

The Fullness: Filled By The Spirit With All The Fullness Of God In Jesus Christ

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The "home base" and starting point of our exploration of this profound and marvelous revelation is found in Paul's twin epistles to the Colossians and the Ephesians.

An immediate and urgent reason for the writing of these two epistles was the threat of Gnosticism with its philosophical speculations concerning Jesus. When the gospel encountered the Greek philosophical mind-set, it tended to become distorted by Greek thought forms. The worst by far was Gnosticism.

Gnostic Christology was divided into two parts. The Docetic Gnostics said that Jesus was an "aeon" that only seemed to have a body. This denied Jesus' full humanity. By contrast, the Cerinthian Gnostics said that Jesus was an ordinary man with a real body, that the aeon "Christ" came on Him at His baptism but left Him when He was on the cross, and therefore that Jesus died on the cross a mere man. This denied Jesus' full deity. Both denials are found in modern religious and New Age thought. Both rob Him of His true person and also rob mankind of its Savior.

So then, the need to combat and refute Gnosticism became the occasion to establish in the New Testament an inspired, decisive declaration of the deity and preeminence of Jesus Christ. This declaration is based on Jesus' own claims, validated by the Father in raising Him from the dead and exalting Him above all things. Colossians and Ephesians link with Philippians in the divine declaration. Over two decades later, the apostle John wrote the inspired, decisive declaration of the full humanity of Jesus—the Word (*logos*) made flesh.

Woven throughout Colossians and Ephesians is the word "fullness" (*pleroma*). It is introduced in Colossians and developed in Ephesians. This could indicate that when

Paul wrote these two epistles, he wrote Colossians first and then Ephesians before sending them together by Tychicus. Colossians emphasizes the fullness of Christ, the Head of the Church, His body; Ephesians emphasizes the fullness of the Church, His body, received from Christ, its Head.

Colossians 1:19.

Colossians contains the two foundational statements of the fullness of Jesus Christ. The first is in Colossians 1:19, "For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell." Because the words, "the Father," do not appear in the original, a variety of translations have appeared. Some are awkward and strained. Others make "the fullness" the subject of the sentence. For example, "[F]or in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (ESV, likewise the RSV). "For all the fullness was pleased to dwell in him" (World English Translation, likewise Darby Translation). The fullness of the Godhead was indeed pleased to dwell in Jesus Christ. Most translate the verse by supplying either "God" or "the Father" as the subject.

Colossians 2:8 – 10.

The second foundational statement is in Colossians 2:8 - 10, "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead (*theotetos*) bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."

It has pleased the Father, Who is the executive authority in the Trinity, that all the fullness of the Deity should dwell bodily in Jesus Christ. It pleased the Father that the glorified body of Jesus Christ be the fixed and permanent dwelling of the fullness of the very essence of the omnipresent God. This accords completely with the great Christological statement in Philippians 2:5 - 11. God has highly exalted Jesus Christ and given Him the Name that is above every name. The Name embodies the fullness.

This settles the matter for all believers for all time. We reject all spurious gnostic "knowledge," all empty egocentric eastern and New Age mysticism and so-called "spirituality." In Jesus Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3).

It is to be noted that in Colossians 2:10 "complete" is *pepleromenoi* (perfect passive participle of *plerao*). "You are in Him made full."

Also, in Colossians 4:12 Paul writes, "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete (*pepleromenoi*) in all the will of God." Following the Alexandrian text (but not

papyrus 46), most modern versions read *peplerophoremnoi* (perfect passive participle of *plerophoreo*), "fully assured" but possibly also meaning "complete."

We go now to the Epistle To The Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:10 says that in the arrangement of the fullness of the times God will head up in Christ all things in the heavens and on the earth. Although this verse speaks of the headship of Christ, it contains an example of the general use of the word "fullness." Here it refers to the fullness of the times. We find other examples of the general use of the word in Romans 11:12, 25 (the fullness of the elect), Romans 15:29 (the fullness of the blessing of the gospel), 1 Corinthians 10:26, 28 (the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof), Galatians 4:4 (the fullness of the time). But when "fullness" (*pleroma*) refers to Jesus Christ and His relationship to "all things," especially to the Church, the word is theologically specific.

Ephesians 1:15 – 23.

We come now to Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:15 - 23. He prays that God will give them a spirit (or Spirit) of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Christ, the eyes of their hearts being enlightened to see (among other truths) the surpassing greatness of God's power that was demonstrated in raising Jesus Christ from the dead; seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name in this age and the next; placing all things under His feet and giving Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which indeed is His body, the fullness (*pleroma*) of Him who fills everything everywhere and in every way.

Notice specifically the apositional phrase that states clearly that the Church is the fullness of Christ. The Head (Jesus Christ) is seated at the right hand of God and also vitally connected to His Body (the Church)—that is filled with His fullness—with all things under His feet (His Body, His Church) here and now on earth.

Only one thing remains to be done. "Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:24 – 26).

Although the references in Colossians and Ephesians are to the Church, they include each member. As believers in Christ, we are part of something surpassingly greater than ourselves individually; yet each of us is connected to its fullness.

Look at the power of God that is directed toward us, available to us, working in and for us! We see it in full action in Christ's resurrection and exaltation. He is exalted higher than the heavens (Hebrews 7:26). That is where the Head of the Church—your Head—

is now positioned in the fullness of His glory, authority and power. Our exalted Head is right now seated on the highest possible throne of the universe. As believers in Jesus Christ, we have "connections in high places." We are vitally connected to our Head, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, in whom we are complete, and who fills us with His fullness. The fullness of the Head flows throughout His body and each of its members.

