

**The Fullness of God, Part 3**

Scripture: Ephesians 3:16-17

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Ephesians chapter 3--How to be filled with the Fullness of God. How to be filled with the Fullness of God. That is the theme of chapter 3 verses 14 through 21. Now we've been speaking of the lofty and glorious position of the body of Christ, the church. The church as Peter says is called to perfection and glory that possesses all things that pertain to life and godliness. The church that is given exceedingly great and precious promises. The church that has become partaker of the divine nature. And we've been learning that we who are the church of Jesus Christ are this very special glorious group of people. In fact I've always said that outside of the Trinity the church is the hottest commodity in the universe. We are even elevated above the angels so that the angels look at us to see the things they cannot comprehend. We have been purchased for God through the blood of Jesus, forgiven, accepted in the beloved. We've become slaves and sons of God. Forever His possession. Sealed with the Spirit. Protected by divine love, sustained by divine providence, energized by divine power. We are priests, we are kings, we have been taught and led and ruled and loved and made alive and built up and blessed by the Lord Jesus Christ. We are thus as we have seen, the possessors of the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ as it reminds us in chapter 3 verse 8. We are rich because we are one with Jesus Christ.

The great almighty God of the universe has set His redeeming love upon us. Has drawn us into His family and proceeds to pour upon us the gracious gift of His love both now and forever as chapter 2 verses 6 and 7 reminded us. So we are rich as members of the church, the body of Christ, the real church the church of people united to Jesus Christ, we are the rich. Our resources are unlimited. We are more than conquerors, Paul says. That is we don't just conquer we claim all the spoil in addition to it. Life both in time and eternity has a fantastic thrilling meaning and an ultimate fulfillment that is beyond our wildest imagination. It's a tremendous thing to realize, people, that because you are a Christian you are a part of God's eternal plan. You are in the midst of an eternal purpose. You have a potential that is unlimited and will be fulfilled throughout eternity.

As I was thinking about that and all those great truths we've already seen in the first three chapters of Ephesians, I was reminded of the contrast between us and the rest of the world. Here we are so rich. Here we are having so much. With such resources. Such power and such potential to be loved by God, to be empowered by Him, to be indwelt by Him, to possess what we possess, what a contrast to the destitution, the spiritual poverty, the emptiness, the meaninglessness, the purposelessness of the

life of people in the world. It's like Mrs. Maylay said one time - life must go on, I just can't remember why. Or, Arthur Miller in AFTER THE FALL where one of the principals says to her husband -life is deteriorated to how many miles we get on our Volkswagen. We face a world of people who are destitute of divine resources and thus they are destitute of purpose and meaning.

And I guess, maybe, it focuses in clearly on Sunday. Here we all are. We have come apart from the destitute people. We who love the Lord Jesus Christ, we who are the rich, we who are the ones with resource, we who are part of the divine plan. We who fit the whole marvelous miracle of the church. Here we are separated out from the destitution of our age and our world. As they run around today making meaning out of meaninglessness.

Victor Frankel, the originator of Logo Therapy, and a writer with some interesting insights who endured some terrible trials in concentration camps has written a book called THE DOCTOR AND THE SOUL. He's not a Christian but he has some interesting things to say and this is from that book. Quote - "In any city Sunday is the saddest day of the week. It is on Sunday that the temple of the working week is suspended and the poverty of meaning of everyday life is exposed. The emphasis on a fast tempo in the personal life is reminiscent of the clinical picture of 'unproductive mania.' The yield of all the to-do is zero. We get the impression that these people who know no goal in life are running the course of life at the highest possible speed so that they will not notice the aimlessness of it. They are at the same time trying to run away from themselves but in vain. On Sunday when the frantic pace pauses for 24 hours, all the aimlessness, meaninglessness and the emptiness of their existence rises up before them once more." end quote

How interesting that Victor Frankel would observe the focus of meaninglessness that becomes apparent on Sunday. A world of no meanings becomes manifest when the world of meaning withdraws itself for that one day a week.

