Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Fullness of God, Part 4
Scripture: Ephesians 3:18-21
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Ephesians chapter 3 verses 14 to 21, Paul says; "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth' and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him: who is 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. Amen."

I've been trying to tell you in the last couple of weeks that this is one of the richest and most significant of all the passages of the Word of God. It is a passage that is filled with transforming truth. It's one of those key points in the New Testament. One of those vital areas that really tells you how to get information out of your head and into your living. And as we've been looking at it I think the Spirit of God has been really reinforcing this to us. And I was thinking, this week, as I was mulling over in my mind how we might approach this text again, that we forget sometimes what an incredible treasure we have in the Word of God. These kinds of passages particularly -- that show us how to really live life to the fullest are such a legacy from the Holy Spirit that we do well to remind ourselves of their richness.

As I was teaching back at Moody this week, at the pastor's conference I was reminded of what a blessed thing it is to have the Word of God. To be able to tell those men that this is what the Bible says and to say to them - You tell your people this is what the Bible says. And to be able to bank upon, to count upon the Word of God. As I read earlier in Psalm 119, "To know that you are wiser than your enemies, that you have more understanding than your teachers, that you have more understanding than those ancients who have gone before." To realize that we are the informed people of the world. We are the ones who have the truth. What an incredible wonderful thought.

I was looking at those men out there as I was speaking to them, men called of God to impart to people God's word, God's truth. Men really called to try to make a difference in the world, to try to change people's lives. And the heart of it all is this book, right here. And you know, it was amazing as

we went through the week back there, that everybody seemed to be emphasizing the Word. Everybody just seemed to be really pounding on the input of the Word and how we must teach the Word. And how we must be shepherds that feed the sheep. And...it was just great, that was kind of like a running theme and you could tell that the Word was having a tremendous impact. In fact one dear black pastor was getting really blessed and he got up to speak the last time and he put it this way, he said “This week the Lord has rung my bell.” And then he said, “and he said If your bell didn't ring, your clapper is broken. He said - The Lord has lit a fire in my heart and if your fire ain't lit your wood is wet.” And, man, he was really going on it, he was blessed. And I can tell you that if... if you study the Word of God and if you plumb the depths of the Word of God, you're going to get your heart blessed, your bell rung, and your fire lit. It can't help but happen. I've never had an occasion to study the Word of God and to really drink it in and to really absorb it without being thrilled. And, I guess, maybe the problem with a lot of Christians is that they don't really drink the Word, they just kind of gargle it. And somehow they spit it out and it never gets inside and makes a difference.

Thomas Edison said on one occasion, "We don't know one millionth of one per cent about anything." Thomas Edison.

Mark Twain added, "But the trouble with the world is not that people know so little but the things they do know ain't so."

Now it's a pretty bad thing not to know one millionth of one percent of anything and the thing you do know ain't so. But that's what it would be like to live in the world apart from the revelation of God. Right? We are the informed. You see, we rise above ignorance. We rise above misinformation. We are wiser than our enemies. We are more understanding than our teachers. We are more understanding than the ancients of the past because we have the treasure of the Word of God. But listen, with privilege always comes what? Responsibility And it's not enough to gargle the Word of God on Sunday morning and spit it out as you get into your car. You need to drink it in. It ought to change your life. God has given us His revelation. It is an estimable privilege. It is an unsearchable treasury.

Look at Ephesians 1, this seems to be a major theme in Ephesians. It says in verse 8; "That God is abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of His will." What an incredible thing that God should make known to us the mystery of His will, that He, as Jesus said, shall reveal these things to babes and hide them from the wise of the world. Chapter 1 verse 17, Paul prays that we would have the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of Him, that the eyes of our understanding would be enlightened, that we would know what is the hope of His calling, what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe. We have this tremendous knowledge. And Paul prays that we would take advantage of the opportunity that it affords. In chapter 3 you have it again, verse 9 Paul says that God has called him to be used as a preacher, to preach the unsearchable riches of

Christ and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things by Jesus Christ. And verse 11 says that we literally know the eternal purpose which God purposed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Beloved, you hold in your hand, in that little book that you have, the Holy Bible, the Word of God, the greatest most incredible gift that God could ever give a man.. And it's up to you to drink it in, to take it in, to use it, to make it a part of your life, to make it a part of every element of your thinking.

Jeremiah said in chapter 15 and verse 16 of his great prophecy; "Thy words were found and I did eat them and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart for I am called by Thy name, 0 Lord God of Hosts." Because I'm called by You, because I know You, because we have this intimacy together, Your Word is my food, my joy, my rejoicing

In Job 23 and verse 12 Job says; "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."

In Psalm 1 the righteous man is described in this way, "But his delight is in the law of God and in his law doth he meditate," what? "Day and night."

In Psalm 119 and 167; "My soul hath kept Thy testimonies, I love them exceedingly," said David. And he said in the 19th Psalm, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold and sweeter also than and the honeycomb."

