

Filled with the Fullness of God

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Preacher: Pastor Kenoyer

[0 : 00] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. This morning to pray for me because I'm reminded of what it says in 2 Corinthians where Paul, he says, we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the glory may be of God and not of us.

And then later, Paul says a very interesting thing in relationship. He says, we are the aroma of life and death.

[1 : 57] To those who are believing, we are the aroma of life. And to those who are dying, we are the aroma of death. And then he says something. He says, and who is sufficient for these things?

I want you to turn your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 3. And we are in the process of looking at the prayer that Paul prays from Ephesians chapter 3 verse 14 through 21.

I think it is perhaps if I were to choose one sermon that I could preach, I would have to decide in advance who was I preaching to.

If I were preaching to unbelievers, I would tell you that I would probably preach John 3.16. If I only had one opportunity, it would be to preach John 3.16.

If I had one sermon to do for those who were believers, I would want to go to Ephesians chapter 3 verse 14 through 21.

[3 : 14] I cannot think of a richer, more precious, more valuable, more significant passage of Scripture. Now, given that pastors speak in hyperbole, bear with me, because all Scripture, what does it say?

Is profitable that the man of God may be completely furnished unto all good works. And so, it's a hard thing to be able to say, and I confess it, that this is the one significant passage.

I don't mean to say that, but it is so rich to us. Earlier this week, I was reading a book called To Tell the Truth by Will Metzger.

And it's a good book. I wouldn't call it easy reading. But Will was talking about the fact that he had been invited to go to a group, a college group, and a large gathering of young people.

And at the very beginning of his series, and he was actually preaching at a retreat for a number of sessions. And so, to start things off, he asked the question, So, how many of you here this morning have confidence in your eternal destiny?

[4 : 29] Now, we use that kind of question in evangelism, don't we? If you were to die tonight, and God were to say, Why should I let you into heaven? What would you say? We use something on the same flavor.

And he was amazed when, after he asked that question about how many of you have confidence in your eternal destiny, all of those young people, it was a Christian gathering, all of those young people raised their hands and said, I've got confidence.

Well, then he asked a subsequent question. He said, And so, do you know what he did?

Beloved, conversion that is genuine, produces in us a growing affection for Christ, and a desire to grow in godliness.

And where those two elements are deficient, there is either a good cause for questioning an individual's birth certificate, or there is good cause to question where in the process of spiritual growth is that believer.

[6 : 14] I speak to you this morning as people who know Christ. I make that assumption, though I would believe there are some that are among us today that may have grown up in a Christian home.

You know all the vocabulary. You got through Awana. You know the verses. You probably got a Timothy award. But the truth of the matter is, is that there is no affection for the Lord Jesus Christ, or even a sense of the importance of growing in that.

And there's a large indifference to the matter of obedience. You may not be saved. Or this morning's message has direct application to your heart, and it would be my plea and my prayer that the Word of God would affect you, and lead to change that is worthy.

Let me read the passage that we're going to be looking at there in verse 18 and 19. Here is Paul. Remember he says in verse 14, For this cause I bow my knees.

He says, I'm going to pray. This is what I'm going to pray for. Works his way through. And then in verse 18 and 19, we actually come to the substance of what he is praying for. And he says this.

[7 : 29] He says that you 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.

So let me begin by recognizing here that what we find in Paul's text is, first of all, that it's important to have a purpose for prayer. And when people pray, we do for a reason.

Listen, there's something we need. There's something that is on our heart. Often when I am in ministry, one of the things that I remind myself of what it says in James chapter 1, it says, If any man lack what?

Wisdom, let him ask of God. And later on in James, it says, You have not because you asked not.

And so we recognize that when we pray, our prayers reflect what we believe is supremely important or important to us at the moment.

And so there are times when in our prayer life, we are just crying out and asking God for things that are a burden to our soul. Other times we're just expressive and thankful.