What a privilege is ours, people, to be a part of the world with meaning. To be a part of the people that count, the people that matter, the people who have a place in the world. The people who have a part in the plan. What a privilege. I look at my own life. I'm so amazed that God chose me. Do you ever think like that? What an amazing thing. I mean, how did He ever see us as useful? Reminds me of the story of the old lady who was hired to sweep out the shavings in a studio where a sculptor had been commissioned by the government to sculpt a large bust of Abraham Lincoln. And it was done and the lady was hired to come in and sweep up all the shavings. And the man was just finishing as she arrived with her broom and her bucket and dustpan. And she looked in amazement and she said - Oh, sir, she said, how did you know Mr. Lincoln's head was in that rock?

What a God is our God who saw in the rock of our meaninglessness a potential for His own glory. Right? How did you know a servant of God was in that rock? What a wonder it is that God has been so gracious to choose us. That when we were without form and void, the Spirit of God moved upon us

and out of the void, the emptiness and nothingness sprang something significant, something meaningful, a creation of God no less than the world itself. A miracle of creation to be used for His glory. How could God have seen in us something to be chiseled into the image of Jesus Christ? To be to His glory and then to shower upon us, as if it were, eternal riches. As if He were taking the statue and gilding it with gold, the gold of His glorious kingdom.

One of the great tasks of the apostle Paul in the first three chapters of Ephesians is to present this great truth that God has chiseled us out of the rock of meaninglessness. That God has made us into the image of Christ. And then He has poured upon us the pure gold gilt of His blessing. That's who we are, marvelous reality.

Now in chapter 4 to 6 he's going to tell us how to live. But, before we get into how we live we've got to get turned on. Right? And that's where we are in 3:14 to 21. We see the resources in the beginning of the book. We see the behavior in the end and in the middle how to hook them up. How to get the engine going. We've used a car as an illustration. Your engine described in the first, three chapters, the road map in 4 to 6 and the ignition in 3:14 to 21.

Now Paul's great desire is that every Christian really be ... really be functioning on full power. He wants the Christian to really be moving out. Doesn't want any limping, flat tire, one cylinder, gagging, coughing, choking, smoking Christians. He wants them to be functioning smoothly, powerfully, fluidly in all of the energy that God could possibly grant. And that's why the climax in verse 20. "Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think according to the power that works in us." And that's what Paul wants. He wants to see the power of God accomplishing exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think. He wants us really functioning. And so because that is his desire he prays that that will happen and his prayer is recorded in 14 to 21. It is a prayer.

Verse 14 begins, "For I ... 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 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 who 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, generations without end." Let it be. Amen.

Now here is Paul's prayer. And it's grandiose, people, it's incomparable, it's magnificent. It embodies such expression, such potential. And as I told you last time, it is a series of hina, that's a little word in the Greek h-i-n-a that means a purpose or result. It's a series of sequences that you can't ... you can't break in the middle. It's like a...it's like a ...a

stepping stone. You can't go to step two without step one, you can't go to four without three, and you can't go to five without one, two, three and four. There is a progression here that must be accepted and moved through in order to gain the ultimate end. And hina is a Greek device in the Greek language to show us this consequent kind of progression.

Now there are five elements to the progression. Five things to get you turned on; inner strength, indwelling Christ, incomprehensible love, infinite fullness and finally, internal power--and you're really going.

Now you remember last time we talked about the first one, didn't we? The first one we suggested was inner strength, verse 16. Look at it. He prays that we, at the end of the verse, we would be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. Inner strength. And we suggested to you that Paul's prayer really is this the recognition that every believer possesses the Holy Spirit. Right? "What know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which you have of God you're not your own you're bought with a price," I Cor. 6:19. "Therefore glorify God in your body and your Spirit which are God." So, to begin with every Christian possesses the Spirit. Romans 8:9; "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His." He's in there. Jesus said in Acts 1:8, "When the Spirit has come upon you, you shall receive," what? "Power" So every believer has the resource. Every believer has the Spirit. Now he says--"Father, I pray that they would be strengthened with might by that indwelling Spirit in their inner man."

You remember last week we talked about the fact that we spent a lot of time concentrating on which man? The outer man when we need to concentrate on the inner man. That the inner man would be strengthened. That the inner man would be strong so that we would be able to agree with Paul--"Be anxious for nothing," Phil. 4, "But in every- thing by prayer and supplication let your request be made known unto God and the God of peace." In other words, you'll experience the God of peace. And then he talks about the peace of God which comes from the God of peace which will guard your hearts and minds. If you want to have a non-worrying mind, if you want to have an unanxious spirit you've got to have a strong inner man. And we said that this simply means a Spirit-controlled life. As you yield to the Holy Spirit which you're able to do by being filled with the Word of God, you fill your mind and heart with the Word of God, the Holy Spirit brings the Word of God to the conscious thought when you get into a temptation and uses that to direct you into an act of obedience. So a strong inner man empowered by the Spirit of God is the beginning.

