

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Filled Up To The Fullness Of God

by Dan Trygg

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ out-from whom every family/clan/people in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ in order that He might grant to you, according to the riches/abundance of His glory, with power to be made strong/mighty through His Spirit in the inner person, ¹⁷ Christ to-habitually-dwell through faith in your hearts in *agapē*-love. Having-been-rooted and having-been-firmly-established, ¹⁸ in order that you-may-be-fully-able/may-be-strengthened-out to grasp, together-with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to-experientially-know the *agapē*-love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, in order that you may be filled-up unto all the fullness of God. ²⁰ Now to the One being-able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all things which we are-asking or perceiving/imaging, according to the power in-working in us, ²¹ to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all the generations forever and ever. Amen.”

Ephesians 3:14-21

This paragraph seems to be the high point of this letter. Everything Paul had written seems to come to a culmination at this juncture. “Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (1:3), and all that God had determined for those who would be in Christ, ...all the past, present and future expressions of His grace that we can experience in this life, and beyond it, are meant to bring us to what Paul is praying for in this paragraph.

Notice again that, as in his earlier prayer in 1:16-19, Paul is petitioning God for us to be brought into a “more-than-intellectual-knowledge” of His love. In 1:16-19, it was prayer for a “revelatory-flash-of-insight-grasp” of God Himself, and His calling, provision and power for them. That had to do with obtaining a larger *perception*. Here, in 3:14-21, Paul uses a different word, ...a more raw, immediate, experiential knowledge. **Paul is not talking about simply revelation or insight. He is praying for experience.** This is not about theological understanding, or “knowing-about God”. This is the apostle’s earnest, heart-felt petition that we would radically and profoundly *experience* the *agapē*-love of God expressed in Christ, **in order that we ourselves would be transformed and transported to a new level of empowerment and fullness in our relationship with Him.**

One of the first lessons that leaps off the page to challenge us is that there is more to knowing Jesus than what the average churchgoer might expect. Paul is earnestly praying for insights that are not simply available to those who are nominally associated with Christ. As Jesus had prayed in John 17:3, “This is eternal life, *in order that they might experientially-know* You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.” **Eternal life, ...or life from the age to come..., is not the finish line, or the goal. It is the starting point of a new adventure, ...the adventure of knowing God.** In chapter one, Paul was praying for greater *perception* and *insight*. Here, he is praying for a deeper *experience* with God. Let me ask you, ...are you praying and seeking for these things? Are you pursuing a deeper intellectual understanding? So many people are not even doing *that* very fundamental aspect of growing in their faith! **Do you know that there is more than simply becoming familiar with what the Bible says?** There are insights, connections, perceptions and even revelations that go beyond a surface reading or understanding of the *facts* of the text of the Bible. **There are things that only can be known or perceived by the illumination of the Holy Spirit!** Are you praying and asking for these *deeper glimpses* into what God has for you? **Then, there are things that can only be experienced by those who pursue more of God, and more from God.** Are you wanting, hoping, asking and expecting for more from God? Are you wanting, hoping, asking and expecting God to do those things in the lives of others?

A second lesson that is clearly stated is that God is the One who must “give” or “grant” this experience. It is not something that comes to everyone, and it is not something you can obtain on your own, by self-effort. Paul was praying and interceding for these believers that God would work in their lives to prepare them and bring them into this deeper-level experience he is writing about. **BUT, we know that it is God’s heart for us, ...because we know that He has given us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (1:3).** So, we can be assured that if we truly want this, and are willing to pursue God for it, He will be faithful to lead us deeper in our experience with Him.

A third lesson that is definitively expressed is that there is a process of growth and empowerment that must take place in our lives in order for us to be prepared to benefit from the experience that Paul is speaking of. Paul uses three different Greek words for power, strength or might, ...along with two other word pictures that emphasize solidity, stability and immovability. The build-up is intense. This is not for novices, or the unstable. This is for those who have developed stability, consistency, and depth. ...and yet, Paul wants it for “all the saints”. It certainly is *available* to all.

