

Experiencing the Power of Christ

Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21

Code: 80-121

Open your Bible, if you will, to Ephesians chapter 3 because this morning we're going to look at the second great prayer that I direct your attention to in this epistle. We completed the book of Titus a couple of weeks ago and I told you I wanted to hit a couple of mountain peaks in Ephesians and then later on we'll start our new series on 2 Corinthians. Last week we looked at the prayer of Paul in chapter 1 and this time the prayer of Paul in chapter 3.

And again the focus of our attention in this consideration is on the sufficiency of Jesus Christ, or the believer's resources available in Christ. We reminded you last week that Peter says we have all things that pertain to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him. Peter went on to say we have in Christ exceedingly great and precious promises. We possess everything necessary for the fulfillment of all aspects of spiritual life. And all of those resources are contained within the life of the believer through the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

We have been, as you remember from chapter 1 of Ephesians, purchased for God by the blood of Jesus. We have been forgiven and accepted in the beloved. We have become slaves and more than that sons of God, forever His possessions, sealed with the Spirit, protected by divine love, sustained by divine care, energized by divine power. We have become priests and kings. We are now taught and led and ruled and loved and made alive and built up and blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. We are the possessors, says Paul, of the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ. The great and almighty God of the universe has set His affection upon us and then given us His redeeming love in Christ, drawn us into His own family and poured out all the full riches of the inheritance of His mercy on us. We are rich beyond imagination. Our resources are limitless. We are more than conquerors. Life in time and life in eternity will bring before us thrilling fantastic fulfilling and utterly comprehensive riches from the goodness of God.

In chapter 1 Paul prayed that we would understand that. In chapter 3 he prays that we will apply it. If chapter 1 is a prayer for enlightenment, then chapter 3 is a prayer for enablement. You remember that in chapter 1 he prayed in verse 17 that we would have an attitude of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. Verse 18, that the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened that we might know. In other words, that we might come to a realization of our riches in Christ. And as I've been pointing out for years really here at Grace Church, the Christian world of today, the church of today is woefully and abysmally ignorant about the resources that are available in Christ. Christians, so-called Christians and true Christians chase around in every direction madly trying to find the solution to life's

problems when they have them resident if they're genuinely Christians in the indwelling Christ. We need to understand that. And we need to apply it.

So in chapter 1, the prayer is for knowledge. Chapter 3, application. We must be aware of what is ours in Christ. You remember Philippians chapter 3 where Paul said, "When he saw the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord, everything else became dung." It was all in Christ. You remember how he said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," in the fourth chapter of Philippians? He found his all and all in Christ. And that's why he said, "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering being made conformable unto his death." It is Christ that I pursue, he says. No more important call could be given to Christians today than that one, pursue Christ, know Christ, focus on Christ, be enlightened about your resources, understand what is in Christ.

The rest of the world, the unregenerate world, of course, has no such resource, no way to find the solution to the problems of life. Victor Frankel who was the originator of Logo Therapy wrote a book called The Doctor and the Soul. And in it he pointed out the fact that man is faced with utter meaninglessness and also the fact that Sunday is the day which more than any other day causes him to have to face that. This is what he said. "In any city Sunday is the saddest day of the week. It is on Sunday that the tempo of the working week is suspended and the poverty of meaning of every day life is exposed. The emphasis on a fast tempo in the personal life is reminiscent of the clinical picture of unproductive mania." he says, "The yield of all the todo 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.

And what a stark contrast that is for us when on Sunday everything we live for has its clear and central place. The meaning and the aim and the goal of our life is Christ and on this day we come together to celebrate that and to focus on that and to affirm that. The world outside, a world with no meaning, knows nothing of us inside. We gather in places like this to celebrate the meaning we have found in Jesus Christ. Christ has given us meaning. Christ has given us life. Christ has given us everything we need. Before Christ and without Christ men are without form and void...meaningless. In Christ, life becomes full and rich.

And you need nothing more than Christ. And if you have in your life unsolvable dilemmas, things that you can't cope with, anxieties you can't deliver yourself from, it isn't because you haven't found the right formula or you haven't been to the right seminar, it isn't that you haven't read the right book. It is that you haven't yet learned how to tap into the resources that are yours already resident within you in the indwelling Christ.

