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Filled With All the Fullness of God

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Series: Prayer: God's "Secret" Weapon

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God, our loving Father, our wonderful friend;

You who didst speak the worlds into being, and yet who cares about every tear that we shed; who, when we wake in the morning, is still thinking of us; who counts the very hairs on our head; who knows every sparrow that falls; who knows the hurts, the needs, the loneliness, the fears that beset us, and yet His love never faileth. We worship you.

We pray for others in our midst this morning, Father, who are hurting, who are facing severe physical, emotional, and spiritual battles; may the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our sorrows and difficulties, be able to allow that comfort to be received in their hearts, even this week.

And now we pray that You would be our Teacher.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

We are nearing the finish line. We have just about three more weeks to go in our study of prayer. You thought it was going to go on until the rapture. Surprise! Well, we have three more weeks, but, at any rate, we're nearing the finish line. These last few weeks, we've been listening to Paul teach us how to pray. It is not so much a theological discussion of how the implications of communicating with the Father affect mankind; it's more like a personal diary of Paul's own prayer life. Basically, Paul just said, "Come on in, I want you to hear how I pray". What a blessing!

We found last week that prayer to Paul was a mixture of adoration, praise, and intercession. They seem so carefully woven together by the Holy Spirit, that though each of those activities was distinct, they were so intertwined that they literally became one. Even intercession, for Paul, became an act of worship.

I wonder if maybe Paul was trying to tell us something. I think he was trying to tell us something we struggle to learn. I think he was trying to show us that prayer is not man asking God to do things to prove He is God; prayer is man bowing in humble submission, worshiping God for who He is. And, in the process, man is beholding who God is and worshipping Him for the attributes of who He is, and then desiring that those qualities, and the qualities

those things impart, both in us and in others, would be granted according to the miracle of His grace. Paul wants to teach us how to take the nature of God, and praise Him for who He is, and then lift to heaven the names of others so that those very same attributes might be theirs. That's prayer.

Last week we looked at Ephesians 1:15-23, and we saw how Paul prayed for those Ephesians, that they might have “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.” Paul said, “Lord, I want these Ephesians to have a kind of spiritual discernment they've never had before. I want them to see life through the framework of who You are. I want them to be lifted heavenward, and then I want “the eyes of their understanding to be enlightened”, or as we learned last week, “the eyes of their heart to be opened” to see sin as it really is.

And then Paul prayed for three results from those two requests. He said, “Father, once that's happened, when they begin to see life through Your eyes, and when they begin to see sin as You see it, I know these three things will happen, and I pray for them. One, that they might know the hope of their calling. Number two, that they might be granted the riches of God's inheritance in them. And third, that they might come to know experientially the greatness, the exceeding greatness, of Your power—the same power that raised Christ from the dead.”

Now, let's put those in more succinct, plain terms. What Paul is saying is 1) what the hope of their calling is. “I want them to see heaven and Your coming as real.” 2) what the riches of their inheritance is. “I want them to come to understand how much You really love them—so much so that they need never again doubt that what You do is really best for them.” And 3) “I want them to experience personally, not just intellectually, the incredible power that will allow You to live Your life through them.” Those are the prayers.

And then we began to look at the makeup of Paul's prayers. We began to see two common denominators that we have alluded to already:

- He spent most of his time just talking about who God is and worshipping Him.
- Then he began to pray those very same attributes into the lives of those for whom he interceded.

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It makes so much sense. Paul wasn't praying for the kinds of things we pray for. He wasn't praying that the shuttle chariot would arrive on time on Sunday. He assumed if it didn't, God was trying to impart patience, which is an expression of His nature, which is longsuffering—so longsuffering that we read,

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish.
(II Peter 3:9 NKJV)

God's just that patient. Paul wasn't praying that the crowd would double for the big rally they planned in two weeks. He knew that if it didn't, God was trying to impart the fruits of His sovereignty, which were humility and a servant heart.

Paul wasn't praying for "things" to happen or circumstances to dissolve. He may have, on occasion; we don't know. But the great focus of his prayer life that's imparted to us in the Epistles is that all that matters is who God is; and that all God is, is available to each of God's children. That's what counts. It's available in the measure and in the type that fallen man can appropriate, but one day it'll be ours in all of its fullness because we will be like Him, and we shall see Him as He really is (1 John 3:2).

