and weeks and weeks since you have really been in the Word of God. You've been busy. Maybe you haven't had a chance to fellowship and don't really know what is going on in the body and what they are learning together as a body. You haven't really gotten back into being strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit of God. I want to tell you to be careful because the potential of evil is all around us. It is resident in our flesh.

We are going to read the qualities in Galatians 5 of what a lost man is like, of what the old flesh used to produce. Whether flesh is saved or flesh is lost, flesh is still flesh. That potential of evil is still resident with us until the day we die and our bodies have been

glorified. James says all of those lusts reside in our flesh. We battle every day with our ability versus God's ability in our life. What is one like compared to the other? Well, let's look. In Galatians 5:19-21 Paul says,

"Now the deeds of the flesh are evident,"

They are very apparent. When a person is not being strengthened with divine ability within his life, it is very obvious in him. Here is what he becomes in bondage to. It says first of all their deeds are immoral. Make no mistake about it, that is sexual immorality. I am not saying it in any way except the way it is. You say,

"I am a believer. Jesus is in my heart."

Friend, if you are not being strengthened daily by the Spirit of God in your inner man, if you are not letting Jesus be Jesus in your life, then sexual immorality is a struggle that you are going through. Many of you may have fallen into bondage to it. The old flesh is still susceptible.

"Impurity" is the word that means "the acts of uncleanness."

"Sensuality" is the word for indecent acts that shock others. We have been reminded and shocked by what we have heard in the Christian community over the past several years. How can that happen to Christians? I tell you how it happens. It is when people don't pay attention to the richness of their salvation and they are not willing to tap into the divine abilities God has given them. They are not letting the Spirit of God dwell in their hearts. As a result, this is what comes out of it, things which shock the world.

"Idolatry" is worship of everything but God. "Sorcery" is the word *pharmakeia*, which is where we get the word "drugs" from.

The word translated **"enmities"** is the word that means "hostility that will take one's own vengeance out on another." Not Christians! Yes, Christians, if they are not being strengthened with divine ability which is the character of Christ. They will use whatever is handy. Most of the time they will take their vengeance out with their tongue. Does that happen in this church? Absolutely. Everyone is not tapping into what God has given them. We all know that. We all struggle this way. We need to be reminded that the normal Christian life is not living as we please and then coming to church on Sunday. The normal Christian life is daily abandoning ourselves to whatever God wants in our life and letting His divine ability be produced in us.

"Strife" is a word that refers to contentious attitudes towards others that always keep things stirred up and confused.

"Jealousy" is the word that refers to when you are offended because somebody is living a higher lifestyle than you are able to live. That is what jealousy means. It makes you mad.

"Outbursts of anger" refers to tempers that flare when bitterness surfaces.

"Disputes" is the word for those who seek their own way at the expense of others. They are always causing disputes because of their own selfish interests and their own selfish opinions.

"Dissensions" is what happens when we are always causing disputes. People take sides and it results in factions. They begin to divide up and seek to conquer. That is what happens when people aren't tapping into what their salvation is all about. It is not a transforming thing that has happened in their life. The word "factions" is really better translated "heresies" or "sects." You see, a sect is anything built around a man.

"Envy" means "never content with what we have." It goes a step further, though. Jealousy is being jealous of a lifestyle above you, envy is when you seek to take away what somebody else rightfully has, even his joy in Jesus. "Drunkness" speaks of itself. Since flesh will not turn to God, you have to get a fix some other way. "Carousing" is talking about partying and frivolity, that which results from not depending upon the Lord Jesus who strengthens us in the inner man.

Now Paul doesn't finish the list. He says, **"and things like these."** Why? You mean to tell me that all of us have resident with us not only the riches of Christ at salvation in the inner man, but we also have resident in our bodies the lusts of the flesh that cause us the problems and give us the potential for evil at a given moment? Yes. We need to be reminded of our ability versus God's ability. Only God's ability strengthens us and makes us mighty. Man's ability only brings a dead-end result, as we have just seen in Galatians 5.

With that in mind let's look at Paul's prayer once again. Look at Ephesians 3:16:

"that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory,..."

What are the riches of His glory? The riches of His glory are found in 1:1-3:13, everything Paul has said about what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, 1:3 says every spiritual blessing. Whatever you need is in Christ in the area of the spiritual realm. It has already been given to us. It is yours. You don't have to go someplace to get it. You've got it. He lives in you.