So that is Paul's heart as he comes to chapter 3 and this prayer. Let's hear what he says starting in verse 14. "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith and that you being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."

Obviously this is a rich, profound, far-reaching, powerful section of Scripture and we're going to do our best to find our way through it and touch the main thrust. What a prayer. The heart of the prayer is not that we would know but that we would do. The goal of the prayer is that we might experience verse 20, that we might come to the place where the power of God within us is doing things that exceed our imagination. That's the point. He prays here that a series of great truths, great spiritual realities will take place in our lives that will cause us to exude the power of God which ultimately in verse 21 will redound to the glory of God.

Now he's going to give us five sequential, progressive principles. If you're going to ever get to verse 20 there's a process. And by the way, verse 20 has always fascinated me. I started thinking about it when I was a college student and wondering how in the world if I would ever get to the place where the Lord would do through me beyond what I could ask or think because it seemed to me that most of my Christian life in those days was stumbling and bumbling around and not even getting up to what I could ask or think. I was always wanting to do better. I was always wanting to see more of the power of God in my life. I was always wanting to be a better Christian and a more committed person. And it seemed to me that not only wasn't I not exceeding my desires, but I wasn't even reaching them. And I daresay that I was probably not alone nor am I alone. Most of us would look at a verse like that and say, "Frankly, I don't know if I'm even concerned about doing exceeding abundantly beyond all I could ask or think, I would just like to do what I can ask or think because I haven't even arrived there yet. How in the world could I get to the point where I am exceeding my expectations. That is precisely the point where God wants you and the process is delineated for us in the greatness of these inspired words.

In order to find yourself in the reality of verse 20 where your life is so powerful that it brings glory to Christ, you have to start in verse 16. Now what prompts this prayer is little bit indicated in the phrase of verse 14, "For this reason, I don't want you to lose heart," he says in verse 13. Even Christians tremble and shake and become anxious and burdened and concerned and they can't resolve their problems and they can't control their environment and they can't get charge of their circumstances. And life can be very much like that. And he is saying, "Look, I don't want you to be the kind of people

who lose heart because of my trouble, so for this reason I'm going to pray for you that rather than being weak and vacillating and disheartened, you're going to be preeminently powerful people, exceeding your own expectation of what God could ever accomplish through you. I don't want you on the short end, stumbling and bumbling around in weakness, just trying to crawl up to the average level...I want you living beyond your expectations. And so I am...I am bowing my knees before the Father, the Father who is really the one behind every family in heaven and on earth, the creator God and I'm going to ask Him to work a work in you.

But inherent in even the asking is implications for our responding. And there are five steps to get us to verse 21 where we are really to the glory of Christ Jesus, where our lives really do redound to His glory and really do cause people to draw up short and take notice of the great power of God.

First step, inner strength. I might also just tell you, this is kind of like the ignition, this is kind of like turning on the engine. The book of Ephesians and particularly the first part of the book sort of describes a Christian's resource. But here in this particular part of Ephesians, you're transitioning into application...1 through 3 talks about what we have in Christ, 4 through 6 gets into application. It's sort of like the car with its powerful engine and all of its features is described for us, this powerful moving machine, it's described in the first three chapters. The road map is laid out in 4 to 6 to show you where it's supposed to go. And right here is how to turn on the ignition. It doesn't do any good to own it and it doesn't do any good to know where to drive it if you can't figure out how to turn it on, put it in gear and move it. And here you have the ignition, if you will, in the life of the believer that catapults him from what he knows to what he is...and what he can be in the power of God.

And it starts with inner strength, look at verse 16. "I'm asking God to grant you according to the riches of His glory," which by the way are limitless and infinite, "I'm asking Him to grant you," and there's no shortage of available material to respond to this, "to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man." He says I'm praying that you would have a strong inner man.