Perhaps we should take one more of Paul's precious prayers and look at this "appropriated-character" principle one more time. I think it's even more clearly represented in Ephesians, Chapter 3, beginning with Verse 13. Paul begins to pray like this:

Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

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Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Ephesians 3:13-21)

Amen? Amen. Paul lifts us heavenward again, out of the mundane world of broken pipes and broken promises and even broken dreams, and he catapults us into heavenly places with Christ Jesus. He describes three of God's precious attributes: His grace, His power, and His love; and then he zeros in on one, trying to explain just how God would have us appropriate that one quality—the quality called love.

Like the prayer in Ephesians, Chapter 1, it seems so spiritual that if we're not careful, we will find ourselves overlooking its practical application. It was not given to us as a divine devotional to make us feel good. It was given to us as a pattern of prayer for us to appropriate.

Now the bottom line is this: Paul wants us to be filled with all of the fullness of God, all of it. And that's what all these prayers are really about. The fullness of God equals the nature of God released through the lives of his children, "in ever-increasing splendor, from one degree of glory to another" (II Corinthians 3:18 NIV). He wants to teach us how to pray that that splendor would be released a measure at a time, in the lives of our children, our parents, our loved ones, our mates, our friends, our co-workers—all of those for whom we pray. The choice is theirs, but the responsibility to pray that God would draw them is ours.

Now, let's look at the circumstances behind the prayer, and it will give us a little idea of why Paul began like he did. Paul was in a Roman prison. There was no indication he would ever get out. And from the passage, it sounds as though word got to him that those Ephesians were really burdened for him, and they were frantically praying, "God, let Paul go! Let Paul go!" Kind of the way we would pray. "Let Paul go free, so he can get on with his ministry, Lord!" They did not understand that so long as Paul was in the will of God, he was in the ministry. They hadn't grasped that his ministry was being deepened, and his life was being enriched by his suffering. So Paul prayed that they would get God's perspective of his being in prison.

He begins to tell them that these tribulations had a purpose; not to stumble them, to strengthen them. Paul's tribulations were for their glory. He said it was for their edification, for their good, not just Paul's. What a tough one to understand. When we see our

loved ones going through difficult times, we pray and say, “No, Lord! Get them out of the problem. We really don’t want them to go through that!” And God’s trying to say to us, “Yes, dear child, but it’s for their good, and it’s for your good.” And because they couldn’t grasp it, Paul said he bowed his knees to the Father. He prayed. He prayed for these Ephesians one more time. No doubt they had been praying for Paul to be freed from prison, relieved of his humiliation, his pain, and his rejection. But God had not answered that prayer. Instead, God had poured through Paul’s weakness, through his tribulation, through his suffering, through his imprisonment, a kind of supernatural love, a kind of supernatural strength, that man could not understand.

In fact, according to Philippians, Chapter One, it was causing the church at Philippi to be strengthened; and even the guards who were standing by Paul, according to Scripture, were being convicted of sin and converted to Christ. It wasn’t Paul’s suffering that did that. It was God’s character being revealed through Paul in his suffering. Now think about it. Had God answered their prayers to relieve the pressure and send Paul home, God’s will would not have been done, Paul would not have experienced God’s grace to that measure, and those who were being strengthened and converted would have missed the whole thing. You’ve got to remember that, when you pray for circumstances. Paul said, “I’m not unjustly accused; I don’t care about that. I’m not a prisoner of the Roman government.” In fact, look how Paul named himself. He said, “Paul, prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the will of God.” God put me here. He said, “God will let me out if I’m supposed to get out”. He said, “I’ve been given the wonderful privilege of suffering for the sake of the Gospel”. So there was no hostility and no futility in Paul’s response. He delighted to be in prison, because it was the will of God. He wanted these Ephesian Christians to capture that mentality. He said, “Don’t pity me”.

So the irony of it all was that they were in one place praying for Paul’s release, while Paul was on the other end, praying that they would understand why God wasn’t going to release him. He wanted the eyes of their hearts to be opened so they could see this thing from God’s perspective. Paul was suffering so God could be revealed. Paul explains this, and he begins to teach them in his prayer. He prays that God would show them how to crawl up into Him.