And don't sort of chafe at that and say - Well, I don't know if I can do that. Yes you can. The Spirit is there. The power is there. Acts 1:8. It's all there. It's a matter of you yielding to it and it's simply a matter of decision. Every time you have a decision turn it over to the Spirit of God. From the first one in the morning to the last one at night. And the only way you can do that is when your thoughts are about Him and the only way your thoughts will be about Him is as you study what? The Word of God.

Now let's go to the second one. Where there is a strong inner man there is a result. And it says to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man with the result that, or in order that. And you have a purpose or a result. In this case both are true. In order that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Or with the result that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Or with the purpose that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. The indwelling Christ then is the second point. From inner strength to the indwelling Christ.

You say - Well, I don't understand that, John, because if I'm a Christian Christ is already there. How could you possibly have Chri ... the Holy Spirit in you and not have Christ in you. It seems like it's backwards. Well that's what I thought too. Wait a minute, it should say - First of all Christ dwells in your heart and then you would be strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man. Right? That would seem logical but that's only because the English is deficient here and we must go back to the Greek. Now we don't need.. we don't want, I should say, to believe that first of all we start with the Holy Spirit and later we receive Christ. Right? That doesn't make any sense. You can't have the Holy Spirit until you have Christ or Christ is the one who gives the Spirit. So, Christ is already in us, that's clear from chapter 1, chapter 2, chapter 3. We are one with Christ. He is in us. We are in Christ. We've heard that over and over and over and over in this book. So this is not referring to getting saved. He's not saying - Now that you're strengthened with might by His Spirit the result is going to be that Christ will come into your life. No, no, no That's backwards. You say - Well, what is he saying? Watch this. See the word dwell there? That Christ may dwell? The Greek word is katoikeesi. Now that wouldn't be important just to say the word except that it has tremendous significance. Katoikeesi, this form, comes from a verb katoikeo, that comes from two words kata and oikeo. Oikeo means to be at home, to dwell at home, to be at home. Kata means down. Now I've told you this many times, you may have forgotten. Whenever you have a verb in the Greek and they add a preposition to the front of it what does it do to it? It intensifies it. So kata added to oikeo means to really be at home. To settle down and be at home. And that's the meaning of the word.

Now he's saying, then, that when you have inner strength and you're really walking in the Spirit and Spirit-controlled and Spirit-energized the thing that's going to happen is Christ is really going to be at home in your heart. And I dare say, beloved, there are a lot of Christians where He dwells but is not that comfortable. Would you agree to that? Why I think all of us would agree there have been times in our lives when we have discomfited Christ greatly. You remember back in I Corinthians where he says - You Christians, you're going out and committing adultery, don't you realize that you are joining Jesus Christ to a harlot? Now wouldn't you think that would make him decidedly uncomfortable? Yes Any sin is a discomfiture to Christ. Anything that quenches the Spirit that grieves the Spirit. Anything that saddens the heart of Jesus. Any sin in your life makes Him uncomfortable

Now Christ is in my life but the question is this. Until the Spirit of God controls my life He is not comfortable there. He's not at home there. He can't settle down. He's always up cleaning up the

place. Some of you...some of you people know about that. Sometimes you come home and you ladies particularly, my wife does that, she walks in the door and she goes - Oh, look at the place. And, you know, I'll say - Well, that's all right, honey, I'll help you. I'll exhort you while you clean. So I follow her around the house quoting Bible verses just to encourage her. But anyway, and then you clean and you clean and you get it all done and then it's just ... isn't it great. And you just sit down and you can talk and listen to music whatever, have a wonderful time. You can be at home. That's very little different than the experience of Christ who enters into the life of a believer and finds that the work is not always all done. He can't just settle down to commune with the believer He's got to be up cleaning the place. Because all is not right. The question then, beloved, is this. The question is not is Jesus there it's is He comfortable there? Is He really comfortable there? That's the issue. And in many lives He's not comfortable. He's distressed. In fact in some lives His process of cleaning even hurts a little bit, get a little chastening.