[8 : 35] And let me tell you that I think there is Bible illustration in the fact that the starting place for most of our prayers in our relationship should be with, Lord, I cannot tell you how thankful I am that you are my God and Savior and that I, by your grace, have come into relationship with you.

And I am abundantly blessed. I have more than I deserve. And so as we look here at Paul's prayer, we find that here is the apostle asking for what he believes is absolutely most essential in the lives of those that he dearly loves.

His goal, in this case, is for the believer to grasp the love of Christ and to be filled with all the fullness of God. And I made the statement last week that over and over again in pastoral ministry, I found myself in various times comforting those who have been afflicted or encouraging those who have been oppressed by the heartaches of life, dealing with discouragement and despair, brokenness, and at the heart of what I have often found myself desperately wishing I could do, is I could put a pill in front of them and say, take this, it will solve your problem.

We are a culture that depends very heavily on pills. And so I would love to have a capsule that said, love of Christ, take two, see me in the morning.

You know, it would work. And Paul is praying and he says, listen, I want these people that I love to grasp the love of Christ and be filled with all the fullness of God.

[10 : 14] I want us to recognize that here he is praying to grasp a profound thing. As we unfold our text this morning, we're going to see that Paul's prayer comes down to a request that each believer would be able to comprehend the richness of the love of Christ.

And so there are several things that draw our attention as we think about this. And I want you to kind of put your mind into gear and follow along with me here. For one thing, comprehending the love of Christ, and that's what Paul is interested in, involves more than just reciting a few verses from a children's song.

Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible told me so, right? And we've got that one down. Or Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. What are they? Red and yellow, black and white, they are...

Comprehending the love of Christ is more than understanding the words of a song or reciting them. The word that Paul uses here when he talks about comprehending is a word that means to have a grip on something and understand it.

At the heart of our faith, and I want you to recognize this, is the truth that God has revealed Himself to us, and He wants us to understand who He is and what He's told us. I want you to turn back in your Bible just for a moment to a passage in Deuteronomy where that truth becomes undeniably clear.

[11 : 37] Deuteronomy chapter 30, if you would go there just for a moment. Deuteronomy chapter 30, verse 11 through 14. I'm going to skip from 11 to 14.

So let's just go to Deuteronomy chapter 30. And in verse 11 it says, For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off.

We are going to preach this summer in the evening services during the time that we do not have small group. Pastor Saul and I are going to play tag team.

That's not like WWF or whatever else, but we're going to tag team, and we're going to preach on some theological truths. One of them has to do with the clarity that God has in communicating His Word to us.

We're going to talk about the Scriptures and God's intention that it's understandable. And so as you look at this passage, here is Moses speaking to his children at the end of his life, and he says, Listen, let me tell you something about this book that you have.

[12 : 45] It's not too hard. It's not so complicated that you can't get it. And then look at verse 14. But the Word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart so that you can do it.

I want you to recognize that God's intention is for us to understand His Word. His desire and His delight is that we comprehend His Word and that it makes a difference in our life.

Having said that, I want you to recognize that it does take work. It does take work. And I think about a passage over in Job, and I want you to go there as well if you would.

Job chapter 42 verse 5. Job is a very interesting book that deals with the matter of human suffering. And most of us, when we're going through suffering, and I can tell you that every one of us will, things are not going to go the way you want.

And you're going to find yourself asking the question on occasion, Why me, Lord? What have I ever done? Right? I mean, it's a great song. But, you know, we're going to ask ourselves, So what did I do?

[13 : 49] I've been reading through the book of John repeatedly, and I found myself again at that passage where, Remember the man who was born blind, and the disciples say to him, All right, all right.

So who sinned? Did he sin? Or did his parents sin so this happened to him? You see, we often think that things happen to us just because of things we've done or things that other people have done, etc.

And here is Job going through all this suffering. Things aren't going well, and he finds himself not only dealing with his suffering, but he has good friends who show up, and what do his good friends tell him?

You had it coming to you. Now, that's a real good friend, isn't it? You know, if you'd been a little better guy, and the day list and bad things don't happen unless you're a bad dude, and so suffer, bud, and learn from it.