His first concern was, “Father, I pray that these guys and

these gals who love me so much and are praying for me, might be strengthened in the inner man". Now, the inner man is that part of your soul where decisions are made and emotions are validated. It is in the human spirit where the Holy Spirit takes up residence at conversion. Paul realized that we can receive Christ and be born again; but until we have His constant abiding Spirit pouring through us, still we will make wrong choices, yield to wrong habits, view life from wrong perspectives, and miss God's best. So he's really praying the same prayer he prayed in Chapter One. There he asked to see us exercise the same power that raised Christ from the dead, and here he's asking that we would have power according to the wealth of God's glory. God's glory is unlimited; the power is unlimited.

But now listen to what happens next. This is incredible. Paul now begins to wrap his arms of love around this Ephesian church, and as he lifts them heavenward, he begins to sense their need, not only to see life from God's perspective, but to go beyond that. Listen to how he prays that "Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith." That word "dwell" in the Greek is a word that means a permanent residence. Paul is saying, "I am praying that the incredible, indwelling Spirit and strength of Christ will take up permanent residence in your life, and that it is so real it will be a natural part of your daily walk; so the deeper the need, the more power you'll have. It will be a supernaturally, natural way for you to live." Then he said (as Wuest translates it), "that Christ might settle down and feel completely at home in your hearts." Isn't that pretty?

What it really means, I think, is that since it's always God's will, it might be better translated, "That you will finally allow Christ to feel completely at home in your heart." You think about that. The miracle is that the Living God, the holy God, could ever feel at home in the hearts of the likes of us; but He does. The problem is at our end. Scripture indicates we do not live with such a consciousness of His holiness—that our spiritual house is being cleansed by His blood continuously and His room is being made ready to be occupied constantly.

But Paul gets to the heart of the matter. Until we grasp more fully the love of God, we can never feel comfortable making Him at home in us. We can never really communicate His nature to those about us. Love is the key—God's love. It is the love that saw us and all our sin yet loves us still, the love that saw us and loved us the more, that loved us enough to die for us. So Paul

begins this anthem of praise for the love of God and lifts up his Ephesian brothers and sisters to the throne of God. He prays that they not only grasp a glimpse of that love but that they begin to see the whole spectrum of it. He was praying they would learn to appropriate God's love in all of its splendor, and then free God, who is now resting comfortably in their hearts, to pour that love through them to others. It would happen by faith. It would not be something God would demonstrate visibly so we could wallow in some kind of spiritual experience. It would be a quiet settling into the neighborhood because, with no tangible evidence of our worthiness, we would have to accept the fact that by faith God really loved us that much. And it gets better.

Paul goes on and says that since we are now being rooted and grounded in love, something's going to happen. The phrase "rooted and grounded" means completely settled, final, satisfied. It means that God's love for us, accepted in the wonderful context of Calvary, means we've become so comfortable with Christ being at home in our hearts, that we've come to grips with the magnitude of His love, that we no longer listen to Satan when he begins to taunt us and say, "If God loved you, He wouldn't allow suffering, if God loved you, He would never let that happen." Instead, the moment that kind of satanic signal reaches the computer of your mind, your love virus detector intercepts the signal and rejects it, before it contaminates the hard disk of your mind. There is no such phrase as "if God loved you". And in your heavenly spell-checker the word "if" has been removed as far as the east is from the west. And every time the enemy whispers, you only resist the more in Christ. And the answer comes back, "Of course, he loves me. He died for me. He ever lives to make intercession for me. He is coming back for me. Love me? No greater love has man than this, that He would lay down His life for a friend. Get lost, Satan! My God loves me with a love that will not let me go. Rooted and grounded means to nail it down. It means that God's love is no longer an issue. Not ever. The love of others will wax cold. The love of others will rise and fall. The love of others will diminish and fade, but not the love of God. His love stretches beyond the heavens, it reaches beneath the sea, it stretches beyond eternity. His love never fails. Paul was praying that this kind of tender assurance would settle down and take root in the hearts of these Ephesians until they were convinced of God's love for them, and He was at home in their hearts all of the time for all time.

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It was settled, rooted and grounded in love. How many of you pray that prayer for those you care about? Ask God to sweep away the cobwebs of doubt and the faithlessness that Satan's cruel ploys generate, and ask Him to quietly place in their heart of hearts that calm assurance that God loves them so much that they need never fear or doubt again. You say, "Yes, but you don't understand what's going on around us. The world is crumbling." Yes, the world is crumbling. Scripture says that "the mountains may be swallowed into the depths of the sea, but there is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God. God is in the midst of her." (Psalm 46).

