

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon November 10, 2019.
Ephesians 3: 14 – 21 “Filled with all the Fullness of God”

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. 20 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, 21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

Pray

- I Introduction –Filled with all the Fullness of God
 - a. God is an endless fountain, a tree we can never climb. May the Lord grant us to drink together, climb together today.
 - b. Let these questions make you curious about this message today.
 - c. Do you find this to be the most desirable experience possible for your soul?
 - d. Is your daily life characterized by this experience?
 - e. How hungry are you for God?
 - f. Do you take time to meditate upon the Father’s sovereign and limitless care for you as His beloved in Christ?
 - g. Do you take time to meditate upon Christ dwelling in you by faith?
 - h. Do you take time to meditate upon the Holy Spirit working mightily to strengthen your soul to receive more of Christ, more of God?
 - i. Have you pondered what it means to be rooted and grounded in love?
 - i. Not complicated. Laying down our lives for others, like Jesus did.
 - ii. We can only love by looking to Christ.
 - j. Do you overflow with praise toward God in your prayers, adoring His glory in His Church in the earth, past, present, and forever?
 - k. Do you realize every theological truth finds its existential (experiential) fruit in this phrase “Filled with all the fullness of God”?
 - i. Why do you study theology? (the study of God)
 - 1. Glasses analogy
 - ii. Why do we frequently find the study of God unappealing?
 - 1. Glasses are only so interesting...
 - 2. Talking about glasses eventually gets boring...
 - iii. To drink from the Fountain.
 - l. Do you realize every ethical expression of love finds its source from The Fountain – “Filled with all the fullness of God”?
 - i. From whence flows your good works?

- ii. Why do we frequently find service to God and others to be a burden, rather than a joy? (be honest)
- iii. Why are our lives so prayerless?
- iv. Why are our prayers so often empty, cold, and burdensome?
 - 1. Any recent memories of walking closely with God?
 - 2. Memory of early days as Christian in prayer. Prayer was not a burden then.
- v. Why do we find ourselves unteachable?
- vi. Why do we find ourselves experiencing relational difficulties within the church?
 - 1. Probably, relationships in this room need healing.
 - 2. Drink together of God = relational healing
 - 3. Babette's Feast example (extensive repentance, joyfully!)
- vii. Why do we find ourselves so often stuck in sin patterns we know to be displeasing to God?
 - 1. So sad of how I treat others.
- viii. Paul is so filled with passion for the Ephesians to be granted this fullness of God from God, because Paul knows it's there only hope to stay true to Him.
- m. Do you pray this kind of prayer for Foothills Church, for all Christians everywhere?

II Context of this prayer to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

- a. Ephesus – western coast of Asia Minor, major Roman city, important political and economic and religious center.
 - i. Greek goddess Artemis temple (Roman: Diana)– may have been largest structure in ancient world.
 - 1. Acts 19:27 “So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.”
 - ii. The theater – larger than modern football field.
 - iii. Looming in the background of any discussion of Ephesus. Ephesians were engulfed by the splendor and power of this false god culture.
 - iv. How has Foothills been like the church at Ephesus?
- b. Paul's situation: date, occasion (Harold Hoehner)
 - i. Paul knew Ephesus well
 - ii. First visit to Ephesus ~ AD52
 - iii. 2nd visit ~ 53-56 AD (~2 ½ years)
 - iv. 3rd visit ~ 57 AD with elders at Miletus – watch out for wolves
 - v. Prison letters most likely from Rome: AD 60-62 → Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon
 - 1. ~AD58 – Ephesians written
 - vi. Likely after spring AD62, Paul writes to Timothy at Ephesus

vii. AD62-66 - Revelation is written

1. So, ~4-8 years after Paul wrote to the Ephesians, we read the bad news about Ephesus
2. Some good: doctrine in order, even had a trial, hate the Nicolaitans
3. Rev 2:4-7 "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. **5** Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent. **6** But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. **7** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

a. Jesus promises we will walk with Him, we who overcome.

c. Falls at the hinge point of Ephesians

- i. Indicative, Imperative: we've probably hear about this
- ii. The imploring of Paul comes in between.
 1. Paul is crying out to God that they would not lose their first love
 2. To avoid being head-heavy, doctrine-focused, frozen chosen

d. Jew-Gentile union established, yet not much experienced yet.

- i. Before we can go from head to hands, our hearts must be won; our sovereign Father granting us to be filled the fullness of God.

III About Paul's Prayer

a. Paul's passion – For this cause I bow my knees.

