

Filled with the Fullness of God

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Good morning. Go ahead and turn in your Bible to the book of Ephesians 3 and we will be looking at verses 14 through 19 this morning. And as we turn there, I want to highlight the goodness of God in his providence working. He doesn't do things accidentally or haphazardly and even when it comes to which songs we sing in church, it's incredible to see his particular care. I always feel incredibly inadequate to present the word of God to you and it really is because I am. You know, I'm just really not... I struggle in ways that frustrate me and it can make me nervous as to how I'm going to present this to you because the truth is so amazing and incredible and I want to convey it for everything that's in my soul and I'm so inadequate to do that. But our text this morning is from the book of Ephesians 3 and it talks about the love of God, the love of Christ. It's height. It's width. It's breadth. Its length. The love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. And the song that was in my head all week was that song that we just sang, that hymn, "The love of God. Greater far than tongue or pen could ever tell." That song was in my head all week and I had wished that I had requested it to be sung and I didn't request it. I figured I'd just let Ted go with what he had already chosen. How long ago? You said about a month ago you chose that song to be sung today? And it's so perfect because God loves you and he wants to minister to you through his word through extremely inadequate vessels and means, but his Spirit is working in bringing all of this together. The circumstances of your life this week all the way up to the last song you heard just before the word is preached, he wants you to know that he cares, that he is looking after you, and that he loves you with a love that you can't grasp it, and he wants me to know that he loves me and he loves you and he's not going to let me hinder you from growing. It's his Spirit at work through his word that is going to produce the fruit and that's a comfort and a blessing.

So as we turn there, you're probably already there, Ephesians 3, I want to read the passage and then ask the Lord for his help. Ephesians 3:14 through 19. The Apostle Paul writes this,

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have

strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Let's turn to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we ask you along with the Apostle Paul this morning that you would grant that our hearts would be strengthened to know your love; that Christ would dwell in our hearts through faith; that we would comprehend what it is you have done for us; that we would know the love that surpasses knowledge; and that we would be filled with all the fullness of God. Father, use your word this morning to set us on that path. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

So this passage written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Ephesus, in fact he probably wrote it to the region of Asia Minor with Ephesus being its chief city, and he had one main concern for them as he wrote. Verse 14 he says, "I bow my knees before the Father," so he bows his knee in prayer for them. This isn't the first prayer in the book but it is probably the most poignant. He bows his knees, both of his knees. The picture is of one flat on his face before a king. He is begging God that he would do what he is about to say, that he would do this for them, and it is all summed up at the end of the passage in verse 19. At the end, his desire is that they would be filled with all the fullness of God. Filled with all the fullness of God sounds like a tall order, and it is. So we're going to approach this passage through four questions. What does it mean to be filled with the fullness of God? 2. Why does Paul want this for them? 3. How can we be filled with the fullness of God? 4. What makes this possible?

Before we get into that, I just want to remind you of the background here. It's around the year 60 A.D. as is documented in Acts 28. The Apostle Paul was in a Roman prison for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ and though he was in chains, the Gospel was not. While he was in prison, the Gospel continued to go forth and it was in prison that he wrote most of the New Testament and it is through that that the Gospel has gone forth through the rest of the ages. The Gospel is not chained. It is not limited by our circumstances.

Well, Paul had been converted to Christ from Judaism on the road to Damascus in about 33 A.D., and immediately he began to preach Christ in the synagogues all around Israel. And while some Jews believed his message, most did not and many vehemently persecuted him, even threatening his life, and this would be Paul's common experience for the rest of his life for the sake of the Gospel, vehement, angry, hostile opposition.