It's so important because the pressures and distresses and troubles and trials of life that come not only upon us but upon others, such as even the Apostle Paul, can tear up the inner man and devastate us and steal our joy and our peace and render us really useless for service and witness. People, even Christians, demonstrate an inability to cope with life and all of its difficulties. And life is a very painful experience. The longer you live, the more painful it becomes because you accumulate a long chronicle of pain and trouble and turmoil and disaster and disappointment. And a weak inner man will result in doubt, fear, anxiety, distrust, impotence, sin. A weak inner man leads to frustration, mental strain, emotional and spiritual imbalance. The inner man is the eternal part, the real you, the spirit, the soul, what you are inside. And Paul is saying I want that strong.

In 2 Corinthians 4 verse 16, it's a great verse, he said, "Therefore we do not lose heart but though our outer man is decaying yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." In other words, he says the

outside is getting worse, the inside is getting better. Now that is certainly one way to express Christian growth. I...I'm happy to announce to you this morning that my outer man has never been in my entire life in a worse state of decay than it is at this moment because it has never been this old. But I also want you to know that my inner man has never been in better condition than it is at this moment because it has been being refreshed.

Now we live in a culture that is concerned only about the outer man. And that's partly because that's all they can work on. I mean, so far as I can tell, I haven't gone into a department store yet to find an inner man department, or an inner beauty department. It's all outer and our whole culture is consumed with this to the level of an uncontrollable compulsion. For some people it's reached the proportions of what we would define as bizarre. For most people they're in to it to some degree or another and thankfully so because the older we get the more help we need on the outside. We're not, to use an old English word, eschewing that all together. But we have a culture that is preoccupied with trying to preserve the outer man. But the outer man, do what you will, is decaying. The inner man, says Paul, is being renewed day by day. While the outer man is getting old, the inner man is getting young, fresher.

You know, when I was a young man I used to wonder if I would ever get to the point where I would experience spiritual strength and spiritual victory and spiritual triumph as a way of life, as a pattern to the degree that I long for it. If I would ever reach a certain point of spiritual maturity where I felt that my inner man was spontaneously righteous in its conduct, in its attitudes. Would I ever get to the day where I would feel I had a vital increasing, richer, deeper, stronger inner man? And in the process of spiritual growth you don't see it but as I take myself at this point in life and look back and remember some of the faint memories of the spiritual struggles of my youth, I know well that while my outer man has grown older, my inner man has grown younger. In the years and years of God's renewing in my heart has effected that.

In 2 Timothy 4:17 the Apostle Paul gives us one little experience of that that sort of builds into this kind of pattern. He says, "At my first defense no one supported me, everybody deserted me, may it not be counted against them, there I was all alone," and then in verse 17 he says, "But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me." What a tremendous testimony. And that is, I believe, exactly what the Lord does. In fact, He does it in the times when we have exhausted our own spiritual resources. It's like 2 Corinthians 12, that when we come to the point of our greatest weakness, in our weakness His strength is perfected.

So in contrast to the perishing outer man, for the Christian there is an increasing strength available to the inner man, an increasing growing developing spiritual energy. Paul says I want you to know that. I want you to be strengthened with strength, empowered with power, dunamis, through the Spirit in the inner man. I want that inner man to be spontaneously righteous. I want its involuntary responses to be virtuous and holy. I want its delights in the law of God to manifest themselves in speech and

behavior. I want the inner man to be firm enough to combat the world, the flesh and the devil. I want the inner man to be so strong it is not easily swayed by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. And only the Holy Spirit can infuse such strength in the inner man. That is precisely why Paul says that you are to be filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18. Why he says in Galatians 5:16 you are to...you are to walk in the Spirit. Why he says in Colossians 3:16 you are to let the Word dwell in you richly. Because when you yield over to the power of the Spirit in your life, you find spiritual strength. Acts 1:8, "You will receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you."

The resident power is there. He prays that believers will appropriate it. Romans 8:9 says, every Christian possesses the Holy Spirit, with the Holy Spirit comes power, with power comes the potential to strengthen the inner man. But it's a matter of feeding that inner man on the richness of the Word of God which leads us to the mind of the Spirit which leads us to yielding to the Spirit and walking in the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit.

