

07/15/12 Sermon – Ephesians 1:3–7,13–14

Ascension Batavia

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Ephesians 3:14–21 (NKJV)**

**14** For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

**15** from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

**16** that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,

**17** that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

**18** may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—

**19** to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

**20** Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

**21** to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

## Filed to the Fullness

Lord, fill us with Your Truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen.

In Jesus' Name,

Dear fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

As the people of Israel wandered through the wilderness the Lord had instructed them to construct place of worship – the Tabernacle. This was to be the place where God would dwell among His people, the place where He would visit them with His presence.

**Exodus 40:34–38 (NKJV) — 34 Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.**

In our study of Ephesians we have been considering Paul's emphasis on the Church. The Church is described as a living and growing assembly, the assembly of believers purchased with the blood of Christ and built on Him alone. By God's pure grace and redemption in Christ we have become adopted members of God's family. Your preservice devotion described this assembly of the saints. From chapter 2 of this epistle, **Ephesians 2:19–22 (NKJV) — 19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ... 22 in [Christ] you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.**

God's glory is no longer hidden behind the veil. Rather God's glory is uncovered in Christ. It comes right to us in the Word and fills us by faith. We are the dwelling place

of God. ...Filled with the fullness of God – the fullness of Christ dwelling in us, the fullness of the saints united by faith, and the fullness of God’s abundant power.

### **1. Of Christ dwelling in you**

Under the Old Covenant God would visit His people in what is called the Holiest of Holies. This place was only to be entered by the High Priest, and only once a year. A curtain was designed to separate God’s glory from the people. However when Jesus was crucified we read that this massive curtain was torn in two. Jesus has taken those sins which separate us from the Lord and has nailed them to the cross, so that through the forgiveness of sins, we can now enter the Holiest of Holies – or should we say, the Holies of Holies enters us.

**(v.17a)** We are being filled with the fullness of Christ. This has been called the mysterious union – Christ dwelling in you, filling you with the glory of God.

At times may seem difficult for us to believe. We just don’t see it. What do we see? We see our lives filled with sin. Looking back with honest eyes it seems more so that we are filled with the fullness of evil – in every direction, whether stretching toward animosity or jealousy, whether stretching toward bitterness; we are given enough but are never quite satisfied; God fills us with good things yet we want what to be filled with bad things; How can God dwell in such a polluted environment?

Well, we are exactly right. Of ourselves we are not a fit dwelling place for God. Without Christ the glory of God would destroy us. We are correct in these feelings of doubt and sorrow. This is why God has built His Church on a different foundation than you. God has to come to us through Christ.

**Colossians 1:18–22 (NKJV) — 18 And [Christ] is the head of the body, the church, who ... 19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. 21 And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled 22 in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—**

God has sucked out the pollution of sin. He has removed those sins and filled you instead with the fullness of His Son. Notice the mention in those verses from Colossians to both the blood of the cross and the body of His flesh. The fullness of God dwells in the person of Jesus Christ. Through the blood of the cross then we receive the payment of God’s blood and in the flesh we receive the God’s full submission to keep the law in our place and die our death. We are reconciled, brought together, at peace with God. In Christ, all the fullness of God is found as God fills us with the fullness of His full forgiveness.

**Colossians 2:9–10 (NKJV) — 9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete (“made full”) in Him.**

You are the Holiest of Holies – full of God’s glory, blameless in God’s sight.

For this reason, Paul bows his knee to the Father ... v.19, that **you would know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.** Again, we see the fullness of God found in

the love of Christ – a love which is all the knowledge in the world, the highest scholarship cannot grasp. This love is not a factual knowledge which we can learn by means of intellect – it is known in the heart. It is discovered by the 3 year old that comes to Vacation Bible School this week. It is clung to by the 90 year old dying of cancer. It is the precious shape that fills the empty soul.

**1 John 4:10 (NKJV) — 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

This is where our roots lie. Our roots reach deeply into the soil of God's love. **(v.17b)** Our inner man grows stronger and stronger as we dig deeper and deeper into this love-rich soil of our Savior. As we struggle in our lives to see the glory of God at work in us, we may be looking to the wrong roots. Look to the true source of God's glory and love – God so loved you that sent His only Son to be the full payment for your sin. May God fill your heart with this love. Filled to the Fullness of Christ.

## **2. Of the saints**

In OT times when under the Old Covenant Israelites were spoken of as God's chosen people. But as far as numbers were concerned this was only external. Indeed they were God's covenant people, they had His word and were heirs of the promise, but Paul points out in this epistle that the true family of God is not according to outward associations. The fullness of the saints is much more than church membership. It is the fullness of Christ who fills all in all. It is the collection of all believers from the beginning of time to now. Let us comprehend the fullness of the saints.

