**FILLED WITH ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD**

**Ephesians 3:14-21**

This morning we’ll be looking at the last part of Ephesians Ch 3. This is Paul’s prayer for his brothers and sisters in Ephesus, for a church he loved dearly. As I studied this prayer this week in preparation of the lesson I have to confess something to you. The Lord convicted me. He showed me that I had not been regularly praying for this class as I should. So, I stopped studying and I got down on my knees with our class roster and extended class roster in front of me. I prayed for each one of you by name. And what I prayed for you and for me is this prayer. The prayer that we’ll be looking at this morning.

This was one of the most difficult lessons I’ve ever prepared and it was for several reasons. One, it was convicting to me personally. Two, it was hard for me to wrap my mind around what it is Paul was really praying for. And three, it seemed like all the different commentaries I referenced saw this passage differently. So I had to really seek the Lord’s guidance to give me insight. This is a beautiful and powerful prayer and it really shows us the heart of Paul. Let me go ahead and start off our time together by reading it to you. Then we’ll unpack it’s powerful message.

 READ Ephesians 3:14-21

Like I said it is a beautiful prayer. It’s a short prayer. What is Paul praying for here? We get a hint when we see where his prayer is located in his letter. This prayer marks a transition between the two major parts of Ephesians. Ch 1 to 3 (what we’ve been studying), is primarily theological in nature. It deals with our position in Christ and all that is ours because we are in Christ. Much theology. Ch 4 to 6 (where we’ll be starting next week) provide us with practical application for all the theology that we’ve learned. We, the church, the saints of God, given who we are in Christ, learn how we should then live. Sandwiched in between the theology and the practical application is this prayer.

So what is Paul praying for specifically? It is not obvious at first. This prayer is unique. It’s not one of those “now I lay me down to sleep” kind of prayers. He’s not praying for physical healing, or for restored marriages, or for successful recovery from surgery or safe travel. He’s not praying for any of that stuff. Don’t get me wrong. There is nothing wrong with praying for all that, but Paul has a different burden on his heart for this church. Earlier in our study, back in Ch 1 Paul prayed another prayer for this church. He thanked God for them and then he prayed that God would give them spiritual wisdom and insight so that they might grow in their knowledge of God. He prayed that their hearts will be flooded with light so that they can understand the confident hope he’s given to those that he called, that they would understand that they are a holy people who are God’s rich and glorious inheritance. So in Ch 1 Paul prayed for spiritual understanding for the saints. But this prayer here in Ch 3 is a little different. What Paul prays for goes beyond just understanding.

At the heart of Paul’s prayer is v 19. “Being rooted and grounded in love” and knowing “the love of Christ,” Paul prays that we, the church, “be filled with all the fullness of God.” Let me repeat that – BE FILLED WITH ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD.

***Show quote by Adam Clarke.***

So, according to Mr. Clarke being filled with all the fullness of God is the greatest thing of all. So what does it really mean to be “filled with all the fullness of God”? Is this something we strive after diligently in our Christian walk? Is it something we can attain to after years of effort? Is this an end result of a long spiritual process that we go thru?

I just want you to chew on that, to give it some thought to what that means as we make our way thru this passage. We’ll get there but for now, let’s go back to the beginning of the prayer, v 14 -- “For this reason…” [because we are all one in Christ] “I bow my knees before the Father.” Paul is on his knees before God and he is praying for the church. “On his knees” is not merely a figure of speech. You need to understand that this is literally Paul’s prayer position. He is on his knees before God.

V 15 Paul is praying before the Father “from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,” One commentary I read said this means that everyone in heaven and on earth exists because God created them. That’s certainly true. Another commentary I read said that Paul is not talking about everyone in the world. Here he is referring to believers. All believers, past (those who have died and are in heaven) and present (those who are alive on the earth) – all the saints of all time are part of God’s big family. We have the family name. That’s certainly true as well. Whatever Paul’s intent, he is acknowledging the greatness and prominence of God above all others. Whenever we come into God’s presence it is important that we remind ourselves of who He is.