So Paul says my...my first step in getting this ignition on so that all of this immense power described in the first part of this book can start you down the path outlined in 4 to 6, the key thing here is to get that inner man strong by the Spirit as it feeds on and yields to the Spirit who comes to us through the Word. And when the inner man is strong and the inner man is powerful, you're going to find yourself able to say like the Apostle Paul said, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain." Like the Apostle Paul said in Acts chapter 20 verses 22 to 24, "I don't know what things await me when I get to Jerusalem, but I don't care. It doesn't matter to me. All I want to do is finish the ministry the Lord has given to me." That kind of resolute confidence, that kind of boldness, that kind of courage and fearlessness drove the Apostle Paul to be the man he was and it was all built on such a strong inner man. They used to say about Paul that his flesh was weak, that he was probably homely, not much to look at, that he did not have any kind of powerful presence, there was nothing about his outer man which, by the way, was constantly being killed for the sake of Christ, the chronicle of which he gives us in 2 Corinthians 11, the outer man may have been nothing to look at, he bore on his body the marks of Christ, Galatians says, it was all scarred and battered and humbled by disease and there wasn't anything particularly comely about him as there wasn't about his Lord in His execution. But in spite of all of that the inner man was so strong that he could face anything and never move an inch. He writes to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, and I'm using a paraphrase version of it, "We are handicapped on all sides but we are never frustrated."

Can you make that testimony? What a tremendous testimony. We are handicapped on all sides, we are never frustrated. We are puzzled but never in despair. We are persecuted but never do we stand alone. We may be knocked down but we are never knocked out. Every day we experience something of the death of the Lord Jesus so that we know also the power of the life of Jesus in these bodies of ours, this is the reason we never collapse. We have a strong inner man. And the outer man, he says, may indeed suffer wear and tear but every day that inner man receives fresh strength. We've all been made, says Paul, to drink the one Spirit. For some of us it's a long time between sips,

it seems. Amazing how many people don't miss their protein drink, but when it comes to drinking in the refreshing Word of God and the power of the Spirit of God, they miss that a lot.

It's one thing to understand your riches in Christ. It's something else to get the ignition on. It's one thing to read the owner's manual and know what you've got. It's something else to turn it on and move it. And to get all this power and all this resource and all this riches turned on and moving, you start by being strong in the inner man which means you are controlled by the Word and the Spirit.

That leads to a second step in this simple progression, and these are indicated in this passage by a series of purpose clauses, the little Greek term *hina* sort of appears through these verses in sequence which leads us to believe that they are sequential and one sort of leads to the next, sort of a purpose or result sequence.

When you have a strong inner man, verse 17 says, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Now here's the second step. A strong inner man has the result of Christ dwelling in your heart by faith.

You say, "Wait, wait, wait. How could I have a strong inner man if Christ didn't dwell in my heart by faith?" Well that's a good question but he's not talking here about salvation. I think you have to take a closer look to the verb dwell, katoikeo and realize that it's an intense verb. Oikeo means to live in a house, katat the word down intensifies it, to really settle down and be at home. And I think that's what it's saying. It's not a question of whether Christ is in your life, it's a question of whether He's comfortable, whether He's at home there. You know the difference between being in a house and being at home. You can be dwelling in a lot of places and not be at home there.

I was eating dinner on the patio last night saying to Patricia how wonderful it is that home is for me such a place of rest. I can come home and settle down and rest. And that's because my wife is concerned about spiritual things and my children are concerned about spiritual things. And Christ is the focus of our home. And there's not a lot of work to do there in one sense. I mean, obviously we're all in the process of growth but I think you know what I mean. I'm not coming home to a house in turmoil, to a house with all kinds of chaos, to a house where major spiritual issues are on the front all the time. I'm coming home to...I'm coming home from the battle to the place of rest, I'm not coming home from the battle to another battle. I thank God for that. My battle is tough enough. The Lord in His wonderful grace, I'm sure, redeemed my family in part because He knew that it would be part of His goodness toward me that I might fight the battle and have some time to rest. I can settle down and be at home in my house because I don't have to fight the battles there. It's a place of comfort, it's a place of tranquility, it's a place of peace, it's a place of quietness, it's a place of rest.