Paul says,

"according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened."

The word "**strengthened**" means "to be made mighty." It is the word that speaks of dominion. Let His character be manifest in your life and you will see the greatest miracle. You will begin to see what normal Christianity is.

Well, Paul goes on. He says,

"... be strengthened with power."

That's the Greek word *dunamis*. It is the word that means divine ability, divine capability. God wants to strengthen you with an ability you don't have apart from Him.

Now he says,

"by the means of His Spirit in the inner man."

God had put His person in you. God the Holy Spirit lives there. Why? To strengthen you, to make you able to do what you couldn't do before you received the Lord Jesus, to make you able to love your wife when your wife doesn't love you, to make you able to love your husband when your husband doesn't love Jesus the way you love Jesus, to make you able to forgive, to make you able to do the things that you couldn't do before. There has been a total change in your life.

Verse 17 continues the prayer,

"so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

The word "dwell" has the idea of a person being in a house and being at home. In other words, he wants Christ to be at home in his life, in his business, when you fill out your income tax, in whatever you do, when you take your checkbook, when you take your thoughts. Christ is at home, settled in. He is a resident now. He didn't rent a room, He came in and purchased the whole house. He came in to rule and reign.

How do we accommodate Him and make Him feel at home? By faith, through faith. Faith is trusting Him and obeying Him. It's believing that God can when you can't. Then Paul goes on and says, "*and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love." When are we rooted and grounded in love? When we first get saved? Oh, no. Yes, it comes in. The potential and the reservoir is there. Colossians says that. You are rooted into Christ. But when do your roots go deep into the reservoir? When are you settled into His love? Only when you surrender to His Spirit do you become rooted and grounded in His love. Both words, rooted and grounded, are in the perfect tense to show a state of being that depends upon a specific action. What have I done? I have bowed down. What has happened? I have tapped into the roots of His love. What springs out of me is that divine love of Christ, that unconditional love. Everything I do is built upon it. Everything I do is wrapped around it.

Verses 18-19 says,

"may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge."

Let me just summarize that by saying you can never teach this. You have to live it. You don't discover it individually as much as you discover it corporately. This is what is so exciting. When the whole body of Christ begins to tap into and be rooted in His love, then you learn with all the saints what the love of Christ is. How do you learn it? That word "knowledge" is the word participatory knowledge. You experience it for yourself. As you experience that love, interacting with people, you begin to comprehend what the love of Christ is all about.

Look at the last phrase of verse 19. This phrase sums up his whole prayer. He says,

"that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."

What in the world does that mean? It is overwhelming that God wants to let us experience His fullness and has offered it to us. What does it mean to be filled up to all the fullness of God?

Let me ask you a question. What is dominating your life? What are you filled up with? You see, whatever you are filled up with controls and dominates what you are. It affects your relationships with your wife, your husband and your children. They are directly affected by what you are filled up with. Paul said, "I want you to be filled up to all the fullness of God."

The first thing I want you to see is Paul is praying that all of God would dominate all that you are. In other words, that all of God

would dominate all of you. I picked that word "dominate" very carefully because the word "**filled**" has that implied in the word. The word is *pleroo*. It is the word that means "to be filled to the brim." If you fill a glass of water and fill it to the brim, that's *pleroo*. It is filled full. There is no room for anything else. There is the implied meaning of satisfaction. You have a satisfied glass if it is full of water. What is a glass for? To be filled up. When you put the liquid to the top it must be satisfied. Nothing else is needed to satisfy the glass.

So in light of Paul's prayer, Paul is saying when we are empty of sin and we are empty of self and filled up with the fullness of God, then we begin to understand what satisfaction is all about. There is also the implicit meaning of dominance. Whatever fills a person dominates that person. What are you filled with? What is coming out of your life? Look at your life. Are you filled with fear and jealousy or are you filled with the Holy Spirit of God?

Let's take the word *pleroo*, and run it through the New Testament. From Acts to Revelation it is found about 29 times. I picked a few of them to give you an idea of what it means to be filled, and therefore, to be dominated by something other than the Holy Spirit of God.

