

THE FULLNESS OF GOD

- A. Introduction: Gen 1:26--God's plan has always been to indwell human beings and then express Himself through us. God created men and women in His image or to be His imagers (that's the idea in the original Hebrew language.) We're meant to know God and show Him to the world around us.
1. All creation (human beings and the heavens and earth) has been created, for the purpose of glorifying God. One way this occurs is through Him expressing Himself, His attributes, or His glory, through what He has created. Ps 19:1; Rom 1:19,20; etc.
 - a. I Pet 2:9--The Holy Spirit inspired Peter to refer to believers in Jesus as a peculiar (or purchased) people who have been called by God to show forth His praises (or virtues): [God's] own purchased, special people, that you may set forth the wonderful deeds and display the virtues and perfections of Him. (Amp)
 - b. As Christians, our relationship with God is more than a legal one. We have more than forgiveness of sins through the Cross of Christ. We have a living, organic relationship with God.
 1. When we believed on Jesus and His sacrifice our sins were remitted (legally wiped away) and we were born of God. He put something of Himself (His life, His Spirit) into our inner being.
 2. In the epistles we see this theme repeatedly: We are the temple or dwelling place of God. God wants to dwell in us and walk in us. I Cor 3:16,17; I Cor 6:19; II Cor 6:16; etc.
 - A. I Cor 3:16--Do you not discern and understand that you [the whole church at Corinth] are God's temple (His sanctuary) and that God's Spirit has His permanent dwelling in you — to be at home in you [collectively as a church and also individually]. (Amp)
 - B. I Cor 6:19--Are you not conscious that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit that is in you, whom you have as a gift from God? (Williams)
 - c. There are aspects of this organic relationship with God that are beyond our comprehension. How can the Infinite, Omnipresent (present everywhere at once) God indwell finite human beings? Our responsibility is to know it and believe it. We're working on becoming God-inside minded.
 2. Eph 1:19,20--The apostle Paul prayed for believers that we would know the exceeding greatness of God's power toward (to or into, in the Greek) us.
 - a. As part of his prayer Paul made reference to the fullness of God (Eph 1:23), and later in this same letter he prayed that believers would be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph 3:19).
 1. Fullness is a noun that comes from a Greek verb that means to make replete. (According to *Webster's Dictionary* replete means abundantly supplied.) The Greek word literally means to cram (a net) or level up (a hollow). When used figuratively it means to furnish.
 2. Fullness (the noun) means repletion or completion; what fills or is filled; and by implication: completion or reaching the intended goal.
 - b. In this lesson we're going to add to our discussion by considering what it means to be filled with the fullness of God.
- B. To appreciate what it means to be filled with the fullness of God, we have to first back up and talk about God's overall plan. I'm going to make some statements that actually deserve more discussion, but time and space don't permit it right now. But these points are foundational for our topic.
1. God's plan since before He created the heavens, (atmosphere, sky, outer space), the earth, and mankind has always been to express Himself through His creation — the supernatural (Almighty God) expressed through the natural (created) realm.
 - a. Man's rebellion and sin unleashed corruption and death throughout the natural (material, physical) world and caused a rift between these two realms. Redemption is God's plan to deliver what He created from sin, both its penalty and its corrupting power.
 - b. Jesus paid the price for sin at the Cross to open the way for God to restore what He originally intended. Jesus died to bring the supernatural and the natural realms together again.