God has given us His Word, people. God has given us this tremendous resource, tremendous sweet and rich treasure that is to be taken in and feasted upon. And as we have been studying in Ephesians we must have been reminded of what a feast it is. All of these things that God has given us are reinforced, revealed, impressed on us by the apostle Paul and here in verses 14 to 21 having given us some great truth, he prays that we would drink it not gargle it. That we would absorb it not put it off. That we would really operate on our knowledge.

I told you before; I'll just reinforce it by saying it again, that the greatest problem in the ministry as I see it, the most anxiety, the greatest heartache comes when people live lives that don't match what they know. That's a heartache. You know, we ought to be able to live up to what we know. We ought to be able to live up to what we understand. We ought to be able to take this knowledge and make it part of our life. And here's how. Here's the way. Three, 14 to 21 of Ephesians tells us how. This is how to get your Christianity functioning. This is how to take the resource and the power and make it operative. And we said there are five sequential steps; inner strength, indwelling Christ, incomprehensible love, infinite fullness and internal power. And Paul prays that we would have these. And they are connected, as I've told you, by a little Greek word hina which means in order that. So that one leads to another. Do this in order that this may happen, in order that this may happen, in order that this may happen and so it goes.

Now as we look at these five things we're going to see how a Christian really gets to the place where he functions. How you get to going on all cylinders. We've been calling it the Christian's turn-on. First of all, if we're going to really actualize all of this great truth, if we're going to take the treasure of the Word of God and the treasure of the indwelling Spirit of God and if we're going to make something out of this then it beings with inner strength. We must be strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man. That's in verse 16, Paul begins by saying that he prays that we would be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. There's got to be a changing in the inner man. We've got to allow the Spirit to have control.

Now your inner man will be strengthened when the Holy Spirit has control of it, when you yield to Him, when you no longer are ruled by yourself, when you no longer do just what you want, but where you learn moment by moment, step by step, one day at a time, to yield control to the Holy Spirit.

Now, I frankly, don't believe that the world has anyway in which it can help somebody in the inner man. I really don't see it. They can gloss things over, they can give you sort of temporary relief from a problem, but when you're dealing with the heart and the soul and the spirit and the inner man of a person, the world really doesn't have any answers. This is reinforced in a new book that just came out, I think it's published by Random House, it's a secular book, written by Martin Grouse, it's entitled THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY. And in this book he attempts to debunk the whole psychological, psychiatric and psychoanalytical method as just a whole lot of nothing. In fact his point in the book is that it's just a...one way for a lot of people to make a lot of money. Very interesting. He says if you want to find out whether or not people are in it for the money, he uses an example of a certain psychiatric hospital full of psychologically, or psychotically ill people, supposedly, who are real mental cases; this particular hospital has three people available to counsel them whereas in Beverly Hills there's over 300 psychiatrists and psychologists. There's no money in a mental hospital, there's plenty of it in Beverly Hills. In fact, Billy Graham said in that area - there are so many people with psychological problems it's called the mental block. But I think... I think that we're all aware of the difficulty with this whole so-called science.

Anyway, Grouse points out the fact that it just doesn't have any answers. His conclusion after all of this, and he goes into it from every conceivable angle, hundreds and hundreds of pages, his conclusion after all of this, and by the way there are medical people who are saying it's the most significant book on psychology written in years, the conclusion of all of this is -- that people are neurotic, they're always neurotic, they'll always be neurotic, let them alone. Just don't charge them money for being neurotic. You can't change them. There's not one thing you can do about it. And, in essence, we would say as Christians - Well, we don't believe that human wisdom can do anything at all about internal problems but we do believe the Holy Spirit can. Right? And if there's to be a change in the inner man it's going to be by the strengthening of the inner man through the Holy Spirit. And that comes as you yield to the Spirit. Every time you yield to the Spirit a decision in your life, every

time ... one time, you yield to the Holy Spirit that decision each day, you strengthen the muscle of your inner man a little more and as you continue to do that your inner man gets stronger and stronger and stronger and it's easier than to say yes to the Spirit and no to sin. And I've always said spirituality is a process of the decreasing frequency of sinfulness. Sin decreases as you yield to the Spirit because you strengthen the inner man and it becomes easier to say yes to the Holy Spirit.

So that's where it all begins. Strengthening the inner man by the Spirit as you yield to Him one day at a time. That leads, secondly, to the indwelling Christ. And we saw in our last couple of studies together that when you yield to the Holy Spirit, He controls your life then Christ settles down and becomes at home there. Right? Verse 17; "That Christ may katoikeesis, settle down and be at home in your hearts by faith. Christ wants to be at home in you. He wants to settle down. He wants to have a clean life. One that He doesn't have to be running around cleaning and sweeping and chastising and chastening and exhorting and so forth. The blessed Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Savior, the Messiah, God Himself in human flesh wants to life within the believer in fullness. He's there because you're a Christian, He wants to fill you. He wants to permeate you. He wants to dominate you so that II Cor. 3:18 becomes a reality. You are changed into His very image. So that Ephesians 4 becomes a reality. That you come to the full measure of the stature of Christ. In other words, Christlikeness, Christ permeating every part, every fiber, every ounce of your being with His wonderful person and presence.