So, what is the progression? In power (*dunamis*), you are to be made strong or mighty (*krataioō*) in your inner person by means of His Spirit. **This is to cause Christ to habitually-dwell through the faith in your hearts in love.** Paul is not suggesting that we lose the indwelling presence of Christ, if we sin. What he is trying to say is that we can make

our lives a welcome place for His abiding Presence within us, when we choose to live by faith in love. Note again that this is the result of a growth and strengthening process. **It is by the power (*dunamis*) of the Spirit that we are inwardly strengthened. The focus of this strengthening process is our “inner person”,** the new creature that was born from above when we trusted in Christ. We have an “inner person” and an “outer person” (2 Cor 4:16), just as we have a “new person” and an “old person” (Eph. 4:22,24; Col. 3:9,10). The “old person”, or “outer person” is our old, sinful nature. Our “inner” or “new” person is our new self that has been born of the Spirit. What Paul is saying is that **when our new life is strengthened with power from the Holy Spirit, our life is filled with Christ’s indwelling Presence,** and He is made visible in and through us. The more we consistently respond to and embrace the power of the Spirit in our inner person, the more the abiding Presence of Jesus is residing and working in and through us. The Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of Jesus, are two names for the same reality. James 4:5 says that God has made His Spirit to habitually-dwell within us. **Our abiding is most clearly evident when we see the *agapē*-love expressed through us. It is a by-product of the indwelling Spirit** (Rom. 5:5).

Then, “having-been-rooted and having-been-established” in this walk with Jesus, the next step is to “be-strengthened-out” or “be-made-fully-able”. Again, this is the result of a growth, development and strengthening process. The word picture of “having-been-rooted” implies a process of deepening growth. The root system not only enlarges the ability of a plant to get nutrients, it also anchors it solidly against the storms of life. The word picture of “having been established” is literally about laying a deep and solid foundation for a building. Jesus’ parable about the man who built his house upon the rock (Matt. 7:24-27) is a good reminder again that ***strength and stability against the pressures and tests of life are important considerations for our spiritual lives.*** Here, this is also a necessary preparation for the experience of God’s love that Paul is leading us to look for.

All of this preparation is so that we might “grasp” or “lay hold of” the unlimited *agapē*-love of God, ...to experientially-know the love of Christ that is above-and-beyond knowledge.” Why? “In order that you might be filled up unto all the fullness of God.” In other words, it seems that what Paul is saying is that to touch, to taste, to encounter this incredibly deep and expansive love of God will have a profound effect on those who experience it. **What does it mean to “be filled up unto all the fullness of God”?** The word for “fullness” here is the Greek word, *plērōma*. It refers to “full measure, full supply, filled to capacity”, but it is significant to see how it is used in the NT. In Colossians 1:19, it says that it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness (*plērōma*) to habitually-dwell in Jesus. In Colossians 2:9,10, we are told that in Him (Jesus), all the fullness (*plērōma*) of Deity habitually-dwells in bodily form, and in Him we are having-been-filled-full. In John 1:16, we are told that out of Jesus’ fullness (*plērōma*), we all have received grace upon grace. Finally, in Ephesians 4:13, Paul says that the purpose of the interactive dynamic of our spiritual gifts is to “build up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the experiential-knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature person, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness (*plērōma*) of Christ.” **We are to be filled with Jesus, become like Jesus, talk like Jesus, and act like Jesus, by the same power that filled and empowered Jesus, ...the power of the Spirit operating in us.** Or, as the apostle John wrote, “The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to *walk* in the same manner as He walked” (1 Jn. 2:6). **What Paul is saying is that this kind of Spirit-empowered life is available to us, ...and it comes through a profound experience of the *agapē*-love of God.** Paul had been the recipient of such an experience, and he believed it was available to us all, ...enough that he prayed for us to experience it, ...he wrote about it under the direction of the Holy Spirit, ...and God saw that it was included in the scriptures that we have today.

I have read the testimonies of people throughout church history who have had such experiences. There have been movements in the church where people have rediscovered these principles, pursued God, and came into such transformative breakthroughs. **I am not championing emotionalism here, or promoting weird spiritual experiences. I am simply taking what the apostle Paul expressed here, and placing it before you to challenge you to seek for a deeper awareness of God.** Ask Him to draw you closer, to bring you deeper, to become a more consistent presence in your thoughts and awareness. Ask Him to strengthen your faith, root down and establish your walk, and prepare you for whatever would bring you through to come to a new apprehension of the love of God in a way that will transform your life.

It is clear that Paul had experienced people who were skeptical of what he shared. That’s why he followed up this section with the doxology of verses 20 and 21: “Now to Him who is able to do far more 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.” Notice what he says: **God is not limited to our thoughts, expectations or imaginations. He can do way more, ...quite above and beyond what we might even dare to ask.** And He will do it by the power that is *already operating within us!* **Don’t let your past experiences, or what may be the common expectations you or others may have had, limit your faith. Ask Him to lead you into the fullness (*plērōma*) of God.**