Over the next few decades, Paul preached the Gospel through modern-day Turkey, Greece and Italy, and he enjoyed great success as many people were saved and churches were planted. Many churches. Miracles. People saved and transformed all over the place. However, he also faced severe opposition in those Gentile communities. The pagans in these towns did not like the fact that this new teaching, the Gospel, demanded ultimate loyalty to Christ rather than to Caesar. They did not like when many people turned away

from their pagan religions to follow Christ, and they didn't like it that it hurt their business when Christians stopped buying their idols. In fact, he was jailed briefly in Ephesus because of the opposition he faced from both Jews and Gentiles in that city. So while many people were saved, it made many people angry and he ended up being thrown in prison there briefly. Throughout his life, he went from town to town knowing that he would face opposition. God had promised it to him. He had promised him suffering and yet his call was to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. This mystery that Gentiles were now fellow heirs with Jews, he wanted to take that all over the known world, and he was willing to endure so much for it.

So after about three missionary journeys in visiting the church of Ephesus on multiple occasions, he ended up getting imprisoned in Jerusalem and then sent to Rome toward the end of his life, and it is there that he writes this epistle, and he wrote it as a circular letter to the region in Asia Minor of Ephesus. Okay, so he wrote it to the big city of Ephesus but then it would be circulated around. This is something that he wanted them to know. He was very familiar with the Ephesians but he was unfamiliar with many other smaller churches and Christians in the little towns surrounding this region and so he wrote this letter because he cared for them to know the contents of the book. I mean, he is in prison. He could be feeling sorry for himself, instead he reaches out and he writes this. So based on the contents of this book, it seems to be written primarily to a non-Jewish audience.

As usual, Paul was very concerned for the church in this region. His desire was for the church at Ephesus to walk in a manner worthy of the calling, as he says in Ephesians 4:1. He was always concerned about this and he communicated it often. In Philippians 1:27 and Colossians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 2 Thessalonians 1:5, this concept of walking worthy of the Lord, worthy of the calling, worthy of the God who calls you. You see, his desire was that God be glorified in the church among the body of Christ, and that's what drove him to write these epistles. It is with that goal in mind that he writes the first three chapters explaining the greatness of our calling and the high point of those chapters is in this passage, verses 14 through 21.

So Paul decides to take time to write them and he is praying for the church in and around Ephesus, and while there are several components to this, the entire prayer is summed up, as we said earlier, in the last phrase, "that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Everything else in this prayer leads to its final result. So he prayed that Christ would dwell in their hearts; that they would comprehend just how big the love of Christ is and that they would know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. The end result of all that is that you be filled with the fullness of God. So this is our first question: what does it mean to be filled with all the fullness of God? It kind of sounds like esoteric, like you're humming to yourself and you get this feeling of God being in you. Well, that's not really what it's talking about. This seems like a really tall order, doesn't it, to be filled with the fullness of God? I mean, God is eternal, omnipresent, omniscient and all-powerful. Jeremiah 23:24 says that God fills the heavens and the earth. You know, who are you? Can a temple hold God? No, it can't. It can't hold, it can't fully hold God and yet Paul is praying that we would be filled with all the fullness of God. How can anyone or any

group of people be filled with all the fullness of God? Well, it must be a different kind of filling.

This Greek word "to be filled," *pleroo*, if you're a Greek nerd, it means "to make full." It's used of ships, a ship's sail filled out by the wind. It's used of a house filled with a fragrance. It can be used of filling objects with a substance but it can also be used of an object or a place being filled with intangible qualities. So for instance, Acts 5:28, Jerusalem was filled with the apostles' teaching. Philippians 4:9, Paul says, "My God will supply all your needs." That's that word, to supply, to fill all your needs. More pertinent to our passage, the word can be used of something filling someone's heart. The idea is that something takes full possession and control of your heart. So John 16:6, sorrow filled the heart of the apostles. So when your heart is filled with sorrow, it means that there is not really anything else going on. You are just overcome with sorrow. Ecclesiastes 9:3 in the Septuagint used this word, furthermore the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives." Then afterwards they go to the dead. There is that idea of being full of evil and insanity. Acts 5:3, Ananias, Peter said to Ananias who had lied to them, he said this, "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" In this case, you can see that Satan is filling his heart. It meant that he was submitted to the will of Satan. He exhibited satanic character. He wasn't demon possessed in the way that we think about it, but his heart was filled with Satan and his ways. At that moment, he did the will of Satan and that was to lie.