1. Eph 1:10--Then when the time is right, God will do all that he has planned, and Christ will bring together everything in heaven and on earth. (CEV)
 2. Col 1:19,20--It is God's good pleasure to let all completeness dwell in him, and through him to win back all things, whether on earth or in heaven, into union with himself, making peace with them through his blood, shed on the Cross. (Knox)
2. Back to Eph 1:19-23--Paul wrote that the power in us (believers) is the same power that reanimated the dead body of Jesus and raised Him from the dead (v20). In v21-23 Paul gives information about what happened to Jesus after He was raised from the dead. (We'll discuss it in upcoming lessons).
- a. Note this point. Once Jesus was raised from the dead, God the Father gave Him to be the head to and for the benefit of the church (believers in Him). v22--And made him the head to which the whole church is joined. (Knox)
 - b. The Bible uses a number of word pictures to describe the nature of the relationship between finite human beings and the Infinite God now that He has indwelt us. Head and body is one of those images. It conveys union and shared life. We could do entire lessons on the church as the body of Christ. But consider this point.
 1. We tend to think of being the body of Christ as the horizontal, corporate relationship we have with our brothers and sisters in the Lord. And certainly, that is true.
 2. But this is first and foremost a vertical relationship—a union with Christ through new birth whereby we, as individuals, become partakers of His life, His Spirit.
 - A. Acts 9:4--When Jesus appeared to Saul (Paul) as he traveled the road to Damascus, Syria to arrest and jail Christians, the Lord referred to the people whom Paul persecuted as ME.
 - B. As far as we know Paul had no contact with Jesus until that moment and he didn't arrest or jail Jesus. Yet Jesus considered Paul's treatment of those affected by his persecutions as something done to Him. Jesus is aware of the union we have even if we're not.
 - c. In Eph 1:23 the church (believers) is called the fullness of Jesus. v23--Which is His body, the fullness of Him Who fills all in all—for in that body lives the full measure of Him Who makes everything complete, and Who fills everything everywhere [with Himself]. (Amp)
 1. We need to comment on this phrase: God fills everything. This is not pantheism. The word pantheism is made up of two Greek words: *pan* or all and *theos* or god. Pantheism is a doctrine that says everything contains God and is, in effect, God. It makes no distinction between the Creator and His creation.
 2. God fills everything. This is the glory of God (the uncreated life and power of God the Creator) saturating the created realm, which has always been His intention.
 3. God fashioned creation (man and earth) in such a way that He can express Himself, His glory through His creation. Through redemption His original purpose is being restored.
3. This process of restoration began when Jesus paid the price for sin at the Cross opening the way for men and women who put faith in Him to be cleansed of sin and indwelt by God. It will culminate in the new heavens and new earth, when this material world is released from bondage to corruption by the power of God (Isa 65:17; II Pet 3:10-12; Rom 8:18-23). The natural (creation) and the supernatural (Almighty God) restored to perfect harmony—no more separation.
- a. We referenced this verse earlier. Col 1:19,20--It is God's good pleasure to let all completeness dwell in him, and through him to win back all things, whether on earth or in heaven, into union with himself, making peace with them through his blood, shed on the Cross (Knox). The word completeness (translated fullness in the KJV) is the same word Paul used in Eph 1:23 and 3:19.
 - b. Paul wrote to believers: Col 2:9,10--For in Him (Jesus) the whole fullness of Deity (the Godhead), continues to dwell in bodily form—giving complete expression of the divine nature. And you are in Him, made full and have come to fullness of life—in Christ you too are filled with the Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and reach full spiritual stature. (Amp)
 1. The KJV says: You are complete in Him. Complete is the verb form of our key word,

fullness. Through union with Christ, through becoming the temple of God, you potentially have all you need to be perfected and restored to your created purpose.

2. This is God's plan, to fill us with Himself, not for the purpose of replacing us, but to transform us into His holy, righteous sons and daughters who are like Jesus in character and power (conformed to His image, Rom 8:29).

4. This is where we get into the "this is beyond our comprehension" aspect of our organic relationship with Almighty God. God is one God who simultaneously manifests as three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You can't have one without the other. When you have Christ in you, you also have the Father and the Holy Spirit.

a. But as we've pointed out thus far in this series, Jesus said that once He returned to Heaven He and the Father would send the Holy Spirit to dwell in believers. How can God the Father and God the Son send God the Holy Ghost to indwell finite men?

b. As we've noted, when we read the Book of Acts, we find that the first Christians had two distinct experiences with the Holy Spirit. They were born of the Spirit and then baptized in the Spirit.

1. Note one point. On the Day of Pentecost, when the 120 disciples in the upper room were baptized in the Holy Ghost, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. Acts 2:4

2. The Holy Spirit is God. Human beings were filled with God. The Holy Spirit is God. Jesus fills His Body by His Spirit. He fills us with Himself to transform us and restore us.

c. Paul referred to the Holy Spirit as our earnest. Earnest is from a word transliterated from a Hebrew word meaning a pledge given to ratify a contract. It was usually part of the purchase money or property given in advance as security that the rest would be forthcoming.