So, as you yield to the Spirit of God, the Spirit of God controls your life and as your life is under His control it is being directed, it is being guided, it is being cleansed, it is being led, and there Christ can settle down and be at home. And when Christ is at home in your life, then He permeates every part of your life, you can said to be yielded totally to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Now, when that happens it leads to a third purpose, look at verse 17 in the middle; "In order that ye may be rooted and grounded in love." The beginning then, of really a love life which everybody really wants, it's the only way to be happy is to be filled with love. Hate doesn't do anything but tear you to pieces. Everybody wants a love life and a love life springs out of the permeation of life by the greatest lover in the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. When Christ fills us love fills us. Look what it says, then, in verse 17; "When Christ dwells in our hearts, that is when He settles down and is at home in our hearts, we are rooted and grounded in love.

Now that's talking about the foundation, the basis, the root system. That's where it all starts. You can't have a love experience; you can't have a love life unless you have love as a foundation. Love as a rock bed, the roots have to be love. And so he says - As Christ fills your heart love rules. Love is the foundation. Love is the bottom line. Love is that which everything else is built upon.

Now we know, according to Romans 5:5, that when we were saved it says the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. The moment we're saved God's love comes in us. His love is

there and it's expected that we love. It's the most normal thing in the world for a Christian to live a love life. In fact, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians and said - Nobody needs to teach you how to love, you are taught of God to love one another. Right? You are taught of God to love. That's just basic. There shouldn't be any question about that. That's just normal. That's just living out the Christian life. That's just doing what is natural. As obviously Peter says it that you ... when you were born again, you were born again unto unfeigned love of the brethren.

Now let me say it this way. If you don't experience a total life of love, it is not because it isn't there, it's because you have never allowed it to function. Which is easier? To breathe or hold your breath? Well, you've been breathing all morning and never thought about it. You don't get up in the morning and say - Now, I've got to breathe. Keep breathing or you'll die. Keep breathing or you'll die. Keep breathing, don't stop. Keep breathing or... You breathe period; nobody has to do anything because the pressure of the atmosphere around you exerts its pressure on your lungs and forces you to breathe. It's very difficult to hold your breath. You try it for a long time and you'll explode, it's just very difficult. You're fighting against the natural. When you became a Christian the most natural thing in the world was this, the love of God is shed abroad in your heart, it should permeate you, it should exude from you, it should touch everybody around you, it should be a way of life, but some people are holding their breath. And your own self-will holds your breath, resisting the love of God in selfish pride. Love is the most normal thing for a Christian to do. The Spirit of God comes into your life, He fills your life with love, He begins to rule your life, you yield to Him, Christ settles down, He is at home, His love permeates, and as it permeates your life you should be characterized thirdly, by incomprehensible love. And it should start by being the very root and the very foundation of your life. The very basis of your life.

Then he goes on to a second element of it. Not only is it the foundation, but if you'll notice in verse 18 he says you may be able to comprehend this love. Now in the Greek the verb comprehend is a compound verb, there is a Greek word lambano which means to receive something. And then there is katalambano which is an intense verb meaning to seize, or to grasp for your own. Or, it's like you...if somebody was really possessive you say they're graspy or they're possessive of something, that's the verb. And that's what is used here. You not only have a life that is built on love but you have a life that possesses love as a personal possession. You literally seize love; you make it your own as a way of living.

And so it is then that we not only have a foundation of love when Christ fills our life but we seize love, grasping every opportunity to love as a personal treasure, a personal possession. It is the most desired thing, something you want to seize, something you want to grasp. Something you want to cling to.

Further he says at the end of this little section in the beginning of verse 19 that we can know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. So it is the foundation of our life, it is that which we seize for

every moment in our life and it is that which we experience. The knowledge here being the knowledge of experience. To live a life built on love, to live a life that grasps every...every possibility of love in every situation, to live a life that comprehends love is only possible when you're filled with the fullness of the Spirit of God who causes Christ to be at home at exude in every dimension of your life, the fullness of His own love. Listen, if you claim to be a Christian but you don't have love as the root and the ground of your life, if you don't in every situation seize love as the expression for that situation and if you don't understand and comprehend and know love experientially then the problem is not that the people around you are giving you trouble, the problem is clear back in verse 16, you have never yet yielded the control of your life to the Holy Spirit because He will produce as a beginning fruit--love, Galatians 5:22. And then Christ will be at home and His love will permeate.

