

“Being Filled with All the Fullness of God”

Ephesians 3:19

INTRO:

We are exploring Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian believers and for us in **Ephesians 3:14-21**. Paul’s ultimate purpose is that we might have the resources to translate the spiritual blessings in **Chapters 1-3** into our day to day lives. Paul's prayer has three main requests. Paul asked first that the Ephesians might be strengthened with might in the inner person. This strengthening is ours through the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit. Second, Paul prayed that Christ might dwell in our hearts by faith. In this request he is asking for our continual submission to the indwelling Holy Spirit so that we are changed from the inside out. Third, he prayed that we being rooted and grounded in the love of Christ, we might have enough spiritual strength to comprehend a little bit of the vastness of Christ's love that passes knowledge.

Today, we come to the last of Paul's requests; it is simply *“that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”* There are two questions that we need to ask and answer.

I. What Does It Mean “To Be Filled With All The Fullness Of God?”

II. What Does It Mean In Our Lives?

I. What Does It Mean “To Be Filled With All The Fullness Of God?”

A. Perhaps the place to begin is by discussing what it does not mean. Some believers think there is a class of spiritual elite Christians. These elite folks supposedly can receive special “higher” knowledge – some kind of special revelation from God. They claim to have an experience of God that is denied other people.

In this thinking only these who are spiritually elite can know what it means to be filled with all the fullness of God. The Apostle Paul has already taken great pains to show us that this is not the case here at all. Paul here is praying for all the believers in Ephesus, not just for some elite believers. He also has already told us that this knowledge is something we share *“with all the saints.”* So, this is not for the spiritually elite, those who have exceptional faith or experienced a second blessing or something.

B. Since this is not a blessing just for the super Christian, what is this about? The verb *“that you might be filled”* means *“to fill with content”*. It can be used in both a literal and a figurative sense. Let me give you just two examples.

1. In one of the parables that the Lord told in **Matthew 13**, we read:
“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away” (v.47-48).

Here our word refers to a fishing net filled with fish.

2. In **John 16:6** we find our word used in a figurative way.

“But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart.”

Here the emotion sorrow has captured their thoughts and minds and so figuratively has filled the disciples' hearts.

B. In the letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul is obsessed with the concept of being filled. Let me show you what I mean. Let us take a walking tour of the letter to the Ephesians.

1. Look first at **Ephesians 1:22-23**.

“Far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, He is the fullness that fills all in all.”

2. Another place he mentions this filling is in **Ephesians 4:7-10**.

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.’

(Now this, ‘He ascended’—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)” Here He did all this that He might fill all His church.

3. In **Ephesians 4:11-13** Paul again mentions fullness.

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

4. Finally, look at **Ephesians 5:15-18**.

“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.”

C. The reference here in **Ephesians 3:19** is connected to these other references to filling. All of them have to do with Christ or the Holy Spirit filling us. So, this request is NOT something that is special for only the select few believers. It also speaks of our being filled with God Himself. What does being filled with the fullness of God mean?

1. To understand this, I think we need to understand a little more fully what the principle of filling means when it is used figuratively. Remember **John 16:6**? Jesus has just told the disciples about what would happen when He went to His Father. Their response, which was understandable, was profound sadness. Sadness suddenly took over their emotions and mental functions. For a moment, all they could think about was what it would be like without the Lord Jesus with them! In a sense, sadness took control of them!

2. Now jump ahead to the statement in **Ephesians 5:18**.

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.”

Being drunk with alcohol leads to a state of intoxication. You drive in this state and they arrest you for driving under the influence (or control) of alcohol. Paul put this comparison there to help us understand what being filled with the Spirit is. It is living under the influence or control of the Holy Spirit of God. Actively obeying Him in our day to day lives!

D. This is also what Paul is praying for us here in **Ephesians 3:19**. That we might be filled with (under the control of) all the fullness of God. When God controls our hearts and our lives, He produces in us and through us a manifestation of His attributes. Now remember that God has two kinds of attributes – His communicative and His non-communicative. God's intransitive attributes are things like GOD'S ETERNITY! God has no beginning and no end. He always was, always is and always will be! We all have a beginning, but praise God, we will have no end! Another of God's intransitive attributes is HIS OMNISCIENCE. God knows all things. Contrary to what some may think God does not share that attribute with Pastors or other church leaders! He is also OMNIPRESENT, He fills the heavens and the earth. We will never share in that attribute! HE IS OMNIPOTENT. He can do anything He wants to do! We cannot. You get the idea.

E. It is God's transitive attributes that we share in as God takes control of our lives. God as to His nature is LOVE. And when God has control of our hearts, we love our brothers and sisters in the Lord! GOD IS A GOD OF PEACE and He delights in producing that peace in our hearts when we give Him our lives! GOD IS HOLY. He desires to produce in us that same concept of Holiness.

F. The evidence of this filling is not ecstatic utterances. It is the work of God in our hearts to make us like Him, that is the “so-called” fruit of the Spirit. **Galatians 5:22-23**

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”

That is why there are five participial phrases in **Ephesians 5:18-21** that describe what happens when we are filled with the Spirit of God.

“And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things

to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God."

II. What Does It Mean In Our Lives?

- A. Now let us get practical. How does this work and how can it be present in our lives? It begins with having Christ in us. We experience this fullness as we in the language of chapter 4, ***"grow up into Him who is the head."*** Listen to the reason that the Lord Jesus gives Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor/teachers to the church.

"For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Growing in Christ is really living the reality of John 3:30 ***"He must increase, but I must decrease."***

- B. Two questions we need to ask. Are you and I saved? Have we put our trust in Him to save us? Are we growing up our relationship with Him? Is He increasing and because He is increasing, we are decreasing?