1. II Cor 1:22--It is God also who has set his seal upon us, and as a pledge of what is to come has given the Spirit to dwell in our hearts. (NEB)

2. II Cor 5:4--In the context of facing martyrdom, Paul wrote that our physical bodies will be swallowed up of life (made immortal and incorruptible. Lessons for another day). v5--Now

He Who has fashioned us (preparing and making us fit) for this very thing is God, Who also has given us the (Holy) Spirit as a guarantee [of the fulfillment of His promise]. (Amp)

3. Eph 1:14--And after you gave your confidence to him you were, so to speak, stamped with the promised Holy Spirit as a pledge of our inheritance, until the day when God completes the redemption of what is his own; and that will again be to the praise of his glory. (Phillips)

d. The completion of the plan of redemption is: The heavens and the earth made new and all in the present invisible Heaven being reunited with their original physical bodies made alive with eternal life (immortal and incorruptible) so they can live on earth again. But this time, it will be forever. Heaven on earth. (lessons for another day)

5. We're talking about the fullness of God. Remember what fullness means. It comes from a word (verb) that means to make replete. Replete means abundantly supplied. When used as a noun it means what fills or is filled and, by implication, completion or reaching the intended goal.

a. In Eph 1:23 the church (believers) is called the fullness of Jesus. v23--Which is His body, the fullness of Him Who fills all in all—for in that body lives the full measure of Him Who makes everything complete, and Who fills everything everywhere [with Himself]. (Amp)

b. Those who believe on Jesus and are born of God are filled with God, with the fullness of God, or what we need to empower us to be and to do whatever God asks of us as well as to be transformed and fully restored to all that God intends us to be.

C. Conclusion: We discussed in previous lessons the fact that the apostle Paul lived with the consciousness that he was indwelt by God. The cry of his heart was that the power of God in him would increasingly conform him to the image of Christ (Phil 3:10-14). That was his heart cry for those who believe on Jesus.

1. His epistle to the Ephesians is laid out in a very systematic way. (We could do a series on it). But note several points as we close this lesson.

a. In the first three chapters Paul lays out God's plan for man and explains how God accomplishes His plan through Jesus and His sacrifice at the Cross. Then Paul explains the transforming effect Christ's work on the Cross (which made possible the new birth) has in those who believe on Jesus. In the last three chapters Paul gives practical instructions on how to live and walk in the light of the effect of Christ's sacrifice and the power of God in those who believe.

b. Paul opens and closes the first section with Holy Spirit inspired prayers. I've encouraged you to pray these prayers for yourselves.

1. In Eph 1:16-23 Paul prayed that, as Christians get to know God better, we would have increased revelation in three areas: The hope of God's calling, the riches of His inheritance in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of His power in and toward us who believe.

2. Paul also closes this section with a Holy Spirit inspired prayer. In Eph 3:14-21 he prays that Christians would know the greatness of the power working in them and that they would be filled with the fullness of God.

2. How can you have more or less of the Infinite God in you? A lot of people would answer that question a lot of different ways with suggestions on how to get more of God in you. But, that's not really the way to look at it. You either have God in you or you don't.

a. It's a question of becoming aware of what you are (God's dwelling place) and what you have (God in you by His Spirit) and learning how to increasingly cooperate with Him.

b. Take time to think about the fact that God, by His Spirit, is in you. That's one way you become conscious of it. And, as we've said repeatedly, this comes through regular, systematic reading of the New Testament and regular praying in the Holy Spirit. II Cor 3:18

3. Let's close this lesson by reading Paul's second prayer. Eph 3:14-21 (NLT)

a. v14-16--When I think of the wisdom and scope of God's plan, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will give you mighty inner strength through his Holy Spirit.

b. v17-18--And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in him.

May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is.

c. v19-21--May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

d. v20-21--Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope, May he be given glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages. Amen.

4. Paul isn't talking about a technique to get results. He's talking about the results of awareness of your relationship with God Almighty. God, the Creator of all is in you by His Spirit. More next week!