Listen, if your home and your relationship at home, husband and wife, is not a relationship of love it isn't the fact that you can't get along because you have personality conflict, it isn't a problem of personality at all, listen, in the Bible you are commanded to love every believer equally. Now if you can't get that kind of love at least for your wife, it's not a problem of incompatibility, it's a problem of iniquity, selfishness. People say - Well, I just don't love them anymore. Well, then you're in... you're in an act of disobedience. And by the way, if you just loved each other just with agape love, just Bible love you'd love everybody like God love you. And believe me; you could get along fine if you loved like that. You don't even need much romance. Believe me, you start loving the way God loves and you'll find romance.

See, we miss the point. The absence of love is the presence of sin. The absence of love is the presence of iniquity. The absence of love means you're not walking in the Spirit or the partner is not walking in the Spirit. You say - Boy, I'll tell you one thing; I've loved so long and look at the way I've been treated. Yeah, well so did God and look at the way He's been treated. Has it affected His love? Oh, you would bring that up. You know, I'm just trying to show you ... there's only one way to live and that's to live with love. That's ... it's only one way to live. To live filled with love, to be a forgiving, kind, tender-hearted loving, gracious, merciful, gentle person, it's the only way to live. It's the only way to have happiness. The only way to have that is to have Christ permeating your life with His Lordship and His love because the Spirit is in control. The only way to live is to have that ground and that root of love. And then to live every situation seizing love in that situation, experiencing love. And if you don't have it you've missed the point. You've missed it right at the basis, you've missed it. This is the bottom line of the Christian life; we are to be creatures of love. Jesus' great message to the apostles, the first thing He said the night in which He met with them before He was betrayed, the first thing He said is I want you to love each other. Remember that? As I have-loved you. Then in the 13th chapter of I Cor. he said - "You could speak with the tongues of men and angels and if you don't have love you're sounding brass and a tinkling symbol." Then he said, "I don't care if you have the gift of prophecy, I don't care if you have the gift of faith and you can remove mountains, if you don't have love, he says, you are," what? "You're nothing." Listen, something minus love equals nothing. I'll tell you something else, everything minus love equals nothing. I'll add something else to that, you minus

love equal what? Nothing. Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

And you want to know that all there is in the Bible and everything that's in the Bible can...in terms of what God wants of us can be summed up in one thing--Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." And your what? "Neighbor as yourself." That's the whole law, right there. You... that's the whole law. Romans 13, the apostle Paul says in verse 8 of Romans 13, "Owe no man anything but to love one another for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." The law says "Thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet," but all of that can be summed up in, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Isn't that true? I mean, if you love your neighbor you're not going to kill him. If you love your neighbor you're not going to covet what he's got. If you love your neighbor you're not going to bear a lie against him, false witness. If you love your neighbor you're not going to steal what he has. You see, the whole law is just saying love people. The Ten Commandments are love. Not making any graven image means you love God too much to do that and dishonor him. Not taking His name in vain means you love Him too much to dishonor Him. All the Ten Commandments are, are a statement of principles that exhibit love. That's all they are. Love is a way of life. Christians are to live in love. And that's why the middle of this whole concept here in Ephesians 3 is love. God is trying to get us to the place where we function in a life of love. And I ... you know, I just can't stand up here and say - People love each other, if you don't love people; I'm going to get really mad at you. That doesn't make it. And I can't ... I get up here and jump around and hop all over the place but the point is there is only one way to love and that's have Christ fill your life with His love. That will never happen until the Spirit strengthen the inner man, that will never happen until you yield to the Spirit. And you're going to yield to the Spirit only when you're filled with the Word of God and the Word of God has so filled you that the very word of the Spirit is there by which to control you.

In Ephesians 5:2 it says, like Paul is saying and we'll see this later; "Walk in love," walk in love. Your daily conduct in love, "As Christ also hath loved us and hath given Himself for us and offering and a sacrifice to God." What kind of love? The kind of love that gives yourself as a sacrifice. That's always the way in the Bible. And I'm just reinforcing what we've seen so many times, biblical love is an act of sacrifice, unselfishness. That's the kind of love God's after. God wants us to live in love and it's the only way to be happy. It wouldn't do you any good to be bitter and angry and hateful and resentful, you need to learn to love. And if you're having a tough time with it then back up to the beginning. Get back in the Word of God. Yield to the Spirit of God. Let Him have control of your life so that Christ can settle down and fill your life with His love.

And, by the way, this love is available to everybody. Verse 18; "May be able to comprehend with all saints." You say - Well, my temperament would never permit it. Yeah, everybody has this available. All saints. That's not any inside track. You know, we sort of secretly do this. We say - Well, you know, so-and-so just is so loving, to have the personality that is so loving. And so-and-so, well is just so hard and crust ... different temperament. No. It's available to everybody. Now love may take different

forms and it may express itself different ways through different people. But love is something that can be comprehended, that is seized and personally possessed by all the saints. For you, it's for you. God wants all of us to know that love. And we could spend time going all over the Bible to show this, but I think you understand it.

But let me add this. You'll never find it anywhere aside from Christianity. Look at verse 19. "This love passeth knowledge." The love of Christ, now notice this, it is not love for Christ it is the love--what? Of Christ. It's the very same love that Christ had. Isn't that amazing?