- i. Pressed down soul with the weight of his desire
- ii. The vitality and future on this prayer depended on this coming true.

b. Paul's longing – For the Ephesians to experience the Soul-Filling of all the Fullness of God, that which surpasses knowledge

- i. Always drinking, yet always desiring more.

c. Paul's praise – Praying such a prayer, overflowing with such high and beautiful truths of God, culminating in such an astonishing request, causes Paul to spontaneously overflow with praise and worship and adoration of God's abundance and power in us, not at all limited by the smallness of our prayers. (the suggestion in this doxology is that Paul found his prayer for the Ephesians, this loftiest of requests, to be too small a request for such a glorious, gracious and powerful God)

IV About Jesus Christ

a. He is the only Savior of mankind

b. He is the only Lord of the earth

c. He takes up permanent residence within us, by faith

- i. Dwell in us by faith. Permanent dwelling.
- ii. Always making Himself more and more at home within our souls.

d. The love of Christ can be comprehended – quantitatively and qualitatively

- i. We can learn propositional truths about Jesus. Look to the Word.
 - ii. We can begin to experience more and more emotional and spiritual realities.
 - e. The love of Christ passes knowledge - critical
 - i. The knowledge of Christ can never be exhausted. The list of propositional truths about God is endless.
 - ii. But, even if we could learn all the learnable truths about God, there is still the Supra-cognitive, meta-cognitive: literally cannot be comprehended with the human mind.
 - 1. Can only be known via the mystery of Christ dwelling in us
 - a. 3:9. “and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery”
 - f. Unity of the Son with the Father: the covenantal relationship within the Trinity
- V About the Father
- a. The Ultimacy of the Father’s Creative Sovereignty
 - i. From Whom all Fatherhood comes (perhaps a comparison to the mother goddess, Artemis)
 - b. The Wealth of the Father’s Fundamental Being
 - i. The wealth of the Father’s Essence: asks the Father to “grant”
 - ii. Appeals to the Father’s riches
 - c. The Generosity of the Father’s Gracious Throne
 - i. Paul expects the Father to move. Not an empty “pipe-dream” prayer.
 - ii. God delights to give good gifts to His children.
 - d. The Unity of the Father with His Son and His Spirit
 - i. Granting the Spirit that we may be filled with Christ
- VI About the Holy Spirit
- a. The strengthening of the inner man – soul-sturdiness
 - b. The process Increases our faith (the mouth of the soul)
 - c. Receive more of Christ by the Spirit
- VII About the Ephesians
- a. To receive from the Father’s sovereign, abundant, gracious countenance and commitment (they did have this 1st love for a time)
 - b. To receive from His Spirit soul-power, soul-sturdiness
 - c. To receive from Christ His Permanent Presence indwelling
 - d. To be rooted and grounded in love
 - i. God does the rooting and the grounding
 - ii. Like giant shade trees
 - iii. Like building that rise and cannot be thrown down
 - e. To be made able, together, to comprehend the love of Christ
 - i. Dimensions – a comparative reference to the Artemis Temple?
 - ii. That surpasses knowledge – the mystery, the paradox – a comparative reference to the practice of magic that filled the city of Ephesus?
 - iii. Nothing can come against a body of believers experiencing God together like this

1. Psalm 133 “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! 2 It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. 3 It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the Lord commanded the blessing-- Life forevermore.”

- f. To be filled with all the Fullness of God
 - i. Their souls were strengthened to become Christ’s Home so that Christ came and dwelt within them, filling them up with more and more of His love, walking in Him. Not just lots of good doctrine. They actually walked with God. This was true for the Ephesians at one time.

VIII Application

- a. Abstract in so many ways, so difficult
- b. Do you see the experiential aspect of walking with God daily.
 - i. Knowing is not enough. You must drink of Christ. Enjoy Him.
 - ii. We must do this together, help one another to do this.
- c. Do you find your soul being filled up with all the fullness of God?
 - i. This is really available to you.
 - ii. So many distractions away from Christ and His glory.
- d. Have you asked the Father to grant this to you and to your family? To our church.
- e. Do you realize we cannot make this happen?
 - i. But we can ask Him, trust Him, and wait upon Him with anticipation.
- f. What would a church filled up with filled up saints look like?
- g. What would sin be like to the filled up soul?
 - i. Wouldn’t it break our hearts to sin?
- h. Have you considered the Lord’s Table in light of this text?
 - i. Every time we draw near to Him, He draws near to us.
- i. Will you make it your highest aim to drink from The Fountain of God more and more, never resting complacently on past experiences with God? Always going after more and more of God?
- j. How will this impact your prayers?
- k. How will this impact your study of the Word?
- l. How will this impact living out God’s law of love?
- m. Seems like if we’re not really walking with God, filled with His fullness, day by day, as life’s aim, then everything else is fake.