Paul was praying for us to live in the midst of that city, to rest in the knowledge that our God loves us so much that the same exercise of devotion He demonstrated at Calvary is now being poured upon us with every blow of the enemy's hand. Satan means it for evil. God means it for good, and not just in eternity where there will be treasures laid up for us. God means it for good in the here. Because we will grow more and more in our expression of His grace, and become more and more of a witness of His love every passing day, so long as we let Him settle down, feel at home in our hearts, and see that our hearts are rooted and grounded in love.

Now if we stopped there, it would be a beautiful prayer; but Paul hadn't got to the good part yet. He was just building a foundation. Now Paul whispers, "Dear, Lord, once they have become rooted and grounded and firmly established, expand the horizons of their faith, take them into the inner chambers of the heart of God, and let them explore the breadth, the length, and the depth, and the height of the love of God." How many of you really understand that? How many of you really pray that for those you love, that they would understand the breadth, the length, the height, the depth of God's amazing love?

He's praying that once we've been rooted and grounded, we would enter with Him into the Holy of Holies and actually begin to experience for ourselves how much more awesome that love is than ever our finite mind could imagine. He wants us to come with Him to the secret place where His storehouse of love is kept. And having removed the scales from our eyes, He wants us to begin to explore the unlimited scope of that love. That word "able" in the Greek is the word *exischuo* that means to be eminently able, to have full strength. It means to operate at full RPMs.

The word "comprehend" doesn't mean what it does in our dictionary. If you comprehend something, you understand it. The

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Greek word means to lay hold of, to make one's own, to seize or take possession of. It means you not only understand but that you personalize it. You grasp it and you make it part of your life. In other words, God's love in you so overwhelms you that it drives you, it determines every choice you make. You want to experience it and to worship God for it, demonstrate it, communicate it. God is love—agape love, unconditional love, abiding love. That doesn't mean, as some indicate, that He's not a God of wrath and judgment; His love requires that. But for those willing to partake of His love on His terms, through the shed blood of Christ, that eternal wrath is silenced forever, and His judgment for sin is tempered a thousandfold by His tender mercy.

No, we can't take mercy for granted. We can't become presumptuous. That's part of the understanding of the breadth of his love. Neither can we limit it to man's finite concepts of love: that we love only those who deserve love or return love. That's part of understanding the height of it. Instead, we come to see the miracle of that love—a love that chose to die for worthless sinners that they might be restored to a holy God. That is the understanding of the depth of it. And we must come to see that the reason we've been so loved is so that we can pass it on to others who are as undeserving as we are. That's understanding the length of it. It reaches out beyond our concepts of man and stretches the length of eternity, the breadth, the depth, the length, the height of the love of God. The mind of man, apart from God, cannot fathom anything so pure, so sweet, so intense, so enduring, so faithful. But God's desire is that we not only understand it, we also comprehend it. His desire is that we enter into the deep recesses of that love until it controls us and infuses our life and gives us a quality of life beyond understanding. He wants His love to become ours.

That's what Paul's praying for. He's praying for these Ephesians who are so disheartened by his imprisonment, who were thinking somehow God's love hadn't reached Paul in prison or he would have been released. And Paul is attempting to capture for them on pen and paper, a little fragment of the majesty of God's love. And then having done that, he's praying for them that this incredible, indelible love would now become the foundation upon which they experientially live the Christian life.

Have you noticed? It doesn't seem that Paul can talk about faith without mentioning love. It doesn't seem that he can talk about knowledge without mentioning love. It doesn't seem that

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he can talk about wisdom without mentioning love. Love is the covering for all of God's goodness. What he is saying is that "now abideth faith hope and love, these three, but the greatest of these is love." Paul was no sentimental fool. He was a man who hunted down Christians to exterminate them. But he had been forgiven; he tasted the cup of God's love; he experienced its fragrant aroma and it captured his heart. He entered into the prison-house of pain, and there that love had brought him comfort. He entered into the literal prison-house of a Roman jail and even there, God's love, had captivated him and filled him with joy. Paul had been through the valley of guilt, in the valley of trial, in the valley of persecution; and in each case, the love of God had upheld him and sustained him. It had encouraged him and poured itself through him.