Turn first to Acts 4:8. Every one of us have had this occur in our life. It makes us understand why Paul had to remind believers to be strengthened with power in the inner man because we forget. We forget that whatever fills us controls us. That is the way we act. In Acts 4:8 we find Simon Peter filled with the Holy Spirit:

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, '... Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified.'"

Whew! Can you see that hand go out and that finger pointing? I am sure those guys backed off and said, "Man, what has happened to him?" Four or five weeks before he wouldn't even admit he knew Jesus Christ. What dominated him five weeks before was not the Holy Spirit. What dominated him was fear for his own life. As a result, he cowered down and wouldn't even speak up in the crowd when he could have associated himself with Jesus Christ. You see, when you are filled with the Spirit of God, you are dominated by the Spirit. Every area of your life is dominated and mastered by the Spirit of God. Boldness is one of the first things you are going to find associated with that filling.

Look with me in Acts 13:52 and we find that word *pleroo*, again. Remember it means to be filled full, to the brim, to be dominated by. In Acts 13:52 Paul is on his first missionary journey. He has been over in Iconium, Lystra and Derby. He has had all kinds of problems, but he has faithfully equipped the saints.

"And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."

Do you see something associating itself with being filled with the Spirit of God? When you are dominated by His Spirit, the ruling attitude in your life is the joy of knowing who is in control and the joy of trusting Him.

Let me show you the converse to that. There are people in the New Testament who the word "filled" is used to describe, but they chose not to be filled with the Spirit of God. Let's see what they were filled with and how it effected other people around them. Look in chapter 5 of Acts and verse 17. In the context of this passage people are being healed of all kinds of diseases. This is the early church. The Spirit of God has come in power, and people are literally overwhelmed. God is doing a great work, but look at the religious lost who continually refused the power that can change them into the character of Christ. Verse 17 says,

"But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates [that is the sect of the Sadducees], and they were filled with jealousy; and they laid hands on the apostles, and put them in a public jail."

You know, there's a principle here, something to think about. One of things I noticed is when I am filled with anything other than the Holy Spirit of God, especially jealousy, I will offend and imprison, with my words or whatever I do, the very people God is seeking to use. It always works that way.

Turn to Acts 19:20. Paul is in Ephesus. Remember Artemis was the Satanic idol there, the big temple there on top of the hill in Ephesus. You can still see how majestic it was even to this day. People came from all over the world to see it. It was filled with Satanic influence, so God countered that with miraculous things that Paul would do. In verse 20 look at what was happening. It says,

"So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing."

Every time you see the words "growing" and "prevailing," what can you look out for? You see, people who aren't dominated by the Spirit of God are dominated by something else. When people are around them who are filled with the Spirit of God, they become a threat automatically.

Look at verse 24. There was a man by the name of Demetrius who was a silversmith. He had picked up on this idolatry stuff, and he was making little idols of Artemis out of the silver. As people came from all over the world to go to the Temple, he was selling these little things for a profit. Look at what it says.

"For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen."

To put that in 20th century terms, he was a self-made, smart businessman. But people who were dominated by the Spirit of God were threatening his business.

Look at verse 25:

"these he gathered together with the workmen of similar *trades* and said, 'Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business.'"

Take that statement and match it with what God's Word says. Does our prosperity depend upon our business? What does it depend upon? It depends on our God.

Well, I am going to show you what these people did. Look at verse 26:

"And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods *at all*. And not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship should even be dethroned from her magnificence."

In verse 28 I want to show you what one man's rage did to effect another group of men, who had no idea, and then a whole city. Verse 28 says,

"And when they heard *this* and were filled with rage, they *began* crying out, saying, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!' And the city was filled [*pleroo*] with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater."

Now what in the world stirred up all those people? One man who was filled with the wrong thing. What are you filled with? It is dominating your life. It is effecting your home and your church. We need to be in prayer. We need to get with it and stop playing games at the foot of the cross.

Romans 1:29 tells us what we used to be filled with. It should never bother us when sinners sin because sinners don't know how to do anything but sin. But when the saints of God start living like the sinners, we've got problems. Verse 29 says,

"being filled [*pleroo*] with all unrighteousness, wickedness, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them."