**(v.14,15)** "For this reason..." Paul prays. A good question to ask yourself when reading this is "For what reason"? Look back. Look back at to chapter three and see described the mystery of the Gentiles. Now revealed is the truth that the Gentiles would share in the inheritance of the saints. This "reason" for Paul's prayer is summarized in our preservice devotion from ch 2: **you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ... 22 in [Christ] you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.**

And so we pray to "our Father who is in heaven." The whole family then fits well with Paul's continuing emphasis on the God's people, the saints, the Church. As we considered last Sunday, 1:5, **[He has] predestined us to adoption as sons.** We are members of the household of God, His family. This includes both those in heaven who have already passed into eternity and those on earth whose bodies are still awaiting the heavenly deliverance.

Thinking in these terms we truly see how vast the fullness of God really is. It stretches to the beginning of time and unites us with Adam and Eve, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It reaches into the heights of heaven and makes us a brother or sister with saints who have passed on. It circumscribes all those believers on the face of the earth, Illinois or India, we are all named after the Father of our Lord Jesus.

**(v.18)** In the OT the fullness of God glory was confined. It was hidden behind the curtain. Yet now in the sending forth of the Spirit, God's glory is let loose. God's glory

stretches as far as the gospel has been preached, to all the ends of the earth. Consider the vastness of these dimensions.

**Ephesians 1:22–23 (NKJV) — 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him [Christ] to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.**

Comprehend the width, the length, the height – Filled to the fullness of the saints.

### **3. Of God's abundant power**

Are you thinking big yet? Think bigger. I'm not talking big, I'm talking immense! ... gargantuan! In v.20 Paul uses a superlative which you have translated "exceedingly abundantly." In the Greek it is just one word: "superabundantly"! Think of what a confined space the Temple was. And this was supposed to contain the glory of God? **Acts 7:48–49 (NKJV) — 48 "However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: 49 'Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the Lord, Or what is the place of My rest?**

God's fullness is far beyond anything we could ever imagine, let alone ask for. Filled with the fullness of God's abundant power.

How often the power of God doesn't quite show itself the way we would expect. When God appears to Elijah He is not in the wind or the storm, but in the still small voice. Yes, God has worked many mighty deeds which are visible to all men. He rescued His people by parting the Red Sea and let it crash down on the mighty Egyptians. Yet the mightiest of all God's power is not seen with the eye. It involves matters of the heart. It involves His power to remove and destroy sin. From 1 Corinthians: **1 Corinthians 1:18 (NKJV) — 18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

This gospel which is the power of God, His might and saving strength, is what works in us. He spoke of this in chapter one of Ephesians, **Ephesians 1:19–20 (NKJV) — 19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,**

Now we begin to see the fullness of God's power. We see a power which works in us – a power which changes hearts to know and trust in God for salvation. By this power God has raised His Son to glory. He has conquered and utterly destroyed death forever. It is according to this power that God has raised us up to heavenly places, and is able to do above all we could ever imagine.

Yet still we think small. As I read this text, I immediately thought of earthly things. I thought of rain. The nation is suffering from one of the worst droughts it has known in a long time. Couldn't God provide some rain for us? However God responded the other night by storming through with crashing thunder and mighty winds, soaking our grass and moving on. It was as if to say, is this all you would ask? How small I was still

thinking. Consider how with the power of His word He brought forth such a great rain that it flooded the whole earth!

Notice, the “exceedingly abundant ability” of God is according to the power that works in us. This power is often above what we might imagine not because we are not thinking big enough, it is because we are not thinking high enough. God’s power stretches not just throughout earthly matters, like the economy, your health, your finances ... God’s power is according to the power that works in us – the power that has raised us up and seated us in the heavenly places. As Paul began this epistle: **Ephesians 1:3 (NKJV) – 3 ... [He] has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.** God withholds rain or allows difficulties not because it is too much for Him to control the weather or the events of this world, but because He is working much greater things – a heavenly good, something not seen with the eye. He works an eternal purpose for His people. He would work a great a mighty faith in us to trust in Him who saved us from sin. He is leading us to call on Him, to bow our knee before the Father of heaven and earth, to pray to Him for these things.

Let us think big as we pray – think beyond the walls of this world. As we pray for food and clothing, we also pray for a greater faith and for the good of His kingdom to be carried out. Filled with God’s abundant power.

As God filled the tabernacle in the wilderness, Moses could not even enter because of the fullness of God’s glory. How amazing it is that this fullness would be found in you and among us. God has prepared a glory that surpasses the glory which filled the temple in Jerusalem. He has filled us with the saving knowledge of Christ. He has filled us with the fullness of the saints, a loving fellowship which extends to the heights of heaven. And He has filled us with a power so great that it will take us to God’s eternal dwelling place where we will see a fullness of God’s glory beyond what we could ever imagine. Filled to the Fullness of God.

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20–21 (NKJV))