You know in the 14, 15 and 16 there of John's gospel, he has Christ leaving His peace and His joy and His supply and His power. He has all the legacy of Christ. And one of the things Christ left was His love. I can literally love with His love, incredible.

Now, Christians, we fight that a lot. You know, we just think of love as sort of an emotional thing and we say - I can't stand that person but I love him in the Lord, you know. We have a hard time. We've got some kind of a quasi-spiritual love. But the thing is that Christ wants us to love with His love. He wants us to love people the same way He loved them, sacrificially, selflessly, givingly, offering ourselves up for their behalf and their needs. But that only comes when we Ire controlled by the Holy Spirit. It's the love of Christ. And listen, the love of Christ passes knowledge. There's no way human beings can ever know that apart from Christ. The world doesn't have that kind of love. Listen to me; I believe that if there is any husband and wife that ought to love each other they're Christians. Because I don't think the world could ever begin to comprehend the love available to us.

And listen, it can be expressed in every human relationship. If there's ever a family where brothers and sisters and moms and dads and kids ought to get along and have love it's a Christian family because we have a love that passes knowledge. That is unavailable to the world. You know, the world's love says-you're a nice object, I choose to love you, I'm attracted to you. God's love says -- I love by nature, you exist so you get it. The world's love says - I love you until I find something that looks better. God's love says--You look so perfect in Jesus Christ I love you forever. The world's love says -- I love you until you offend me. God's love says - I love you in spite of the fact that you never stop offending Me. And that's the kind of love we bring to a relationship. Any human relationship that the world doesn't know anything about. The world loves for what it can get and we love for what we can give.

And what a privilege it is to have this love that passes knowledge. It's like everything else we have. You know, when the world's falling apart and we've got a peace that passes understanding. Right? Phil. 4. And the world is looking for meaningful relationships and we have a love that passes knowledge. But sad to say, you know, you look at Christianity and no wonder the Lord Jesus was grieved, no wonder ... I mean, that night of John 13 when the disciples were fighting and hassling and arguing about who was going to be the greatest in the Kingdom and He gives them the lesson on love

and says - Look, will you just love each other. Will you not try to be seeking your own things and your own prominence.

And he writes later on, does the apostle Paul, to the Philippian church and he's so upset because they're fighting and wrangling and there's contention there and some women have stirred up some problems and he says I just want one thing, will you have the same love one for another, let each of you look not on his own things but on the things of others. Let each esteem others better than themselves. Would you try to be like Christ who thought it not something to hold on to, to be equal with God but made Himself a servant. Would you try and get that kind of humility? There never will be love until there's humility. Never. When humility is one of the things born of the Spirit of God. So he says - Look, if you have the inner strength of the Spirit of God then you have the indwelling Christ who is at home, you will have incomprehensible love as a foundation for living as something you grasp for every situation and is something you experience and understand that the world will never know. I mean it, people, and Jesus said it in John 13, we ought to be able to knock the world right off its feet with our love. We really should. And every time I hear, you know, about a some kind of bitterness or anxiety or animosity or struggle in a family I ... it grieves my heart and it's happening all the time. Or between people. Or in neighborhoods. Or on the job or anywhere ... we ought to be so loving, we ought to exude the very love of Christ. And when we don't we betray the fact that we have not followed through the process of Ephesians 3:14 and following.

One other thought here, in verse 18 he says - He sort of tries to describe this, but it's a little tough, you know, he says -- "What is the breadth and length and depth and height of this love?" He says, We're able to grab this love in its fullness. It's not incomplete. I mean, it's up and it's down and it's over there and it's over here. He's trying to give this thing almost a universal quantitative description. This love extending in all directions. One dear old saint of God said - Yes, and he said the breadth and length and depth and height is illustrated by the cross which is the symbol of love. The upper arm points up and the lower arm points down and the crossing arms point and extend the-- way all around the world to embrace it all and such is the love of God. God's love for us is as big as this whole universe.

Jerome said that the love of Christ reaches up to the holy angels and it reaches down to those in hell. Its length covers the men on the upward way and its breadth reaches those drifting away on evil paths.

But I guess the best way to interpret this little, phrase here is to look at the book of Ephesians itself. What is the breadth of His love? How broad is it? How broad is the love of Jesus Christ? Chapter 2 verses 11 and following; His love is broad enough to take the Gentiles who were called uncircumcision and to bring them together those who were a far off, verse 13, and make them near by the blood of Christ. To take Jew and Gentile and make them one, verse 14, and break down the middle wall of partition and abolish the enmity. And make one new man reconciling Jew and Gentile

unto God. Listen, it's broad enough to catch the Jew and the Gentile who were at the opposite ends of the world and bring them together.