Let me give you an illustration. Back in, don't need to turn to it, Genesis 18 and 19 God was going to bless Abraham with a son . You remember that? Abraham and Sarah So the Lord was going to do this thing and it was a monumental thing, I mean, this child was going to be Isaac and this was going to be the first seed of the Abrahamic covenant, ultimately to resolve in Christ. This was going to be the first real Hebrew, if you want it in terms of what really happened. This was the first Jew in effect, first of the seed to be known as the nation Israel. Isaac. And it was a monumental time for this thing, it was a big deal. It was so important. The Messianic line was born And so God was going to make a special visit to the earth. Oh yes, the incarnation of Jesus Christ was not the first time God showed up here. In fact in Genesis 18 He arrived at Abraham's house with two angels, remember that? Just came walking down the path with two angels. You say - In what form was God? I don't know. Apparently, some kind of a visible form, not unlike a human form. But in fact He came there and Abraham said to Sarah - Sarah, we have got company like you won't believe, Sarah. You've heard of important company? God is here. And two angels. And then, of course, later in Hebrews 13 it says - You better be careful too, you might entertain angels unawares, and it's referring to that. So what happened, of course, is Sarah really went in there and whipped up a wonderful thing and God actually came into Abraham's house and had fellowship. And you know what that tells me about Abraham? And Sarah? That tells me they must have been righteous people or God wouldn't have been comfortable there. You know that? God wouldn't have been comfortable there if they were not righteous people. Even though they were in the plan. And the reason I believe that is because in the very next chapter you have a most interesting situation. In the very next chapter in the 19th chapter, Lot was living in the city of Sodom. And the Lord planned to destroy those cities. But the Lord wanted to warn Lot to get out of there. But have you ever noticed that the Lord sent the two angels and never went Himself? He was comfortable in Abraham's tent but for some reason or another He wasn't comfortable in Lot's house. Even though He had a relationship with Lot, and Abraham.

And the same thing is true of Christians. We have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ but that does not necessarily mean that at all times Jesus is comfortable in our lives. Would you agree to

that? That's really an important thing. But when you are strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man then He's comfortable. When your life is resolved into the control of the Spirit of God, when you have yielded a moment by moment living pattern to the Holy Spirit Christ can settle down because as the Spirit controls your life He keeps it clean. He keeps it clean.

Some of you have read the little booklet called "My Heart Christ's Home." If you haven't you ought to get it and read it. That's a good little booklet. I read it many, many years ago when I was just a kid. And it's ... it makes a person's heart, does a kind of allegory to where a person's heart and life is like a house. And Jesus comes to the house and starts it out. The fact that Jesus is there indicates the person is a Christian. And Robert Munger who wrote the book describes it this way. First Jesus went into the library which is the control room of the house. Right? What you read. Which is like the brain. Where all the information is stored. And Jesus goes into the room that is the mind, the brain, and he finds on the shelves all kinds of trash and garbage and junk and evil and bad thinking and bad human philosophy and useless stuff, stuff that is not going to help you. A lot of neutral things and He just takes it all off the shelves, throws it away and puts the Word up there. See. The control room. Then He goes to the dining room. And the dining room is the room of the appetite. Right? And the room of the desires. What do you really feast on? What do you really hunger for? What do you really want? And he finds a worldly menu. A menu of riches, a menu that includes prestige, a menu that includes things, materialism, lust of the flesh and He takes it all out, everything out of there, and puts a new menu in and it is the food that really satisfies the will of the Father. Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. So the library is cleaned up and the Word is there. And the dining room is cleaned up and the only thing on the menu is the will of God. And you can get it in any different shape and form you want it but it's all the will of God. And so the will of God becomes that for which you hunger, not your own fleshly desires.