And that's what it means to katokeisai(?), that's what it means to settle down and be at rest. And what he's after here is that we as believers have so yielded ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit

expressed through the Word of God to create a strong inner man that Christ dwelling in us can settle down and be at rest at home. The question we could ask is...is Jesus comfortable in your heart? Is He at home there? Or is He always up fussing with something?

I always think about, you know how it is when...when your mother comes to visit and rearranges everything. But is your house clean and orderly and is your heart the way it should be so that Christ when He comes doesn't have to fix that and fix this and adjust this and deal with this and cope with this and confront that and chasten this and He can settle down?

Years ago when I was just a young guy I read a book called My Heart, Christ's Home, a little book by Robert Munger(?), some of you may remember it. You could dust off some of your old books probably and find it in almost any Christian home. But this little book, My Heart, Christ's Home was an interesting approach to looking into a Christian's heart. Munger had likened the Christian's heart, his own heart to a house. And Christ came to the house and in the book he sort of analogizes very simple, in a simple way that helps us to understand how the heart can be like a home and how important it is for Christ to be able to be at home there and comfortable there. And he says, first of all, the heart like a home has a library and then a dining room and then a living room and then a workshop.

And he said the library is the control room, that's where all the data is stored. All the information is stored, and that's like your brain. And when the Lord comes into your house, what does He find in the library? What does He find in the control room? In the brain? Trash and smut and evil and triviality and pornography and materialism. What does He find? I mean, what occupies your mind? Today it wouldn't be a library, it would be a...what?...it would be the TV room, right? That's where the input is stored now seemingly. But what does He find? He wants to replace it with the Word.

And then he said Christ goes into the dining room which is the room of appetites where your desires and appetites are satiated. And He wants to know what do you long for? What's on your menu? What do you order? What satisfies you? What really satisfies you? And He wants to replace all the illegitimate stuff with the will of God so that that alone would satisfy you.

Then He goes to the living room and the living room is a place of fellowship. And the living room is a place of conversation and being together and cultivating relationship. And in this particular story and Munger gives it that Christ comes into the living room and sits there and sits there and sits there and sits there and nobody ever shows up. What ever happened to prayer? And what ever happened to communion? And what ever happened to fellowship? And what happened to relationship?

And then He went to the workshop and there was the work bench and all the tools and He asked the question, "What are you making? What are you doing? You've got all this skill, all this manual dexterity, all this tremendous brain power that you're putting through your hands to effect something.

What are you making?" And the answer is toys. And He wants to fix it so that you're producing something that has eternal value.

And he gets through all of that and kind of has it all kind of in order and Munger says there's a terrible stench coming from somewhere. And it's a closet. So the Lord, picking up the scent, goes to the closet and in there is something foul, something dead and it's the place of hidden personal sins. And He throws the door open. And Munger says, "I was angry. I mean, give me a break. I gave You the library, the dining room, the living room and the workshop and everybody knows in every house if you find the right closet, God only knows what you'll discover in there...especially five minutes before the guests arrive." Everybody's got to have a closet.

But Jesus couldn't set Himself down and be at home until the closet was clean. You see, the lordship of Christ extends through every part of our lives. He wants it all and if He has it all He'll settle down and be at home. If you ever want to experience the power of God in your life, it starts by a strong inner man where the Spirit of God is applying the Word of God in a cleansing fashion that empowers you and in that kind of experience you'll find the Lord can settle down and be at home in your life.

And when He settles down and is at home in your life, that's going to lead you to a third step, verse 17. "And that..." there's another one of those purpose result clauses, the middle of the verse, "And that you being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge." And we'll stop at that point.

Incomprehensible love...inner strength...indwelling Christ...incomprehensible love. When Christ settles down and is at home in your life, He transforms you into love. What does he mean when he says "being rooted and grounded in love"? He means that love is not peripheral, love is not extraneous, love is not something on the circumference, love is not a hit and miss, now and then, love is not a minor detail, it is the essential root and ground of all that you are. When Christ dominates your life, the characteristic will be love. You will love in the way that He loved. The very love by which God is known, for God is love, by which God is manifest, for Jesus Christ is love manifest, will flow through you. That love which has been shed abroad in your heart will not be shed abroad from your heart. And this comes by faith, not by works, by practicing His presence. Rooted and grounded in love, by this, Jesus said, will all men know that you're My disciples, when you have love one for another. And certainly not only one for another but for Him as well. When you begin to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself, when you begin to love with a love that covers a multitude of sins, when you begin to love with a love that fulfills the whole law, as Romans 13 puts it.