How long is this love? What is its length? Chapter 1 of Ephesians and verse 4; It began when He chose us in Him, when? Before the foundation of the world. So it stretches from eternity past. Chapter 2 verse 7; "That in the ages to come He will show the exceeding riches of His grace and His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." How long is His love? From eternity past to eternity future.

How deep is His love? Chapter 2 verses 1 to 3. How deep? Deep enough to reach us when we were dead in trespasses and sin. When we walked according to the course of the world, according to the prince of the power of the air. When we walked according to the spirit that works in the sons of disobedience. When our manner of life was guided by the lust of the flesh and the lust of the mind. And we were, by nature, the children of wrath. It was deep enough to reach to the lowest pit to draw us out.

How high is His love? High enough according to chapter 1 and verse 3 -To take us and bless us with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places. High enough, Ephesians 2:6, to raise us up together and make us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. That's how high it is.

Its breadth -- it can reach anybody. Its length -- it runs from eternity to eternity. Its depth -- it reaches to the pit of sin. Its height -- it takes us to the presence of God and sits us on His throne. That's His love.

This is the kind of love we are to build our life on. This is the kind of love we are to comprehend and seize at every moment. This is the kind of love we are to experience and know. The kind of love that reaches to parties that hate each other. The kind of love that runs from one part of our life to the end of our life. The kind of love that reaches to the person in the deepest pit. The kind of love that can lift up a person to the very presence of God. That's the kind of love we are to know.

And so Paul prays that we will have a deep, experiential knowledge of Christ's love. A comprehension of its infiniteness. An expression of that same infiniteness that can only happen because we are rooted and grounded in it. Because Christ is at home in us. Because we are strong in the inner man. Because the Spirit of God is at work there. This is living life at a full throttle, people, really living it up.

That leads to a fourth thing. In order that, at the end of verse 19, this is just mind boggling. "In order that you might be filled with all the fullness of God." Now I don't even know what to say about this. I thought of so many things to say. How do you explain this? I don't know. I just know that he is saying here that I as a Christian, if I follow this sequence can be filled with all the fullness of God. It's one thing for me to be ... think about being filled with the Spirit in verse 16. Another thing for me to think about being filled with Christ in verse 17. But now to be filled with God, the eternal God, the almighty

God, the creator God, the sustainer God, the God of the universe, the God who made it all, the God who fills it all can fill me? Incredible. Incredible. No way to measure it. I don't even know how to measure it. That somehow God who fills all and all could fill me, could come and live in me and He would all be there. Not just a piece of Him. I'm not a pantheist, I'm not saying He's everywhere and because I'm somewhere He's where I am. I'm saying He in His totality lives in me. And wants to fill me with all of His person, all of His characteristics, all of His attributes. Incredible thought.

All I have to do is start thinking about what kind of a God He is. You know, this concept of fullness is a great concept. God never intended Christians to function on half, you know, half basis. We are to be full, full, full, full. Paul says it over and over and over and over. In Ephesians 1:23 look at it, he says; "The body, the church, is the fullness of Him that filleth all and all." The fullness of Him that filleth all and all. In chapter 3, we've just looked at being filled with all the fullness of God, verse 19. Chapter 4 verse 10; "That He might fill all things." Chapter 4 verse 13; "That we might come to the stature of the fullness of Christ." Chapter 5 verse 18, "That we would be filled with the Spirit." Do you see? God doesn't settle for anything than total fullness.

I can illustrate it this way. The word pleeroo, fullness, is a word that is used many times in the New Testament to speak of total fullness. That's its meaning. A way to illustrate it would be on a scale basis. For example, in the gospels it says he was filled with anger, he was filled with rage, he was filled with wrath, filled with malice. It means that that one attitude dominated. For example, most of the time we try to keep equilibrium, like we've got two things. For example, imagine it this way, happiness and sorrow. And so we'll go through life - a little bit of happiness, you know, a little bit of happiness is real nice, happiness. A little sorrow over here balances us off. Oh it's wonderful, we're having a great time but we think about so-and-so and they're very sad, we sort of just go back and forth like this. And then Aunt Martha dies and leaves us $150 thousand and whooop on the happy side, doesn't matter anymore about whoever's sick. We forget that, we're having happiness. Or our son or daughter decides to marry a wonderful Christian instead of the person they were going with that scared us to death. Yea, we're so happy. See. We are filled with happiness. That's where pleeroo is used. Its dominant, total dominance. And when you come to the concept of our lives, we go like this ... we say - Well, here's the Holy Spirit and here's me. A little bit for the Holy Spirit, a little bit for me, a little self-will, a little Holy Spirit's will. But when we're filled with the Spirit, you see, all of a sudden self is out of the picture and all falls on the Holy Spirit's side of the scale. And God doesn't want to share us with us either. It isn't a little bit of God and a little bit of us, a little bit of ... it's the fullness of God. It's the fullness of Christ. It's the fullness of the Holy Spirit. You see? And God wants, literally, Himself to fill us so that as Paul said to Titus, we adorn the doctrine of God. Incredible thought.