It's interesting that this word is also used in Ephesians 4:10 where Jesus fills all things, and even more interesting, look at Ephesians 1:22. It says that he put "all things in subjection under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." There are those words from our passage, fullness and to fill. Christ has already, he is the one that fills all of these things and he has already been given to the church. So the church already shares in the fullness of Christ. His fullness is already available to them. Christ has been given to them. In Ephesians 5:18 in a similar way it says this, we are to be filled with the Spirit which results in Christlike discernment and character. According to Colossians 1:9 and 2:9, the fullness of God dwells in Christ. And in chapter 1, verse 10, it says believers are made full or complete in Christ. We have been united with him in his death, resurrection and exaltation, and the goal of the ministry in Ephesians 4:13 is to "build up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The result of this is that we are no longer carried about by every wind of doctrine and human craftiness.

So what does it mean to be filled with all the fullness of God? It's not a state of euphoria. It's not just being overwhelmed with good feelings about God. That's not what it means to be filled with the fullness of God. We often have this, and you see this a lot, it's sort of the camp high, right? You get this feeling for a while that you are filled with God and it kind of carries for a couple of days and then it kind of wears out and you look for another experience, another high. Look, you can get that with drugs, right? You can get that high with drugs. That's not what this is talking about. It's not talking about feeling good, in

fact, many religions use drugs to get that feeling of being one with God and being filled with God. They look to drugs to do that. That's not what this is talking about. When you are filled with God, there is no room for anything else. There is no room for idols. There is no room for sin. There is no room for self. To be filled with the fullness of God is to be completely controlled and dominated by his will, his purpose, his character, and his way. This results in deliberate decisions to deny self and sin and to obey Christ; to lay down selfish desires and to love other people. Being filled with the fullness of God is to love others in the way that he loves them. One commentator put it this way, he is praying, Paul is praying for them that they may be all that God wants them to be, that is, spiritually mature. Since God himself, Christ himself is the standard, then this means being perfect as he is perfect, being holy as he is holy, as we are called to in 1 Peter and other places.

So to be filled with the fullness of God is to be completely controlled by him and his desire for your life. That is Paul's prayer. Think about what that would look like for you. How would that be different? How would your life be different if it was completely controlled by God, his will, his character, his love, his word? I tell you what, I'd complain a whole lot less. I would be a whole lot more patient. I would look to him more if I was filled with the fullness of God.

So why does Paul want this for them? Well, look at verse 14. He has already given us the reason, verse 14, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father." For what reason? Well, if you look at the beginning of chapter 3, verse 1, Paul says again, "For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on your behalf." You see, there is a little sort of an excursion, a rabbit trail sort of in chapter 3. In the first two chapters, Paul just got done explaining the Gospel, the amazing love of God for us, and then in chapter 3, verse 1 he says, "For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles," verse 2, "assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you." He says, "For this reason," and then he kind of says, he kind of goes on a side trail, "Wait a minute. You know, just in case you didn't know about my calling to the Gentiles, I'm going to explain that to you and then I'm going to come back again," in verse 14, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father." So he's picking up where he had started in 3:1.