When Jesus Christ can settle down and be at home in your life and there's nothing to clean and there's nothing to chasten and there's nothing to confront and He can just be at home there, He'll fill

your life at every point with love. And you will be established solidly in love as a way of life, a love that is deep and secure through all kinds of winds and all kinds of shakings, all kinds of offenses.

And you will experience love. And not only will you experience it but you'll comprehend it. Verse 18 says you'll comprehend it, you'll comprehend its breadth and length and height and depth and you will know the love of Christ which...which surpasses knowledge. You'll know what you can't know. You'll know what can't be explained. The only way to know it is to experience it. It's like jazz, some people like jazz, some people don't like jazz. Someone one asked someone who didn't like jazz once asked Louis Armstrong, a famous jazz trumpeter, to explain jazz. And he replied, "Man, if I got to explain it, you ain't got it." And that's how it is. With love, if somebody has to explain it, you ain't got it. But if you got it, you can't even explain it.

And that's what he's saying here. When Christ settles down to be at home in your life, your life becomes dominated by a love which is incomprehensible apart from experiencing it. It isn't going to come to you through some rational means. It's going to come to you through Christ. The word "comprehend" means to seize or apprehend, katalambano, a real strong word, to take and make your own possession along with all the saints, it's the common property of all of us. It's only then when Christ is settled down in your life and He is shedding His love into every corner that you're going to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth and know and experience this immense love of Christ which is beyond knowledge.

People always say the greatest thing in the world is to love and be loved. The greatest emotion in the world is to feel love. It's the most exhilarating and wonderful feeling there is. And to feel love and to feel loved is the epitome of human joy and that is precisely what a Christian experiences who is totally committed and purged and filled with the love of Christ.

Just to make a note, I think what he's trying to say by the breadth and length and height and depth is to just describe the limitless aspects of love, just to take it as far as he can take it, to the limitless sky above, to the limitless horizons on every side, to the limitless depths beneath, love extends on and on into infinity. One ancient saint saw the cross, the upper arm pointing up, the lower arm pointing down and the crossing arms to the widest horizon. And from the very center point where Christ was crucified, love extends infinitely. Jerome said, "The love of Christ reaches up to the holy angels and it reaches down to include those in hell. In length it covers the men on the upward way. And in breadth it reaches to those drifting away on evil paths."

So Paul prays that we will have the deep experiential knowledge, the exhilarating joy of knowing we are loved by the love of God through Christ, a comprehension of its infinity, a comprehension that escapes every human being except those who are rooted and grounded in it because Christ is at home in them because they are strong in the inner man.

And that leads to the fourth point. When this is true we come to the next result, verse 19, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Just trying to grasp that thought is mind boggling. God sees this particular believer sort of like a vacuum. You know, nature sees a vacuum and hates it and fills it up. God sees any vacuum in man and wishes to rush in with His presence. And when we're what we ought to be and we follow through these paths, we will be filled up with all the fullness of God.

What does that mean? That simply means we'll be like Him. Jesus was the fullness of the deity, right? Fullness of the Godhead. Jesus was full of grace and truth. And of His fullness have all we...what?...received and grace upon grace. It's simply the idea that we've become like Christ like God. You follow this process where you are strong in the inner man, Christ is settled down, is at home, flooding your life with this overwhelming and incomprehensible love and you're going to find yourself like God. That is to say, filled with His attributes. It could come under the category of the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, etc. You're going to have the love of God and the peace of Christ. You're going to know all of that. You're going to even have the knowledge of God and the wisdom of God to whatever degree we are capable.