Why do they do that? Verse 28 tells us "they did not see fit to acknowledge God." Do you know what the word "acknowledge" means? It means to bow down to and allow Him into every room of your house, letting Him dwell, letting Him be who He is in your life.

Perhaps there is something else you are being filled with. I hope not. I don't like this passage. You don't like it. None of us like it, but I think we need to be reminded of it, don't you?

Ephesians 3:16-21: A PRAYER FOR FULLNESS, PART 6

by Dr. Wayne Barber

[Return to TOP of page](#)

Let's read the prayer together, all the way through. Paul says in verse 14,

"For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you might be filled up to all the fulness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever

and ever. Amen."

Remember we saw last time that the phrase, "be filled up to all the fulness of God," means whatever we are filled with will dominate us. The prayer says we are to be controlled and empowered by the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit of God who empowers us gives us that divine ability far beyond what we could come up with ourselves. If we choose not to be filled with the Spirit of God, not to be dominated with the fulness of God, then we have obviously chosen to be filled with self, which is filled with a myriad of applications. When you talk about self, you are talking about envy, jealousy, strife, rage, vengeance, bitterness and the list goes on and on and on. Countless numbers of Christians are not willing to tap into that which God has given them in Jesus Christ. They would rather be dominated by the very things that He has set them free from. For that reason, it effects the people around them and effects their witness to a lost world.

Let's move on to the second point. What do we mean by all of God? Can part of God fill you? Well, no. But what do we mean when we say all of God? He says here, "that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God." The definite article is used there. Normally when the definite article is used while referring to God it means God the Father. Let's just see if that is correct. The context will always tell you. If you look at the whole context of Ephesians, he mentions God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Let's look in 4:13:

"until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ."

Now, we have the fullness of God and the fullness of Christ. The verse says we are to attain to the measure of the fullness of Christ. We are to be filled up to the measure of the fullness of God. Look in 5:18 and you will see that we are to be filled to the full with God the Holy Spirit.

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit."

There you have the fullness of God the Father, the fullness of God the Son and the fullness of God the Holy Spirit. You say, "You are complicating this. Are there three gods?" No, there is only one God, but there are three personalities of the Godhead.

Look at I Corinthians 12. Who gives out the spiritual gifts? It is the Holy Spirit of God. Who is it that gives the ministries to those gifts? It is the Lord Jesus Himself. Who is it that gives the effects of those ministries? It is God the Father. God the Father has a work in gifts. God the Son has a work in spiritual gifts, and God the Holy Spirit has a work. So be filled to the full with all of God, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Now, folks, this ought to excite every one of us. The whole Godhead has offered Himself to us. In other words, we can tap into all of the personalities of the Godhead if we are just willing to surrender to the leadership of the Spirit of God. When we let Jesus Christ be the Lord of our life, we tap into something that we are missing. I am telling you, Christians normally are missing this, being filled with everything but God. The Scripture says,

"No, you be filled with nothing but God and the fulness of God, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit."

Isn't it wonderful that God spoke all creation into existence? He spoke air into existence before He ever created people with lungs who needed the air. He spoke everything that we know of into existence. Isn't it incredible? If we put ourselves up next to Him, folks, we wouldn't even show up on the chart. We would be worse off than a little piece of sand on the beach of time. You couldn't even find us in all the shuffle, for the things He has created. Yet at the same time God says,

"I offer to you all of the fullness of who I am. Learn to tap into Me. Don't be dominated by anything but the fullness of God."

I don't want to miss out on it, do you? Look at what God has given us, folks. We have such a low view of salvation. We have mentioned that several times. That is what is wrong with us. We don't realize what we have. We go everywhere but to God. We do everything except tap into His divine ability that He has given us and offered freely to us in the Lord Jesus Himself.

Colossians tells us Jesus is the fullness of the Godhead bodily. So when you let God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit fill you, you are letting Jesus be Jesus in your life. That is the fullness of the Godhead. Everything is resident in Him.

Let's move on to verse 20 and see what else Paul is praying for these Ephesians. He is praying that they might know and understand that there is nothing that God cannot do if you allow Him to dominate your life.

Verse 20 says,

"Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us."

Paul makes a statement here that to me is the crux of everything that he has prayed so far. He says,

"to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly."