V 16-17a “that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—" [I stopped in the middle of the verse because this ends a major thought]

The relationship that we as Christians with the one true living God, the God of the universe is based on what Jesus Christ did for us. “By grace we have been saved thru faith” (Eph 2:8) This relationship is not some sort of distant relationship – God far off in heaven looking down on little old us down here on earth. No. Just a reminder, as believers God is IN us! Let me use the analogy of a home. My body is a house. When I got saved, Jesus moved into it. Thru the indwelling of the Holy Spirit He lives in me. What part of me does he live in? My inner being. My heart.

Review of Cindy’s lesson back in June. She talked about the 3-part man – body, soul and spirit. The body is the outer man, what we see on the outside, the physical. The soul and spirit comprise the inner man. The soul is the mind, will and emotions. The spirit is our God consciousness, intuition and conscience.

So when I got saved, God moved into my inner being, all the rooms of my soul – my mind, my will and my emotions – and all the rooms of my spirit. God’s in my house. Paul prays here that God thru the power of the Holy Spirit strengthen us in our soul and spirit. That He lead us, empower us, encourage us, give us wisdom, give us insight, remind us, control us.

We are saved by faith and we walk the same way – by faith. We trust Him that He has our best interests at heart and knows what He’s doing. But frankly sometimes it’s hard to just let Him have control. It’s a battleground.

V 17b “that you, being rooted and grounded in love”

Notice that this is in the present tense. It is a present reality. Paul uses two analogies here to emphasize the same point – roots of a tree and the foundation of a building. As a believer I have been planted in the fertile soil that is that is the love of Jesus Christ. I have just the right amount of sunlight, rainfall and shade. He gives me everything I need to flourish. As my roots grow out and go deeper in the knowledge of Him then I gain strength and stability in my Christian life. I grow in Christ. In the other analogy I am grounded in Christ’s love. My foundation rests on bedrock, on the Rock that is Jesus Christ. He holds me up.

V 18-19 “may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,”

Paul’s prays that we will be able to comprehend, to fully understand and appreciate all that we are and all that is ours in Christ. We already know about the love of Christ, John 3:16, what Jesus did for us on the cross. How He died in our place; how He paid the ransom for our souls; how He satisfied the holy wrath of God against our sin; how He made our relationship right with God; how He declared us righteous. There is a lot that we do know. But the love of Christ surpasses knowledge. We may know something of the love of Christ, but there is more for us to learn about His love than we already know. No matter how much we will ever learn, there will always be more for us to know.

Which brings us to that phrase – “that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

God has taken up residence in our house. But He wants to fill us completely with Him. He wants full control and access to every room. He wants to fill all those rooms that make up my personality. He wants to be in room of my finances. He wants to enter my strategy and planning room. And so forth. He desires to fill, to be in every single room of my life. Paul prays for us that the fullness of God, His very essence and presence fill you and me.

So, Paul is NOT praying here in Eph 3 for some new spiritual process to take place in our lives. He’s not praying for us to receive more of God than we already have. He’s not praying for some existential experience. Fact is when we got saved, we received all of God.

Paul’s prayer is not that we will be able to get something we don’t have yet, but rather, that we will grasp what it is that we already have! God already dwells in us. That is a reality now for believers. But we don’t fully comprehend what that means. We may understand a little bit, but we are not fully mature yet. We’re still growing. We’re still learning. We are a work in progress.

Well, just the thought of Christ’s love for us makes Paul break out in praise as he closes his prayer…

V 20-21 “Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

Paul is writing to the Ephesians and he still remembers what he heard while he was in Ephesus. Acts Ch 19 gives the account of a riot that broke out there. It was instigated by people who opposed Paul because they were angry that he was turning the people away from the worship of their favorite gods and he was hurting their primary source of income. The people in unison cried out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” Well here at the end of his prayer Paul is, in essence, saying, “Great is the Lord! Great is our God! To Him be all the glory forever and ever!”