It transcends life's pains and problems. It so captures the spirit that he wrote these words,

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

(I Corinthians 13:1-3 NKJV)

That's what it means to enter into the length and the breadth and the depth and the height of the love of God. It is experientially to come to understand that without that controlling, abiding, consciousness of His love, you can become the most successful man or woman in your church, the most accomplished speaker or singer in the religious community, or the world's most generous, unselfish benefactor; but all of your activities and supposed spirituality amounts to nothing. Nothing. That's the sum total of anything multiplied by zero. What you do may amount to something in your eyes but when multiplied by a factor of nothing, you have nothing. And that's the formula God uses to measure your fruitfulness in the kingdom when you operate outside of His precious love.

But it involves more than fruitfulness. It involves relationships. He wants to be at home in your heart. He wants to be so rooted and grounded in every fiber of your being that you're set free from

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the prejudices, from the temper, from the self-seeking mind of man, that you become unencumbered by the tentacles they once wrapped around you, that you're free in Christ to still be loved and to love by a factor of infinity.

What does it mean? How can it help you pray for others? It means you pray for yourself and for others that you and they might enter into all of the fullness of God. That's what Ephesians 3:19 says.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you being rooted and grounded in love,

May be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length and depth and height;

And to know [personally experience] the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:17-19)

Can anything be more wonderful than that? To be able to pray and see God extend an invitation to those who have made Christ at home in their hearts to actually be at home in His? To see their life so transformed, so different, so intensely spiritual, that they're not living it—Christ is living it in them? The fullness of God, it's like a special room in the heart of God, a room covered with love.

What would that life be like? Paul just told us. He said once you fathom the love of God, all of man's accomplishments, his oratory genius, his musical gift, his discernment, his magnificent education, his gift of faith, his generosity, all added together add up to nothing. In other words, what you do, even to further the kingdom, in your flesh amounts to nothing. But God is looking for surrendered vessels filled with His love that is overflowing into the lives of those about us. And when that happens, your speech, your music, your wisdom, your knowledge, your faith, and your generosity blossom as flowers in springtime.

Listen, Beloved, love is the catalyst that makes it work. Love is the emblem of the exchanged life. Knowledge without love calls attention to itself and is sickeningly self-centered. Talent without love calls attention to itself and blatantly steals glory from God. Faith without love becomes self-serving and rushes into life's spotlight, pretending to believe God when it's really using God for its own purposes. Generosity without love becomes a duty which when fulfilled hopes to earn favor with God or man. But when you come to experience the love of God, which surpasses knowledge,

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you will come to be filled with all of the fullness of God. That fullness encompasses all the attributes of God's nature and expresses itself by demonstrating them in a thousand ways. Listen.

Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. (I Corinthians 13:4)

Think about that one verse. It says the love of God is longsuffering which means it is that quality of God from which His patience comes. Love envieth not; it is the quality of God from which contentment comes. Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Love is that aspect of God from which humility comes.

Verses 5-7 say that love does not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own. In other words love behaves itself. It's the quality of God from which self-control comes. Love seeks not her own. It is that quality of God from which generosity comes. Love is not easily provoked. It is the quality of God from which gentleness comes. Love thinketh no evil. It is the quality of God from which compassion comes. Love rejoices not in iniquity but rejoices in truth. It is the quality of God from which honesty comes.

Love bears all things, believes all things. So it is that quality of God from which faith comes. Love hopes all things. It is that quality from which hope comes. Love endures all things. It is the quality of God from which endurance comes. Do you see?

Love is a fountain that springs from the heart of God, and its refreshing waters flood the lives of those for whom we pray when we pray aright; and as they do a veritable rainbow of God's nature overflows and produces the lush, ripe fruit of a life that is enjoying the fullness of God. That life stops seeking its own. That life ceases sounding its own trumpet, calling attention to its own righteousness, demanding its own way. That life stops complaining, stops wallowing in self-pity. It is too busy refreshing others from its flow as the waters of their lives rise like the ocean at high tide and sweeps onto the shores of other lives, washing away the debris of sin and bringing to them a kind of cleansing and life.

God wants us to enter into the fullness of His life. But more than that, He wants us to learn how to pray that prayer for other people. He wants us to learn to pray that:

1- They will be strengthened with might in the inner man. God wants them to have a supernatural power so they can make the right choices, respond to the right instruction, and be open to

correction. We have to pray that prayer for those we love.

2- And then we're to pray that Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith; that they would make Christ comfortable as He chooses their hearts as a permanent dwelling place.

3- And that will be rooted and grounded in love; that they will allow Christ who's taking up residence in their heart of hearts to grant them a confident, settled assurance that He loves them so much that they will no longer question Him, or doubt Him or resist His tests, or be bitter over His choices; that they will rejoice and they will rest.