Then Jesus goes to the living room because the living room is where you share and you fellowship and He goes in there and He finds that that's where He's neglected. There's a lot of activity going on but nobody pays any attention to Him. He's just there. And all the fellowship and all the action that is going on, He's just there. I mean, you imagine that. Just think of it this way. Imagine the best friend you have, spend an entire day with you from dawn till midnight. The whole day. At your side the whole time. And all the while loving you, and all the while wanting to say to you you know, here's a good thing to do...oh, I don't think you should do that ... I'd like to encourage you to do this. Well, all day long you never bother to even acknowledge the presence of your friend. You never even said hello. You just went about your business, some- times giving an elbow, stepping on a toe. Just complete ... how long do you think that person would be your friend? About one day. Probably be pretty disillusioned. Jesus is the same kind of a friend only in a greater way. And it's very likely as near as one day last week He spent an entire day with you through which you never one time bothered to acknowledge His presence. Never one time. And yet He's your friend forever. It's a good think it's based on Him and not you. Right?

And so the living room is a place of fellowship. But you've got to have the right fellowship. And so this is where you need to spend time with Christ. And you can clear out a lot of those worldly acquaintances. And a lot of that wasted activity, and a lot of that stuff that doesn't have any redeeming virtue at all and spend your time with Christ and... listen to this, spend your time with people who have Christ living in them. See. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as a manner of some is and much the more as you see the day approaching because this is necessary to provoke yourselves to love and good works." Spend time with Jesus and spend time with people that Jesus lives in. Very important.

Well, then He goes to the workshop. And He goes to the workshop and He finds fantastic tools, beautiful work bench. And the guy is in there making toys. Just toys. And Jesus says you've-got all this ability and you can't produce anything more than a toy? Jesus wants to take all your abilities, all your capacities, all your capabilities and cause them to produce things for the Kingdom. Cause them to lay up treasure in heaven, cause them to make things that have eternal value. So He changes the whole format in the workshop. He gets all done. I mean, the library's all fixed; it's got the right kind of stuff up there to control everything. The dining room is great, we've got the appetites all set on the will of God. The living room is settled, we're in there fellowshiping with Christ and people Christ lives in. And the workshop is ready; we're down there using our tools and our abilities to make things for the kingdom. But there's a strange odor coming from someplace. Nice and clean but something stinks. You know, like when the meat leaked under the ice box, or whatever. And the Lord isn't too happy. There's something dead in here, He says. And the guy says - Look, You come into my house. You clean up everything. I mean, leave me one closet, will You? That's all I ask. You can have the dining room and all this stuff, just ... that's my closet. The Lord says No, I want that closet. That's the closet full of personal sins, the hidden things, the dead things. And the man became very angry because Jesus had every other room but Jesus gave him a command - Open it! And he opened it and it was full of evil things. Those little secret things that nobody knows about, those things that go on in your mind. Those things that you do when nobody sees you do them. And Jesus cleaned that out. And when He got all that done-then He was at home. See?

Now that's what it means in verse 17. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. And that's the key to it, people; we can't see that He's at home we have to believe that He is when we know our lives are pure. By faith we accept that Christ is at home. If somebody says to you - Well how do you know Jesus is at home in your life?! You say - Well I ... I believe it by faith. I believe by faith that He came into my life, I believe by faith that I confess my sins and He cleanses them and purifies me and I believe by faith that if I'm being pure and confessing my sin and dealing with my sin and repenting of it and turning from it and endeavoring to keep my life as pure as possible in His power, I believe by His promise that He is at home in me. And I'll tell you something, the Lord's got enough grief in the world without John MacArthur giving Him more. Right? I'd just soon have Him at home in me. Wouldn't you have Him at home in you?



Somebody told me the other day that they were praying for a certain person because he wanted to accept Christ just to stay out of hell but he wanted to go ahead and live just as worldly as he wanted to, he didn't want Christ messing with that stuff. Well I don't know if he's a Christian, maybe he is. God is gracious enough to accept somebody's faith and then have His heart broken by their disobedience. That's happened a lot. But I'll tell you one thing. I love the Lord Jesus Christ too much to do that to Him. To say to Him - I'll take everything You can give but don't expect anything out of me. You give me all You've got forever and I'm not giving You anything I've got for time. That's a bad, bad attitude. If I really love the Lord Jesus Christ then my desire is not to grieve the Lord and my desire is not to make Him uncomfortable in my life, my desire is to make Him at home. Right?