How many times have you heard that verse quoted? How many times have you heard it quoted in context? People just reach out and say, "Oh, God can do it." Well, there is no question about that, friend. If you have got a question as to whether He can, then you just need to meet Christ and get saved. Yes, He can do it. We know that. That is not the problem. When does He manifest that ability? When does He move in and do those things that are exceeding abundantly beyond what we ask or think? I'll tell you when. When the Holy Spirit has empowered us, when Christ has indwelt us, when His love has mastered us and when His fullness has filled us. Look out. Here come the exceeding abundantly great things of God's ability that begin to be manifest in our life.

There are conditions to be met before you start claiming this verse. That is why Paul's prayer went so long before he ever said anything about it. It is an ability beyond our comprehension. Do you know what? This verse hinges on the whole prayer that Paul has prayed. Do you know what that says to me? That says we are limiting God from doing those things which are far exceeding and abundantly beyond what we even ask or even think. Why? Because we won't quit playing games at the foot of the cross. That phrase has stuck with me. We would rather play church and talk about it than we would to tap into it. We would rather have fear and bondage and worry and everything else holding us hostage instead of being dominated by the everlasting Spirit of the living God.

How do we limit God? Folks, we limit what He wants to do in and through our lives. Do you think He won't get it done? Oh, yes. But He will use somebody else. Oh, He will get it done, but we are missing out on what God wants to do in and through our lives. He wants to draw us into what He is up to. There are so many people who would rather be dominated by their own self-pity than they would the living God who offers all of this abundance in our life. When we cooperate with Him and allow His Spirit to fill us and Christ to indwell us and His love to master us, that's when it takes place. Remember, Jesus made a statement to the disciples in the gospel of John. He pointed out some of the things He had done and then He said,

"Greater works than these shall you do."

Oh, I trust that you will study that and not just rip a verse out and run out in the street and think that you are going to do something beyond what Christ can do. There is a beautiful thought here. He is allowing us to be a part of what He is still doing. Folks, you will never in quality surpass what God can do. When He came, He limited Himself to a body. That was the purpose. That body would die on the cross. What Jesus was saying to His disciples was, "My Spirit is going to be in you. He is going to give you a divine ability. You will not be left as orphans. I am coming to you if you will just simply cooperate, not in quality, but in quantity. Greater works than what you have seen here you shall do."

What are we hindering God from? We are limiting Him because we are not willing to let the Spirit of God enable us. Let's take the verse apart and just see what God will show us.

"Now to Him who is able... "

That is in the present tense middle voice. Present tense means that He is able, is always able, has always been able and will always be able. There is never a question about His divine ability. The Greek word is *dunamis*. He has got that divine capacity and ability that we don't have. It is in the middle voice. Middle voice means on His own He chooses to be able in you and in me. Well, what is the problem? We are not choosing for Him to be able in us. We would rather do it ourselves than we would confess to Him that we can't and tap into that which He can do. God has offered Himself and His ability to you and me. It is all resident in the Lord Jesus Christ. He lives within us.

He is able! He has chosen to make Himself available to you and me. I will tell you what He is trying to do. I think He is trying to raise a level of faith where we can stand on what God says, not on what people think or the opinions of man. Do you know what they used to do in the Psalms? They used to celebrate the victory before they ever went to the battle. That looks kind of dumb to me. I mean, they would get together before they even went out to battle and have a victory celebration. Then they went out. Why? Because they are given as a shadow of a truth that comes in the New Testament.

Friend, we don't work toward victory. It is not like a basketball game when there is three seconds left and we shoot and win. That is not victory. **Victory** was at the cross. We don't ever go towards it! We come from it! We walk in victory. Victory is not us overcoming anything. Victory is Jesus overcoming us and indwelling us and His spirit empowering us with His divine ability. That is real victory! We have got to learn that He is able; always has been, always will be. No question there. He has chosen to make Himself available to you and me.

Well, he goes on to say,

to do exceeding abundantly beyond."

The Greek word used here is made up of three words: *hyper*, which means above, *ek*, which means a standard or a measure, and *perisseuo*, which means over and above more than enough. So, it is like the writer, Paul, writing in the Greek, was trying to express something that there were no words to express. Paul was saying,

"He is able to do over and above and over and above and more than enough and over and above that."