So what is the reason? Why does he care about this? Why does he want this for them? Well, chapter 1, verse 3, because God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. In verse 4, because he chose us to be blameless and holy before him. So Paul prays that they be filled with the fullness of God, meaning that you would be filled with his will, the desires that God has, his character, deciding to follow his ways, right? Why? Because God chose you to be blameless and holy before him, and he chose you in verse 6, to be for the praise of his glorious grace. This is the purpose that he chose you. Verse 10, because his purpose in saving you also was to unite all things in Christ. Because God worked through Christ, chapter 2, verse 1, to save you who were dead in trespasses and sins. Because we are his workmanship, created for good works that God has already prepared to us to do, and because he saved us by grace through faith so that no one may boast. And chapter 2, verses 14 through 15, because Christ died to reconcile Jew and Gentile and to form them into one body and gave them the same access to God through

one Spirit, and together we are being built into one dwelling place for God, Ephesians 2:22. Because God has done that, because he chose you before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless, because he wanted you to be to the praise of his glorious grace, because everything was to be united in Christ and he has given the same access to the Father to every single one of you, Jews and Gentiles. There is no people group more different and distinct than Jews and Gentiles. No people groups that have less in common than Jews and Gentiles. If those two can be united in Christ, then we can be united with anybody else in this room and anybody else around the globe.

So to be filled with the fullness of God is to be united with his purpose for your life; to do it, to live these things out; to value these things; to live in light of these things. Paul prays that they would be filled with all the fullness of God because this is what God chose them for. This is what God has caused all of history to work out according to his purpose in order to accomplish, and this is why Christ died and rose again, and this is why God called them out of darkness. His purpose was that they would be filled with all of his fullness; that they would be like him; they would follow his ways; they would be fully devoted to him, fully dominated by him, fully like him. That's why he chose you and this is why Paul writes this. This is why he prays this. This is why he wants this.

Paul in writing this is demonstrating what it is to be filled with the fullness of God, because his desire for them is what God desires for them. When you pray for one another, are you filled with the fullness of God? Are you desiring for one another what God desires for one another, for each other? Is that what you want? Is that what you pray for? Is that what you're concerned about? Are you concerned that the people suffering in the hospital are filled with the fullness of God? Are you concerned that the people suffering because of their own sin would repent so that they would be filled with the fullness of God? To be to the praise of his glory?

This is what Paul wanted while he was in the middle of prison. This was Paul's – listen, not only did Paul do this because this is what God wanted but this is also why Paul was in prison, to present every man full in Christ. Every man complete. He labored and strived to present every man complete in Christ and that is why he was in prison because he could have hung out in the safe regions of the world, instead he went into villages and towns and cities and places that he knew hated him because there were chosen people of God in that town that needed to hear the Gospel and be united to Christ, and there were churches that needed to be built up. And because of that, he was in prison and so now he writes to them this prayer that he would bow his knees to the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that they would be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being.

So what does it take, then, to be filled with the fullness of God? What is required for that? What does that really actually mean? Well, first of all, it takes power. Look at what he says, "according to the riches of his glory," verse 16, "he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being." For you to be filled with the fullness of God is not simply a matter of choice. It's not simply a matter of intellectual gaining some intellectual knowledge. It's not simply a matter of reading your Bible or

listening to sermons. It takes strengthening with power by his Spirit and it has to take place in your heart. The inner man. The place where you think and reason and desire and decide. You have to be strengthened there.

Strengthened for what? To believe the love of Christ. Look at verse 17, "so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." He's already mentioned in chapter 2, verse 8, that faith is a gift of God and that's not of yourselves. So for you to be filled with the fullness of God, first you have to have faith in Christ, and I think he's referring here to a salvation kind of faith because every believer has Christ dwelling in their hearts. If you don't believe in Christ, you don't have the first step towards being filled with the fullness of God. There is no other way. You can't get it through mysticism and you can't get it – and now we're preaching to the choir here – but you can't go up and find the fullness of God on a mountaintop through meditation. It can only come as by faith you believe in Christ and he dwells in your heart.

You see, this power, the power to make that happen was first, yeah, to give you faith, but also look back at verse 19. Paul wanted them to know, chapter 1, verse 19, Paul wanted them to know "what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places." It took mighty power to raise Christ from the dead and that power was immeasurably great and that was working on the behalf of every believer to save them from their sins.