And so the Lordship of Christ is to extend to every room in your life, He wants it all. Now after you are yielding to the Holy Spirit, and you are strengthened with power in the inner man and the Spirit controls your life, the result is you become Christ centered. And you become clean. And Christ settles down into every dimension of your life and He is at home in you. Listen people, that is an incredible condescension, do you understand that? That the God of the universe should settle down and be at home in me. What a magnificent thought. This was Jesus' great prayer in John chapter 14 and verse 23. This is what He said; "If a man love Me he will keep My words," and look, "And My Father will love him and We will come unto Him and make Our home with him." See, God the Father, God the Son they want to come and be at home in my life. They don't want me dragging Them into a wrong behavior, they don't want me dragging Them into an evil place. They don't want me exposing Them to an evil deed. I have to realize that everywhere I go and everything I do involves the Lord. That's a basic Christian truth. I have to practice His presence by faith. That's what he means by faith. I have to know that He's there to believe that He's there, to believe that He's only at home in my life as I'm dealing with sin. I want the Father to be at home. I want the Son to be at home. I want the prayer of Jesus to be answered. I want to be one who loves Him and He says - "And if a man love Me and keep My words, We'll be at home in him. You can't do that unless you're strong in the inner man. You'll never be able to obey the Word of God. You'll never be able to avoid sin. You'll never be able to deal with sin. You'll never be able to confess sin, repent from sin, turn from sin, keep the rooms clean in your house, you'll never be able to do that until the Spirit of God has granted you inner strength and that will never happen until you give Him control of your life. Never happen. So all the while you don't have that inner strength, Christ will never settle down and be at home in your life. You'll be a constant source of anxiety to Him and chastening to yourself.

Now there's a third thing and we'll probably stop with this one. Verse 17; first thing is inner strength, the result of that is Christ dwells in your hearts by faith now here's another purpose and result clause -- "In order that" or with the purpose that, or with the result that, "Ye being rooted and grounded in love." Now stop right there for a minute. This is fabulous. Everybody wants love. Everybody wants to know love and experience love and give love and receive love and enjoy love. And here's the key--a strong inner man leads to Christ being at home which leads to being rooted and grounded in love.

Now you'll never know love in your life until you follow the first two steps, the third one is incomprehensible love. Inner strength leads to the indwelling Christ which leads to incomprehensible love. Another one of the purpose clauses in the Greek here. The result of Christ, now watch this one, the result of Christ's unrestricted access to the Christian's heart is love. You see, when Christ settles down in your life He will begin to exude His personality. You see, if He controls the library, the thinking, if He controls the dining room, the appetite, if He controls the living room, the fellowship, the discussions, the sharing, the conversation, the entertainment, if He controls the workshop, what is being done, the use of abilities and gifts and functions. If He's got the closet clean then His nature dominates and His nature is what? Love, love. The result of Christ's unrestricted access to the believer's heart is love. That's when you become rooted and grounded in love. That's when you really experience it. That's when you're able, verse 18 says, to comprehend with all saints the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

You'll never know that love until you have inner strength and the indwelling Christ, until you have come to the place where you've yielded to the Holy Spirit, Christ settles down home in your life, and He begins to exude His love. Then it dominates you, it roots you, it grounds you. And this is his prayer for you that you know His love. Jesus said, "The new commandment I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you that ye also love one another." In I Peter 1:21 and following he talks about this, verse 22 says; "Seeing that you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another with a pure heart fervently." This is God's desire. Chapter 4 verse 8 he talks about love covering a multitude of sins. You know as well as I do that love is a vital part of the Christian's experience. We are to manifest the fruit of the Spirit, the first one is the... the fruit of the Spirit is love and then somebody says joy, peace, gentleness, faith, goodness, meekness and self-control are simply subcategories of love. Love is an attitudes of selflessness. Love is an attitude of...unselfish sacrifice, love is service. I don't think we should keep defining love as an emotion, we've gone through that in I Cor. 13, love is not an emotion in the Bible, never. Love is an act of selflessness. God so loved the world that He felt emotional about it. No. God so loved the world that He did what? He gave the best that He had. If any man loves Me he will keep My words. If you don't meet your brothers need, I John 3:16, how dwells the love of God in you. You see, love is not an emotion, people, it is selflessness. It is sacrifice. It is meeting someone's need. It is serving somebody. It is dying for somebody. "Greater love has no man than this that a man feel really emotional about his friends." No. "Greater love hath no man than this that a man," what? "Lay down his life for his friend." It's always sacrifice, it's always selflessness, it's always giving something, it's always serving something.