And at the end of the day, God shows up on the scene. Does God explain to Job why he's suffering? What's the answer? Nope. Let me say that again slowly.

[14 : 53] Nope. And we come to Job chapter 42, verse 5. I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye sees you.

Remember, the point that I wanted to make is that God's Word is there for us to understand, but I've got to tell you that it does take some work. And the idea that it's just like, we can all lie around and spend our days in carelessness and want and pleasure and think that we're going to understand the Word.

It doesn't work that way. And so here we find Job going through the process of suffering, and then he's crying out to God, what am I doing? What do I need to learn? And God says, hey, let me tell you who I am.

And all that he does, really, is reveal his creative power. That's what he does. By the way, were you there when I did thus and so, or thus and so, and thus and so? And Job finally comes to the point of saying, you know what, I get it.

You're awesome. You're wonderful. Now, in more specific terms to our lesson today, God wants us to grasp the scope of his love and its incredible value.

[16 : 05] At the heart of what we find the Apostle Paul praying, and by the way, when the Apostle Paul penned these words, because we understand from our grasp of the doctrine of Scripture, these words were not something that Paul thought up on his own.

Why do we have these Scriptures? All Scripture is given to us by inspiration. The Spirit of God instructed Paul to write these words, and they give to us some indication of what God has in mind. And here is Paul praying, I want you believers to understand the scope of the love of God and its incredible value. And so as we look at these four words that we find here in the passage, I want to make an appeal to you that they were not designed for speed reading, nor were they designed for speed thinking.

There in verse 18 it says, that you would comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ. Each word is important. And the Spirit of God intends for each of these words to be meditated upon and given careful consideration and allow the depth and the beauty of what is expressed in these words to then encourage us in understanding the scope and breadth, the depth, the beauty, of the all-surpassing love of Christ for us.

[17:42] Let's think about the four things that he says. He says, I want you to understand the breadth of the love of Christ. What is the breadth of His love? Turn over in your Bible, if you would, just for a moment, over to a passage in Revelation chapter 5, verse 9, and I want you to stop and think what eternity is going to be like, and one of the settings or scenes that you and I are going to enjoy.

Revelation chapter 5, verse 9. And they sang a new song. By the way, sidebar, my hearing is going, so one of the things that if you see me doing it occasionally, don't think I've gone off, just understand that probably at the point I need hearing aids, they're all shot out, but I like to, embarrassing thing to do, but I like to cup my ears, my ears with my hands.

Do you know what that does? That kind of amplifies the beauty of hearing people sing, and there's something about listening to the people of Christ sing the glory of Christ.

It is just beautiful. And here is John. He says, And they sang a new song, saying, Do you understand how broad His love is?

The other day I was filling out a form, actually, at the Social Security Administration, or whatever it was, and I had to identify my ethnicity.

[19:34] And now they have one little box, refused. Well, I thought, Oh, don't be that way, so I checked off white. You know? And I think, You know, every tribe and nation, do you realize that?

One of the things that I take pleasure in when I pray for our different missionaries, I was praying for Mark Furman this morning and his ministry in China and India. I like, I find pleasure, as I grow in understanding the scope of ministry, I find pleasure in praying for people around the world.

It reminds me, They're all over the place. They're in China. They're in Japan. They're in Africa. They're in India.

They're in America. They're in Ecuador. All over the world, there are people who, by the grace of God, have come to be part of the family of God, and that's the breadth of His love.

I want you to think with me now about the length of His love. And in Jeremiah chapter 31, verse 3, it says this, I have loved you with an everlasting love.

[20:43] When did God start loving you? You know, when I look at myself in the mirror, I got to tell you, I'm not like that, I'm not what I ought to be, but I'm not like that wicked witch or whatever woman who has looked at herself in the mirror and said, Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all, right?

I don't do that. But, I look at myself and think, jeez. You know, and here's the truth. I was sitting down here this morning, sitting right there, meditating and praying about the sermon, and I found myself struggling with that age-old battle that takes place in my life.