This is perhaps the most difficult thing that God ever had to do was to save you. I mean, he created the world just by speaking it. You know, the stars and the planets by the word of his power. He holds it together by the word of his power. He works all things according to the counsel of his will and yet when it came to Gethsemane, Jesus broke down sweating and loud cries to the Father, begging him saying, "Father, if there is any other way, let this cup pass from me." The most difficult thing for God to do was to save you through the suffering of the cross to pay for your sins.

That's incredible. What great love is involved in that? Love and power because when he was raised from the dead, when he was seated at the right hand of God, look down at chapter 2, verse 5, actually let's go ahead and read verse 4, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved--and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." When he was raised from the dead, we were united with him and we, by faith, were seated with him in the heavenly places.

That is the power at work for us and that is the power that it takes for us for Christ to dwell in our hearts through faith, but it takes not only faith, it takes love. For God to dwell, for you to be filled up with the fullness of God, it takes Christ dwelling in your heart through faith and it takes love. It takes comprehending his love and it takes knowing his love. Those are two different things. To comprehend the love of God, it means to grasp, right? But look at what it says to grasp there in verse 18, that you would

"have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ." Is has the idea of becoming acquainted with and holding onto and apprehending and understanding, but how big is the love of Christ? How big is it? Think of it. What is the breadth of his love? He's been talking about it already: Jew, Gentile, every human that believes, his love covers it all. It's wide. How long is it? We read it in our Scripture reading this morning: before the foundations of the world, he loved you. And it has endured many wicked people through the ages. Think of this. God could have killed everyone at the flood and then returned and set up his kingdom, instead not willing that any of his chosen ones would perish, he has allowed history to continue and continue and many wicked people to exist so that his chosen ones would come into existence and believe. He chose you and I and every other believer before the foundation of the world. You were in his heart. He knew you and he decided to save you.

Not only did he choose you and plan that, but he worked everything out. Acts 17 says that God has basically determined the boundaries of people's existence. He has controlled the movement of nations and to do that you have to control the movement of individual people and families, and there's wars and refugees and famines and gold rushes that moved people around the world. He allowed your ancestors to survive so that you would come, so that his believers would come into existence and come to faith in Christ.

Not only did he keep them alive and control all that, he ensured that the Gospel made its way to you through all of that. The active, purposeful, long-suffering, enduring love of God through the ages and it says in chapter 2, look at verse 7. So he saved us, verse 7, seated us with Christ in the heavenly places "so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." So in coming ages, future millennia. I mean, eternity, we say that and we don't have any grasp of what that means. It is year after year after year, day after day after day, moment after moment, stretching out endlessly. He wants to show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us and it's in eternity. It's going to be, you know, it's like an eternal birthday party. You know how as a parent, how many of you are parents here? When you have a birthday party for your kid, you want to give them just this awesome stuff, right, because you want to see their face light up. You love them and you delight in lavishing them with kindness and gifts on their birthday. It says here that God made us alive with Christ, raised us up with him so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us and we will turn around and worship the Lord, we will be perfect. That's not going to tempt us toward self-centeredness. We'll be perfect so he can lavish and just dump his grace upon you forever. That is how long the love of Christ is.

How deep is it? It's as deep as your sin. Deeper, in fact. It reaches to the depths of your soul. It loves you to the last shred of wickedness in your own heart and transforms that heart and one day will completely eradicate sin so that you will no longer be, you won't have to deal with the effects of temptation, of suffering, of death. That's how deep it is. It's going to transform this universe. This world will be renewed. We will live in a

kingdom ruled by a great God, the son of David. Everything will be different right down to the most ugly desires of your heart.

And how high is it? We've already talked about how we have been seated with Christ in the heavenly places. It can't get any higher. Seated with him on his throne, that's how high the love of Christ is.

So Paul prays that you would have strength to grasp that, to grasp how big it is. He prays that you would have strength to have the faith for Christ to dwell in your hearts which is the prerequisite to being rooted and grounded in love. And having been rooted and grounded in love, that you would have strength to grasp how great his love is.