God can do it! I like "exceeding abundantly beyond." That brings it down to where my feeble mind can grab hold of it. Do you realize the failures in our life are never because of God, never, never, never? It is because of our unwillingness to bow before Him. We limit His power that has been offered to you and me, His divine ability to do through us what we could have never imagined possible.

Well, he is exceedingly able to do over and above and beyond "all that we ask or think." Maybe you are inquisitive like I am. I got to thinking about that. When I am filled with the Spirit of God, God is the one who governs my thoughts. When I am filled with the Spirit of God, God is the one who governs my requests. Everything I am asking of Him He has already put on my heart. So therefore, He wants to do more and more and more and more beyond anything I have ever asked or beyond anything I have even dared to think. Folks, just think how far we can move into this, of His divine ability within us, to reach a lost world for Christ, to touch a world that doesn't understand the divine ability that God wants to show them in Jesus Christ.

"All that we ask or think."

How many people does God want to call to reach a world for Christ? How many people does God want to start getting involved in missions and getting the money out there where it needs to be. Listen, we haven't even dared ask Him yet. We haven't even dared to think about it yet because we are not living in the fullness of what God already offers. Oh, yeah, He is able, but we will never tap into that until we start learning to be indwelt by Christ and empowered by His Spirit and mastered by His love. Folks, when God gets hold of surrendered people like that, then He manifests that divine ability that is absolutely incredible!

We love to claim this verse. "God is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all you ask or think." What does that mean? I don't have a clue, but it sounds good. God is able to do exceeding abundantly. Folks, until the conditions are met, you might just as well forget the phrase because you will never know that ability. There are some things God is going to have you ask Him and think about asking Him that are far beyond anything you have ever thought before, because you haven't gone that far in the Lord Jesus, in His fullness. Greater works than these shall you do. God says if we will tap into Him, He will give us the ability to do it.

Well, we have come to the final thing in verse 21:

"to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever."

Paul says a similar thing in Philippians. He wrote these letters in the same imprisonment. Let's go over there and see. Look in Philippians 3:3. He is saying here to give all the glory now to the Lord Jesus in the church. He says something that really caught my attention. He says,

"we are the *true* circumcision,... "

What does he mean? We are not circumcised of the flesh because the covenant we are under is not an external covenant. It is an internal covenant. We are circumcised of the heart:

"...who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh."

In other words, Paul is saying here to Him be the glory in the church. Do you mean the only way to give Him glory in the church is to glorify only Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh? That is exactly right. How can we go on and give Him the glory? We keep on lifting up Jesus Christ. We don't praise men. We praise God. Every time we have a problem we don't get involved in all that stuff. We come before Him and say, "God, what are you up to?" Then God is glorified. Man is not, but God is.

Then Paul finishes the prayer and says, "Amen." Do you know what that means? It means "let it be so." It just sort of seals it.

What a prayer! There is just so much in it. Let me show you something. This prayer sums up everything he said in chapters 1-3 and sets up everything he is about to say in chapters 4-6. Look at verse 1 of chapter 4:

"I, therefore."

When there is a "therefore," look and see what it is there for. You now know what it is there for. You have the divine ability of God. All the fullness of God has been offered to you and me, not to go out and raise the dead, but to go out and manifest the character of Jesus in our life and be about the things that God has told us.

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

Amen.

Anything less than what we have seen prayed in this prayer is nothing more than mere religion. God's power wants to flow. Why would God lead us into a wilderness? Because He wants to take us on into Canaan of His blessing. It is sitting there waiting on us, folks. Don't you let a negative thought go through your mind. We have a God who so supersedes our problem, it would blow us all away. He is just waiting on us to shape up and start living in the truth that we already know but have not yet tapped into.

The word we get the word dynamite from is *dunamis*, which is the word we are studying. God is able. We translate it power, strengthened with power in the inner man. We sing a song about the fact that there is

"Power, power, wonder working power, in the blood of the Lamb. There is power, power, wonder working power in the precious blood of the Lamb."

Oh, folks, can you hear what you are singing? God wants to turn it loose in your life even now, but you have got to deal with the sin that is clogged up. It is all there. It has been offered to you freely, but we have got to get the sin out so the power can flow one more time. We can rise up and call Him blessed and touch this world for Jesus Christ. That is what He is wanting to do and we are all a part of this.

[Return to TOP of page](#)