And the remedy was to remind myself of the unfailing, unconditional, never-changing love of Christ. And do you know what the Scripture says? I have loved you with an everlasting love. I can tell when people are not convinced of that significance.

Do you know what's a giveaway? When people are not convinced of the everlasting, absolute, certain love of Christ, they're self-consumed, they're unhappy, they're insecure, and they're pretty irritable with other people.

[22:12] Do you know why? Because the false god that they worship invariably is insecure. And here is Paul saying, I want you to understand the length.

How far does his love go? It started from everlasting. And over there in Revelation chapter 13, verse 8, and again in 17, verse 8, we find a very similar statement in which John speaks about the

fact that our names were written in the book of life before what?

Help me here. When was your name written in the book? Was it when you decided to trust in Jesus? Is that when it was written? No. It was written before the what?

The foundation of the world. Beloved, I take comfort in knowing that. I like the fact, and this morning as I was listening to the songs that we were singing together, I was just kind of matching up some of the scriptures that bear on those passages.

And let me tell you what it does for me. It amplifies my appreciation for the music that we sing. And I was thinking about what it says that he has his hand and on his hand is my name.

[23 : 30] My name. And someday, beloved, we are going to meet the one who has loved us from eternity past. And that's going to be pretty good, isn't it?

That's going to be something that is going to lift up our hearts and, oh man, I can't tell you how sweet that day is going to be. I remember the last time I traveled to India, I was gone for who knows how long it seemed like an incredibly long time.

And I remember getting off the, as I was, this is something that happens in my heart. When my body starts turning towards coming home, guess what happens to my thinking? It kind of zeros in down on my honey.

Okay? And I was over there in Bangalore and when I walked into the airport, I was thinking, I am going home to see Judith. And the closer I got, guess what?

the more focused my thinking was. Beloved, the day is coming when we are going to see Jesus and can I tell you something?

[24 : 35] If your heart does not long for the day that you will see Him, I would ask you a question, what's happened? Or maybe you don't know Him. I want you to recognize there's another statement that Paul makes there.

He talks about the height. There in the passage, He says that you would understand the breadth and the length and then He says height. And I stop and recognize that that is a reference to the exaltation, the height to which He has lifted us.

I'm awestruck when I stop and consider that His love has rescued wounded, rebellious, bitter enemies of the cross and He has made those same people His own.

And you know what? His love will bring us home to glory and to perfect union with Him. I think about a passage and there are many that would bear on this subject, but turn over in your Bible to John chapter 17 verse 24 and 26.

This is Jesus in His high priestly prayer as He prays for believers and here's what He says in verse 24. He says, Listen, Father, I desire that they also whom You have given Me may be with Me where I am.

[25 : 55] Yeah, I love Jesus, but I don't really care to be around Him. Huh? No. Jesus says, I love them, I love them, I love them, I want them to be where I am.

To see My glory that You have given Me because, listen to this, because You loved Me before the foundation of the world. Do you see the connectedness between this whole issue?

Jesus wants us to have communion and intimacy, but the heart of it, He says, it's because You've loved Me. Then look at verse 26. I made known to them Your name and I will continue to make it known.

Now follow the remainder of the verse because it is poignant that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them and I in them.

Jesus is praying before the cross and He says, listen, here's what I'm asking that You would do for these dear, dear disciples and those who follow in belief in the centuries to come.

[27 : 12] that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them. Oh, Jesus, I would like to win the lottery.

Pfft! Oh, Jesus, I would like better health. Oh, Jesus, I need different neighbors.

Oh, Jesus, no, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them. Let's go to one other piece and I have to tell you that I've asked myself over and over again this week, why was this last? The depth. I think the matter of height and depth stand close together and give us some depth of thinking that deserves attention.

I can't help but think I appreciate Pastor Ken mentioning the man who recited Isaiah chapter 53 and I have in my notes I have referenced Isaiah chapter 53 where it talks about the Lord Jesus and His suffering for us.