Now before we get to what it means to know the love of Christ, I want to talk a little bit about what it means to be rooted and grounded in love. This word, it's a planting term and a construction term: rooted like a plant in the soil of love. When you come to know Christ, you are like a new plant planted in that soil and that soil is deep and wide and there is no limit to the ability for love to grow. Does that make sense? Love cannot stop growing. It will just continue to expand and you have been planted in that soil and you will never exhaust, you will never reach the end of what it means to love. You will never fulfill every opportunity that there is.

The construction term: you are grounded, you are established in love. The foundation is a foundation of love because of Christ, because of what he has done. That is what you lacked before salvation was a true godly love, but now you have it if you are in Christ. You have the foundation that you need and you have the soil that you need to act in love. Now this is not an easy thing to love, and we'll get into that in a moment. That's really what it means to know the love of Christ.

So what does it mean, then, to know the love of Christ? Well, think about this. I moved out here from out West. You know, we just got done talking about the length and the width and the height and the breadth and it's just huge. It's massive, right? Well, I grew up on a 20,000 acre ranch out in the middle of Montana. There is a big mountain range behind me. You can see 50 miles that way and 50 miles that way to the other mountain range. It's just massive and you can see that far and it's huge and you just are in awe. I lived there for 15 years, never got over how big it was. The stars at night were just crystal clear because you're out in the middle of nowhere and the air is a little bit dry so you can see it. It looks like powder on the sky. It's huge. You go down to the Grand Canyon and you drive over there and you walk up to the edge and you look down that thing and it's huge. Go out to Yosemite, massive granite cliffs. Sequoia trees as big around as half of this room in diameter. Redwood trees several hundred feet tall. Just massive massive things.

Now I can tell you about it here. I can explain that to you. You can read the encyclopedia. You can look at a picture and you can go, "Okay, yep, it's big." And you can even maybe be in awe of that, but it doesn't impact you the way that it does when you really know it. What does it take to know the Grand Canyon? You've got to walk down into it. You've

got to hike down into it. Only when you hike down into it and then you start trying to explore it do you realize that this thing is so much bigger than you even could tell from reading about it. It's so much bigger than even if you stood on the edge of it. When you get down into the middle of it, you realize that in a lifetime you could never fully explore it. That's how big the Grand Canyon is and that's what it means to know the Grand Canyon. You'll never fully know it but you know it because that knowledge is a knowledge of seeing, of experience. It's different than comprehension. It's different than a grasp. It's different than an intellectual apprehension. It is a sense of you have seen this canyon and you realize and you feel it how big it is.

You know, when you've experienced it, you love it. You want to go again if you've spent some time down in there. If you've spent some time in the massive mountains, if you've gone to Yosemite, I mean, I almost tear up thinking about it. Why? Not because I read about it. Not because it was awesome. Not because I was even a tourist. Because I spent so much time there. You drive down Highway 1 on the coast and there are these white cliffs dropping off into the Pacific Ocean and the sun is shining on the green, brown and the blue, and it's just like, you see, that's a different explanation, that's a different experience than just knowing about it. To know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. How can you know something that surpasses knowledge? It is simply that, it's to know that it is so much bigger than you can grasp and you have a sense of that.

So how do you come to know the love of Christ? Paul had already expressed the desire that they would have strength, that Christ would dwell in their hearts, that they be rooted and grounded in love, that they would grasp how big God's love is, which he just got done explaining, and then that they would have the experiential knowledge of the love of Christ. So how do you do that? You have to walk in his love. You have to walk in his love.

Look at chapter 4, verse 1, "I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling." He's already laid out the Grand Canyon and now he tells you to go and walk in it. He talks about being filled with the fullness of Christ and being filled with the Spirit to live out the love of God. You will comprehend his love when you imitate his love. You will begin to grasp it when you try to do it. You will see what great love it took Christ to save you when you lay down your life for someone else and it's in that when you're suffering on behalf of another, that you begin to know the love of Christ.