What kind of God do we have that wants to fill us? Oh, I was thinking this week about what a God we have. What a God. Who wants to fill us with His power. Just for example, the choir sang II Samuel 23 it reminded me of II Samuel 22,-- look at it for a minute. David's magnificent song of praise to God. Listen, I just want to describe God to you for a minute, in the words of David. "And he said," this is

David, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer. The God of my rock, in Him will I trust, He is my shield and the horn of my salvation." II Samuel 22:3, "My high tower, my refuge, my Savior, thou savest me from violence. I will call on the Lord who is worthy to be praised. So shall I be saved from mine enemies. When the waves of death compassed me; the floods of ungodly men made me afraid; the sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death came upon me. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my God: and He did hear my voice out of -is temple, and my cry did enter into His ears. And then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because He was angry. -There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens, also, and came down; and darkness was under His feet. And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind. And he made darkness pavilions round about Him, and dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies. Through the brightness before Him were coals of fire kindled. And the Lord thundered from heaven and the most High uttered His voice. And He sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and routed them. And the channels of the sea appeared and the foundations of the world were laid bare at the rebuking of the Lord, at the blast of the breath of His nostrils. He sent from above, He took me, drew me out of many waters; He delivered me from my strong enemy and from them who hated me; for they were too strong for me."

What a God! What incredible things. And down in verse 29; "For thou art my lamp, 0 Lord; the Lord will lighten my darkness. For by thee I have run through a troop; by my God have I leaped over a wall. As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is tried; He is a shield to all them that trust in Him. For who is God except the Lord? And who is a rock except our God? God is my strength and power and He maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hinds feet and setteth me upon my high places."

What a great God. This is the God who deems it His will to live in me, to live in you.

Listen to Job. Job in his extolling of the wonder of God, in Job 26 and verse 5 "Dead things tremble from under the waters and their inhabitants. Hell is naked before Him and destruction has no covering. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place and He hangeth the earth on nothing. Once there was nothing." Did you know that? And God stepped out on nothing and God made something out of nothing and then He hung it on nothing and told it to stay there. "He bindeth up the waters in His thick clouds and the cloud is not torn under them. He holdeth back the face of His throne and spreadeth His cloud upon it. He hath compassed the waters with a boundary until the day and night come to an end. The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at His reproof. He divideth the sea with His power, and by His understanding He smiteth through its pride. By His Spirit He has garnished the heavens, by His hand He's formed the crooked serpent. Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him? But the thunder of His power who can understand?"

What a God! What a God is our God!

"All the while my breath is in me," chapter 27 verse 3 says, "and the Spirit of God is in my nostrils; my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. God forbid that I should justify you; till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, I will not let it go." Listen, if God is that great then I will cling to my righteousness.

He goes on to extol the wonders of God and His character in the 36th chapter. So many wonderful things, he says; "Behold, God is mighty, mighty in strength, mighty in wisdom." Verse 26 of 36; "Behold, God is great and we know Him not. Neither can the number of His years be searched out. For He maketh small the drops of water, they pour down rain according to their vapor which the clouds do drop and distill upon man abundantly. Also, can any understand the spreadings of the clouds or the noise of His tabernacle? Behold, He spreadeth His light upon it and covereth the bottom of the sea. For by them judgeth He the people, He giveth food and abundance. With clouds He covereth the light and commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that cometh between. The noise of it showeth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapor. At this also my heart trembleth."

And you can go all the way through the end of the 39th chapter of Job and here all about God. And when he gets all done he says, "Wherefore, God, I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear but now my eye sees Thee and I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Well, that's a little glimpse of God. And that's the God that wants to fill you. And that's the God that wants to enable you. The God that wants to make you powerful. The God that wants to do all the good pleasure of His will through you.

David said, no wonder he said it, in Psalm 17:15, he said; "I'll never be content, I'll never be satisfied until I awake in Thy likeness." See? Inner strength leads to the indwelling Christ, leads to incomprehensible love which leads to infinite fullness. When God's love permeates us through Christ then all of His fullness follows on. It all follows.

And then you know what the sum of it is? The fifth point, internal power. When that happens the explosion takes place. The engine is on. The blast is on. And in verse 20 comes the great doxology. The great benediction. The great paean of anticipated praise. "Now unto him who is able," listen --here's the praise, when a believer follows these paths, when you follow these sequences - Now he is able. Listen, do you realize that as powerful as God is you hold the trigger that determines whether He's able or not in your life? To accomplish all that He would through you? Now that you have inner strength, now that you have the indwelling Christ, now that there's incomprehensible love, now that you're filled with internal fullness, the fullness of God, now He is able to do what? "Exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think according to the power that works in us." That power doesn't work in you until now. Not until verse 20, until verses 17 to 19 have been fulfilled. Verses 16 to 19.