And if we're ever going to know what it is to serve and to sacrifice and to give with unlimited generosity, it will only be when we know the incomprehensible love of Christ. And we'll never know that until He is the indwelling Christ who is at home in us and that will never happen until we've experienced the inner strengthening of the Spirit of God. And this is the turn on, people; this is what is going to make the difference.

Once the Spirit of God takes over, Christ settles down and is at home, and we become rooted and grounded in the love that is His nature that permeates us. You know, I find that that is exactly what happens in my own love. That when I realize my own sinfulness, when I deal with my own weakness and when I really walk in the Spirit, Christ is at home in my life and things are right in my life, I just feel love, I just have a desire to serve, I just have a desire to meet needs. I find myself doing things that I normally wouldn't even do.

Rooted and grounded in love. And then it says not only will we experience it, we'll be rooted and grounded in it, but verse 18, we'll even comprehend it. Now a lot of people don't comprehend love. Love ... you know, that's a common deal isn't it? You see it in the paper now and then, somebody will ask a bunch of famous people for their definition of love ... people do not ... they don't know love. You know why? You can't know it unless you experience it.

One time somebody asked Louis Armstrong to explain jazz. Louis Armstrong is a great jazz trumpeter. They said, - Mr. Armstrong could you explain jazz? And Louis Armstrong says - Man, if I've got to explain it, you ain't got it. And he's right. And if you're asking about love, if I've got to explain it, then you ain't got it. But if you got it, you're not looking for the explanation, you comprehend it.

Verse 18, "Then you will be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and height and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." You can know it. You can comprehend it. Only when you experience it.

Now I have a lot of things I want to say about that love but I'm going to have to wait until next time to say them. But let's review quickly. First of all, Paul prays - O Father, that they would have inner strength, strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man and the result of that will be indwelling Christ, Christ will settle down and be at home and the result of that will be love will permeate their lives, and oh boy, when that happens then the prayer of Jesus is answered - Father, that they may love one another as I love You. That's my prayer.

And then not only will we experience it, we'll comprehend it, we'll see it, we'll be able to define it. We'll know its operative. And that's exciting to think about. We're go on from there next time.

I hope this morning you'll make that second commitment. We'll finish the third one next time, but let me just say this quickly. Last week I asked you to pray. Did you do that? Did you remember to pray every day for somebody that they would be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man? Or did you fail to do that? Did you pray for yourself that you would experience that inner strength that comes from yielding to the Spirit? Let me take you ... I hope you didn't. I'm not foolish enough to think that all of you did. Let me take you to that second one. What about the indwelling Christ? Is He at home in your life? Or do your attitudes toward your children, toward your husband or wife, toward

your boss, toward your employees, to the guy driving down the freeway next to you, toward the guy at the gas station, the next door neighbor that bugs you, that waters your patio instead of your yard. Your attitude reflect sin? Does your thought processes reflect sin? Do you do things in your business or your work that aren't right? Do you go places? Do you entertain yourself and indulge yourself with things that are not honoring to God? If you are then I would just encourage you to realize that Jesus Christ is not at home in you. He's there by His grace, He's not at home. He can't settle down. He's up cleaning up all the time. Why don't you love Him enough to let Him be comfortable? Let's pray together.

Our Father, we thank You this morning for the fact that Christ is in us. That's a wonderful mystery. We know we don't deserve that. We thank You that's it's true. That He lives in us. Father, we desire that He be at home. Father, there may be some with us this morning and they've never invited Jesus Christ to come into their life at all, He isn't even there. May this be the day when they open their heart to Him. O to that end we pray, Father. But for those of us whom Christ already lives we want Him to really settle down and be at home. At home because it's clean in there. And it's clean in there because we yield to the Spirit of God to do only those things that please Him. That our brains are filled only with the things of God. That our appetites are only for the will of God. That our fellowships are only surrounding the things of Christ. That the workshop is filled with endeavors and efforts to build for the Kingdom and that there's no closet there filled with evil. Father, help ... help us to grapple with the fact that Christ wants to really be at home in us. And we know that that will lead to a life literally filled with love. What a way to live. In Jesus name. Amen

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