[28 : 41] And I'm reminded of what Jesus did in order to save you and to save me. It is the most incredible, the most unbelievable thing of all of human history that God would send His own Son to take upon Himself human flesh to die in our place and to rise again so that those who believe in Him might have an intimate relationship with the Lord of glory.

I think back over to Philippians chapter 2 and you remember where Paul is writing to the church at Philippi and he is dealing with the struggle that church is having with attitudes and relationships with one another and he says let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

In other words hey, hey, hey think the way Jesus thought and having said that he says alright let me help you with that let me talk about what Jesus did he had every right to view himself as co-equal with the Father rightfully so and yet he willingly humbled himself and took upon himself human form and not only that but he obeyed the Father and was willing to go to the cross for you that's depth that's depth now I want to tell you that these four dimensions of his love are designed to serve as prompters and the deeper you think about his love the more blessed you are going to be let me say that again slowly and I don't have it on a header over the board but let me just say this these four dimensions you have them there in front of you it speaks about his breadth and length and width and depth and I want you to height and depth and I want you to understand that these four are prompters they're designed to help you think carefully and accurately about the subject of the love of Christ see it's one thing to memorize the little song and sing it

I appreciate Tim Bauer bailing me out last week when we I found myself wanting the words to a song and Tim kindly recited them his love never gives up right you know never walks out on me his love never fails and here when Paul says hey listen I want you to think about the breadth of his love the intention is that we massage that a little bit and squeeze it and figure out what it means to us personally in the frame of scripture let me say this carefully to think about it and not think about it in the frame of scripture is at best very dangerous now why would I say that I don't know should pastor say such a thing apart from the counsel and instruction of the word of God my thinking is very flawed would you agree with that the heart is deceitful what and desperately wicked who can know it left to my own devices

I go left of center every time I can't tell you how often the scriptures help me think properly so I want you to recognize that these verses are given to us to help us think carefully and it's not just a matter of singing Jesus loves me this I know it's going further than that you can sing that song until the cows come home and be very very fruitless as a believer do you understand that it's another thing I would encourage you to do this it's another thing to memorize Ephesians chapter 3 verse 14 through 19 but I've had people come in and sit in my office and they have accomplished my counseling assignment and they have memorized the passage and they rattled it off but they are still self consumed and unhappy do you know what every good Jew would do morning and evening as you might know they would recite the

[33 : 07] Shema hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is one and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart they said it in the morning and by the way if you want to go on the web it's always entertaining to kind of say so what was that like and there's actually rabbinical instruction on when to say the Shema to get the most value from your obedience in fact if you say it after sunrise it's a good thing but it doesn't count as many points as if you say it before sunrise and if you really want to die as a good good Jew you need to have the very last thing you say being the Shema hear oh Israel the Lord our God the Lord is one people don't go to heaven because they say the Shema nor do they go to heaven because they know Ephesians chapter 3 verse 14 through 19 by heart what the father wants us to do is to meditate upon this

Bible truth with the enabling of the spirit of God and be affected by it so let me play it out for you in practical terms grasping his love takes the spirit's power and persistent effort there's no accident for the reason that Paul prays as he does and I want to kind of spell something out for you here a little bit in our study of Ephesians we commented on the fact at the very beginning that the first three chapters are informative of the glory of Christ in our redemption and the wonderful work of God in saving us the last three chapters are about our behavior okay and it's very important to recognize that in scripture as it should be in parenting we talk about who God is and what he's done for us before we talk about how we should behave towards him and so as we look at this passage in Ephesians we're at the point the pivot point and the pivot point in particular is understanding comprehending the love of Christ because out of that will flow all of our obedience and the fruitful joy that comes with it so it makes sense then to pray that Paul would ask for the Spirit's help and

you should do the same I would encourage you let me have you look up just for a minute look at me please you should pray regularly you should pray regularly that the Spirit of God would help you grow in understanding the love of Christ I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand and say when did you pray that last but I would move that up your prayer list I have a natural deficiency to understanding the love of Christ and let me tell you something understanding the love of Christ is the genesis of loving