The great doxology of praise. Jesus said in John 14:12, - It's alright when I go away because when I go away you'll do greater things than I did. Not greater in quality, you could never do things greater in quality; greater in quantity is what that text is saying. We've studied it before. Greater in quantity, all around the world and over and over through the centuries has the church been able to see the power of God manifest in a far greater way quantitatively than Jesus ever did in His limited 3 year ministry in one location.

Listen, look at verse 20; "He is able," that's enough, isn't it? "He is able to do--He is able to do what you ask--He is able to do what you ask or think--He is able to do all that you ask or think--He is able to do above all that you ask or think--He is able to do abundantly above all that you ask or think. And that's not all, He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think. Don't ever say, Lord, I don't know if You can use me in this situation. He can. Beyond your dreams, infinitely beyond. What a power is there. And as a church we should have that power. You know, I don't believe that we've even begun to see what God could do if we really got turned on. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, said Paul to the Corinthians, when you are gathered together and my spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ. Don't ever forget it. When the church gathers together, it gathers with the Holy Spirit, and the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when it separates every believer goes out of here able to do exceeding abundantly above all that he can ask or think, if he follows the pattern right here.

Talk about winning people to Christ. Talk about teaching the saints. Talk about denting the world. Listen, don't you ever be smug enough to think that Grace Community Church has arrived. We haven't begun to touch even this valley. And I've been asking God, somehow to help us to do that. I've been praying regularly that God would help us to reach and win this valley for Jesus Christ. And you know what? I can ask that and I can think that and God can do more than that. Who knows, maybe we'll go over the hill and get the rest. But I'll never be content until we begin to see in our lives abundantly beyond what God could ever ask or think. Let me tell you something. When I started out as a pastor, I started in the ministry, I didn't know anything. I still don't know much. This is the first church I ever pastored. The first two fellows died of a heart attack, they said - Get him young, we don't care if he's good, we can't support another wife. Just get him.

I'm not sure that's what they said. I think that's what they probably said. And I didn't know anything. Talk about being green. I came here and these dear people were gracious enough and just coming in here this morning and looking at you is beyond what I ever asked or dreamed of. And I've seen God do it in the past and I believe He'll do it again in the future. And I want to see Him do it in your life, individually. And in our lives collectively. The power is there. The resource is there. There's no limit to what God can do. He can cause us to mount up with wings as eagles. He can cause us to run and not be weary. To walk and not faint. He can accomplish things through us that we never dreamed. But not until we follow His pattern. Not until we realize that we have to yield to the Spirit. Be strengthened in the inner man. That Christ may fill us with Himself. That we may be filled with all the fullness of God. And then the power will flow through us. And when it's all said and done, just to make

sure nobody gets proud, nobody says - look what I did, verse 21 closes - "Unto Him be," what? "Glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, generations without end. Amen."

You see, God wants to be glorified in the church. And Christ made it possible for God to be glorified in the church. Christ came and redeemed the church. And so, by Christ Jesus, God can be glorified in the church. But listen, people, He can't be glorified in the church until the church really uses its resource. It's the same thing I tried to tell you earlier in chapter 3. God wants the angels to give Him glory, doesn't He? Because of the church. And if the church isn't what it ought to be, it diminishes the glory He gets from the angels. And if the church isn't what it ought to be, then God is not glorified as He ought to be glorified. Listen, I'm saying this very practically. If we just go along doing our little deal, that's why dead churches are so awful. if we just go along doing our little deal, the conclusion is God is just going along doing His little deal. If the church is dead, then God is dead. You see? If you function half-baked, then God is half-baked. But if we see God move and we see God's power flow through this church, then God is glorified. You understand that? Because what you are is a living advertisement for your God, believe me. And if God is to be glorified in the church it is to be because the church is moving in an expression of the mighty power that He has. Let Him translate this into your manner of living. Listen; don't cheat yourself out of what God can do by thinking you've only got a little bit of resource.

I'm going to close with this. One of Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman's meetings was being held. And a man arose to give a remarkable testimony; this is what the man said. I'm quoting him...

"I got off the Pennsylvania depot as a tramp. And for a year I begged on the streets for a living. One day I touched a man on the shoulder and I said -Hey, mister, can you give me a dime? As soon as I saw his face I was shocked to see that it was my own father. I said - Father, father, do you know me? Throwing his arms around me with tears he said - Oh, my son, I found you. I've found you. A dime, all I have is yours. And then this man said Men think of it, I was a tramp. I stood begging my own father for ten cents when for 18 years he had been looking for me to give me all that he was worth."

Listen, don't ask your heavenly Father for a dime. Take all that He's got to give. Don't live as a beggar on a pittance when the resources are there to live as a king to His glory. Let's pray,

Thank You, Father, for our fellowship this morning. Thank You for the Word that it is powerful, that it speaks to us right where we live. Oh God, the prayer of my heart for this people is that they would see this a reality. That we would see You touch their lives and the lives of this community and the lives of this state and the country and the world. Father, just do what is beyond us through us as we walk in the Spirit. We pray in Jesus name cause we know this is what He wants. Amen.

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