This is how we grow. This is what it means to be filled with the fullness of God so that you would be no longer tossed to and fro but speaking the truth in love you would grow up into him, that you would put off sin and put on righteousness. Chapter 5, verse 1, that you would "be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." There is no limit, no boundary to the amount of love that you can show. It continues. Every moment there is an opportunity to love. Every minute there is an opportunity to love as Christ loved; to lay yourself down; to care and be concerned for the needs of others; to speak the truth to build them up.

There is no limit to this and when you start to climb down into that canyon of God's love and explore it, then you begin to realize more and more, first of all, the strength that you need to do this. This takes supernatural strength to do it and it is only in doing it that you realize that you need the strength and you realize how massive the love of God is. Walk in love as Christ loved. Submit. This is where it gets down to difficult things. You want to know the love of God? Be filled with the Spirit, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. Do you want to know the love of Christ? Learn what it means to submit because Christ submitted himself to the Father. Husbands, you want to know what it means to know the love of Christ, then love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

You see, your knowledge of the love of Christ is limited by your obedience to him. You want to know the greatness of his love, you want to understand it, you want the joy of that, you want to be dominated by him and his love, walk this out. Is that easy? No, that's why it takes strength. That's why he prays that the Spirit of God would give them power, strengthen them with power in the inner man, so that Christ would dwell in their hearts, that they be rooted and grounded in love, that they would know the love of Christ and that they be filled with the fullness of God. It takes strength, strength that is beyond you. It's not simply knowing you should do it, and it's not doing it simply out of legalistic self-righteousness. Genuine love for your wife is a supernatural gift of God. Children, obey your parents if you want to know the love of God. Fathers, do not provoke your children. Bondservants, obey your masters. Masters, treat them well. And finally, be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might, 6:10, put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. Stand firm against the devil.

So how can we do this? What makes this possible? We've talked some about this already but it is possible to do this. It is possible to walk through the Grand Canyon of God's love. It's possible to grasp it. It's just like it was possible for Christ to dwell in your hearts. Why? By a supernatural gift of God through nothing that you did. It was by faith. God can do that. God can enable you in your soul to love as he loved.

Look at chapter 2, verse 10, "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." You can do this because God has prepared it for you and he is working that in you. You can do this because he is arranging everything after the counsel of his will, and look at what Paul prays, chapter 3, verse 16, "that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened." So it takes the riches of his glory to strengthen you with this power through his Spirit in your inner being so that you can do this and we're not left alone to do this. Look at what he says in verse 20, "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

So if you want to know the love of Christ, if you want to be filled up with all the fullness of God, you need to cry out to the Lord. If you have not been saved, you need to believe in Christ who died for your sins based on nothing that you could earn, and then being

rooted and grounded in love, you need to comprehend the gigantic breadth and length and height and depth of his love, and you need to know experientially the love of Christ. You need to walk out that knowledge and it is God who is at work in you to do this.

So with that in mind, we're going to end 10 minutes early but I would ask you to take just a moment to consider in what ways do you need to walk in the love of God because when you do, you'll be blessed by the joy that comes of the knowledge of the love of Christ that surpasses understanding and may he strengthen us to do this, I pray.

Let's pray.

Father, I pray that you would guide us and strengthen us. Lord, take this feeble attempt at explaining your word and make it flourish in the hearts of your people. Lord, only you can strengthen us. It is your Spirit, it is your truth, and I pray, Father, that the soil, this deep soil and this strong foundation that we've been built upon, the foundation of Christ and the Gospel of love, would cause us to grow more and more, to put off sin, to seek, humbly seek unity with one another, to lay off the old man and put on the new, to put off our sinful desires to put on the new, and to love each other and be imitators of Christ's love. Help us, God, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.