Christ do you follow that it's the way it happens you understand the love of Christ and that nurtures and stimulates and encourages you to grow in your love for Christ now you're sitting there with a heart that's stone clothed towards Jesus one of two things is going on you don't know him or you've allowed the world and the issues of life to creep in and rob you of the supremacy of the joy of loving the lover of your soul and the starting point is prayer it also makes sense to not only pray but to spend more time in the word I am flummoxed that's a new word for you to look up I suppose flummoxed I'm kind of stumped okay at the many people who tell me that they love Jesus but they never crack the book and read about him or find out what he has to say or care about being with him in prayer what kind of relationship do you have with someone else that you really don't care about talking with or listening to you're fooling yourself let me close off by mashing the accelerator to the floor comprehending his love leads to his fullness

Ephesians chapter 3 verse 19 it says and to know the love of Christ so how can you know something that surpasses knowledge it's saying hey it's out there wrap your arms around it know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God that is that is just kind of like that is it's like putting it all together so what do you want in life I want the fullness of God well what do you really want I want the fullness of God what would you be willing to sacrifice anything and everything for I will sacrifice for the fullness of God let me say in relationship that one grasping his love is the fruit of faith there's some of you sitting here that really don't know how deep and how wonderful the love of Christ is and you have been slogging your way through life you know what

[38 : 59] John said in 1st John chapter 4 verse 7 he says love is of God so where does it come from that you miserable broken ruined sinner should come to begin to love God it is the work of the spirit that's gotten a hold of your life and is drawing you into relationship and is giving you that desire secondly fully grasping his love gives us his fullness I wish for time I had more time we'll deal with it another point so this morning I speak to you this here in this place recognizing that one of two things is true you may be here and you do not know Christ now you may know all the rules you may even know the vocabulary but you have never had an interest and an affection for the

Lord of glory who occupies the praises of eternity and I gotta tell you love for Christ comes through his grace and this morning as you stand or sit here I would appeal to you if there is a lack of interest in Christ and no affection for him you should turn over the birth certificate and say yes when did I really come to know Christ and where is the evidence of his grace today may be the day also that you as a believer need to rededicate yourself to growing in his love and how are you going to do that well we don't rededicate ourselves to anything that we are fully persuaded that we're doing pretty well at do you follow what I'm saying but if you're sitting here and your love has grown cold then I would plead with you that with humility and brokenness you begin praying

Lord now listen I think what we say in prayer is pretty important Lord I want you to do whatever you think necessary to encourage me to persistently grow in my love for you I want to grow in love I'm going to pray for that I don't care what the cost let's close in prayer precious father this morning our hearts revel in the glory of Christ we look forward to the day that we are going to see the lover of our soul and be satisfied and I have no doubt that there are some here this morning that do not know Christ and there are others here whose lives and hearts have grown cold it's been years since they've really had warm affections for the Lord Jesus they're unhappy they're discontent they're embittered they're disobedient and

Christ bids them pray to have that love rekindled by the spirit of God that their obedience would be willing that their walk would be holy there are some here today that do not know Christ and this morning father I would plead with you that in your grace you would draw them to the cross and we ask this for the glory of Christ amen let's stand together as we close in singing and I'm going to ask that if you're!

here this! morning we will glory in my Redeemer whose priceless blood has ransomed me mine was the sin that drove the bitterness and hung him on that judgment tree I will glory in my

Redeemer who crushed the power of sin death my holy Savior before before the holy child the lamb
who is my righteous man the lamb who is my righteous man

[44 : 15] I will glory in my Redeemer my life be bought my love he owes I have no longings for
another I'm satisfied with him alone I will glory in my Redeemer His faithfulness my standing place
though close on I lead and rush upon me my feet are firm held by His grace my burden are firm held
by His grace I will glory in my

Redeemer who carries me on eagles way He crowns my life with loving kindness