4- And the final prayer is they'll become so at home having God at home in their hearts that as they trust Him, they will allow Him to usher them into the inner chamber of His heart, where they can begin to experience the breadth, the depth, the length, and the height of God's amazing love.

You're praying that they will begin to lose sight of their own rights, their own reputation, their own desires, and be filled and flooded with the very nature of God, until His love flows and overflows and reveals itself with a new kind of patience, a new kind of contentment, a new kind of humility, a new kind of compassion, a new kind of faith. We're praying that step-by-step they will enter into the hallowed chambers of the heart of God, and experience who He is to the degree that they will never be the same. You pray that prayer for those you love.

It's tough to pray. It's especially tough to pray, Beloved, if you've never experienced it yourself. It's tough to understand. It's tough to ask God to give it to someone else. And I think Paul knew that. I think that's why he wrote 1st Corinthians 13. I think he knew some of us would think that all we need to do to have that kind of love is to try harder or to study more. Some of you have been Christians for years, and you're still operating at the very edge of the cup of love. Your life is still characterized by bickering, by self-centeredness, by selfishness, by impatience, by pride. You still struggle to show compassion. You still have a problem exercising real faith.

Maybe you're sure you're a Christian. Yes, you pray. You're faithful in your Christian duty. You may teach a Sunday school class, you may sing in the choir. But those close to you still walk on eggshells. Those who work with you still operate in fear. Those in your family still live in confusion over the difference between what

they know you know, and how they see you behave.

Maybe there are convictions in your life but no love with which to communicate them. Maybe there's a wealth of Bible knowledge but no life that expresses it. Paul said you've got to come to "know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge". What does that mean? It means that knowledge about Christ cannot change the world. Only when that knowledge is mixed with God's love and that love reaches out, can that knowledge make sense. The Pharisees had more knowledge than you do. They each had enough doctrine to be president of the local seminary. And, yet, Jesus saved his harshest words of all, not for the woman taken in adultery, but for those religious hypocrites who knew it all, but did not possess the love of God.

No, you can't make it happen, but with an answer to prayer, Beloved, God can. He can infuse you with His love. He can overwhelm you with His compassion. He can energize you with His sensitivity. And he can make you actually experience the love of Christ until you are filled with all the knowledge of Him. You say, "I hear you but you don't know me; you don't know my personality. It's just the way I am." Maybe so, but it's not the way God is, and God is in your heart if you're a Christian. And God wants to feel comfortable settling down there and ushering you into the palace of His love. So there's no excuse. In fact, if you've lived a long time without the evidence of God's love in your life, when it begins to permeate you, no one will ever question where it came from. You're a better candidate than anyone else is.

I think Paul knew many of us would feel that way. I think he knew we would see from afar this kind of love-filled freedom in Christ. It seems that just a handful have it, and they wish we could live that kind of life. But I think Paul knew we would say, "God just didn't make me that way; I've been this way too long." I think that's why Paul ended his prayer the way he did. I think maybe we ought to end this lesson the same way. He knew the lies that Satan would throw at us to keep us from asking God to fill us with all the fullness of Christ. So he said,

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20,21)

Filled With All the Fullness of God

Praise God! Paul said that it isn't up to us, it's up to Him. It isn't impossible. He can do exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think because it's His power at work in us.

I beg you to start this week praying that passage into your own life. Then look out, heaven is liable to come down and touch earth. And then begin praying it into the lives of those for whom you intercede. God will hear you. God will answer you because He wants you and He wants them to be filled with all the fullness of God.

OH, TO BE FILLED

Oh, to be filled with the fullness of God
Oh, its goodness to know.
To experience the height and depth of it
To watch that love overflow.

Oh, to receive that measure of love
That encircles and captures the heart,
To hold nothing back and to be assured
That Christ is at home in your heart.

If only that fullness my God would give me,
If only that love would flow through.
I have only one question for you, my child:
Have you ever asked Him to?

Our Father and our God,

We simply pray for ourselves and for one another that somehow, by your miraculous gift of grace, we might become filled with all the fullness of God, rooted and grounded in that incredible love until we know the height, the depth, the length and the breadth of it.

Until we come to experience it, no, really experience it in all of its fullness, may we settle for nothing less. We can't do it; You can. You showed us how to pray for it.

May we now do so in Jesus' name,

Amen.

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