Now when it says you are filled up with the fullness of God, it doesn't mean you become God. It simply means that the essence of who God is in His glory is going to be filling your life. If I go down to the Pacific Ocean, I take a little glass and I scoop up some of the ocean, it wouldn't be proper to say that the entire Pacific Ocean is in my glass because there's much more. It is vast and vastly beyond my glass. All of the ocean is not in my glass but all that the ocean is in my glass. The essence of what it is is contained there. And all of the vast infinity of God is not in me but what God is by virtue of His nature is in me. And I become like Him, moving...as 2 Corinthians 3:18 puts it...from one level of glory to the next to the next to the next.

Now...now we're getting down to why we can be powerful. If I'm filled with all the fullness of God then God is going to move powerfully through me, and that takes you to verse 20. Inner strength leads to indwelling Christ, that brings incomprehensible love resulting in infinite fullness, the fourth point, infinite fullness. And then listen to what happens. And this is in the form of a doxology. "Now...now with all of that in place, to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works within us." Now the power is turned on, right? And now He is able to work in us.

Just dissect that verse 20, it's just amazing. To Him who is able...to Him who is able to do...to Him who is able to do what we ask...to Him who is able to do what we ask or think...to Him who is able to do all that we ask or think...no, above all that we ask or think...no, abundantly above all that we ask or think...no, exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think. And now we're way out there in the stratosphere somewhere.

You see, most of us live in the shallows, don't we? Powerful lives are built on these principles. They're not built on clever ideas. You can build an empire on a clever idea but not spiritual power. You can build a company with a clever idea and hard work but not spiritual power. The path to spiritual power which is the only path you would ever pursue in ministry within the framework of the Kingdom, that path goes right through Ephesians chapter 3. Paul walked that path and that's why to the Colossians he said in chapter 1 verse 29 that God works in me mightily. He was a living illustration of 3:20. The man did things beyond what he could ever ask or think. Tremendous power is available for every issue of life. That's why God did not give us a Spirit of fear but of power, power, 2 Timothy 1:7.

Isaiah, I think, saw this wonderfully and put it into such magnificent language. Recall these familiar words...Isaiah 40 and verse 28, "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is unscrutable. He gives strength to the weary. And to him who lacks might, He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not become weary."

It is such a foolish thing, such an ignorant thing, such a faithless thing to wander around in your Christian experience thinking you are inadequate and unable when you have this at your disposal. If you're not seeing the power of God in your life, it's because you're not filled with the fullness of God. If you're not filled with the fullness of God, it's because you're not rooted and grounded in love because you're not filled with Christ because you're not strong in the inner man. And it just goes right back through.

As you come through that particular path of progress and arrive at the place where you're filled up with the fullness of God, you will see things occur in your life beyond what you could have imagined. When trials come you'll have a strength you never knew was there. When ministry opportunity comes you'll have a strength and a power in that ministry that you never knew was there.

You say, "But why would God do all of this? Why would He want me to be so powerful?" The answer is in verse 21, "Unto Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever let it be, amen." In order that He might display His glory through the church. Can't you understand that when we run around saying we belong to Christ, we belong to God, God is our God, our God is a mighty and a powerful and a saving and a transforming God and we have these weak vacillating lives that people assume that either our God is lying about who He is or we're lying about who He is? Somebody is not telling the truth. The world looks at the church, what do they see? Power? No. Weakness. What do they conclude? That God is powerful? No. Those are His people, take a look at them. He wants glory in the church. I think obviously not only in eternity where

He'll get it but in time as well, to all generations forever and ever, starting now and on forever. He wants glory. Unto Him be glory.

That's the reason for everything. You see, our evangelism is not tied up to our cleverness, it's not tied up to our style, it's connected to our power which is connected to this pattern of spiritual resource.

So my prayer for you is that you will be to the glory of God, that you will bring Him praise and honor and respect and admiration from the people who see you and conclude that He is indeed a powerful, mighty, saving God.

Father, again this morning we offer our humble thanks because the prayer that Paul prayed You are eager to answer. In the life of every believer You are eager to answer it as soon as we desire to submit to what Your Spirit wants to work in us. Lord, help us to understand and use all that is in Christ and to pursue Him and we will praise You and thank You for whatever these humble vessels can do to bring You glory...in the Savior's dear name we ask. Amen.

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