As human beings, whenever our head (mind, will) chooses to do something, it puts our body into action. Life, energy, communication are flowing throughout our body. Instructions go out. Immediately our body is mobilized. There is action. Things get done.

The same is true of the Body of Christ. Whenever our creative Head, Jesus Christ, wills to do something on earth, He puts His Body—His fullness—into action, and every member is a part of the action.

This must not be dismissed or diminished as merely an "ideal." This is what the Church is. It is not necessarily what the Church is living up to, or to what it or its members have attained. The Church is "a work in progress," and so is each believer. Nevertheless, God is calling us to live up to who we are in faith and obedience. This is the divine imperative, and we must take it seriously. "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17).

Ephesians 2:20 – 22.

We encounter another metaphor of the Church in Ephesians 2:20 - 22. We the Church have been "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in [by] the Spirit." The Church is both the Body of Christ and the Temple of God, each with its own distinctions and applications, and filled with God's fullness.

Ephesians 3:14 -19.

Let us go forward now to Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14 - 19. He prays that God would grant them, "according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

We focus our attention on the last clause—"filled with all the fullness of God"—specifically the word translated "with." It is the Greek preposition *eis*. Although its primary meaning is "into," *eis* has a broad range of definitions and applications. Here it

means more than "with." "Into all" means "up to the full measure of all." As we would say of a cup, "filled up to the brim." The NIV renders it, "filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." Others say, "filled up to all the fullness of God" (NASB, NET, Lexham, Mounce). It is the purpose accomplished through the process. Both the purpose and the process are embodied in the high-priestly prayer of our Lord, recorded in John 17, and in the other New Testament prayers for believers.

Ephesians 4:10 – 16.

This leads us directly to Ephesians Chapter Four. Verse 10 says that Jesus Christ "ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things." The fullness of the very essence of the Godhead, including every attribute (quality) of that essence dwells bodily in Jesus Christ. This includes His omnipresence. That is why Jesus can be everywhere at once—at the right hand of God ever interceding for us (Hebrews 7:25), and at the same time by the Holy Spirit (who is also the Spirit of Christ) with us always even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20). His glorified body transcends the laws of the present physical cosmos.

He "gave gifts to men" (verse 8, quoting from Psalm 68:18). "He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. to a perfect man, to (*eis*, into) the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (Ephesians 4:11 – 16).

Notice the word "fullness" in verse 13. How is the Church "filled up to all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19)? By growing up "into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). All the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Jesus Christ. As we grow up into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Jesus Christ, we become filled up to the measure of all the fullness of God. As we shall see in Ephesians 5:18, the Holy Spirit has brought that fullness into the Church through Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church.

The biblical description of the Church as a body emphasizes both the headship of Jesus Christ and also the interaction of believers with one another in the local church. That is why Paul earlier focused on the local church in 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17, and 12:12 - 27. 1 Corinthians 12:12 states, "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ."

Notice, it does not say, "so is the Church," but "so is Christ." In other words, Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, is so identified with His Body, the Church, that His Church is not considered apart from Him and He is not considered apart from His Church. Jesus Christ is not a head without a body, and the Church is not a body without a head. The Church is not only fully connected to Christ, but also fully in Christ. Also, Christ is fully in His Church. Christ is all and in all (Colossians 3:11).

Theosis.

Before we proceed further, it is important that we address an error that came early into the post-apostolic Church and has been with us ever since, particularly in the eastern Church. It is the doctrine of Theosis, also known as Divinization. Briefly stated, it is said to be the process of becoming so united with God that believers actually become deity. A classic statement of the doctrine is by Athanasius, Bishop Of Alexandria (c. A.D 296 - May 2, 373). Athanasius said, "He was made man that we might be made God."

This assertion comes directly out of the influence of Greek thought forms deeply ingrained in the minds of many of the Church fathers. It misinterprets Peter's statement in 2 Peter 1:4 that God gave us very great and precious promises so that we "may be partakers of the divine nature [*phuseos*, from *phusis*]." The word *phusis* was assumed to be ontological (referring to the divine essence), rather than moral (referring to the divine character) as it clearly is from the context and also from 2 Corinthians 6:17 - 7:1. Romans 8:29 says that believers are predestined to be conformed to the character-image of Christ, not the essence of His deity.

The doctrine of Theosis also misinterprets Psalm 82:6, where God called the judges of Israel "gods" because they were His representatives as judges. Jesus referred to Psalm 82:6 when He used His adversaries' own rabbinical style of interpretation against them (John 10:34, 35).

Sometimes an error is a truth that is taken too far. The distinction between the Creator and the created must always be maintained. Being filled with the fullness of God in Jesus Christ does not mean that we will become divine. What fills and what is filled are two distinct things. By the Holy Spirit the essence of God fills the believer; but the believer does not become the essence of God. The contents of a container fill the container and might even permeate and saturate the container; however, the container does not become the contents. No matter how fully God fills the Church and the believer, the Church and the believer do not become God. The Church is the fullness of God because He fills it with His fullness. Our devotional pursuit is to be filled with the fullness of God out of love for God and devotion to Him, not to become God or a god ourselves.

The Church needs to clear Greek thought forms and neoplatonic ontological presuppositions from its thinking. For too long the Church has read the Bible through "Greek glasses." The Scriptures were written in a Hebrew/moral-relational mindset, not a Greek/ontological-metaphysical mindset. The Scriptures neither came from Plato nor are they understood through Platonism. They are by the Spirit of Christ Himself.

Ephesians 5:18.

We arrive now at Ephesians 5:18. "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit" (NIV). A key word in this command is the preposition translated "with." The original Greek word is *en*. Although its common meaning is "in," *en* (like *eis*) has a broad range of definitions and applications. The word is in the dative case. The question is this: is it the "dative of place" (locative, "in"), or is it the "dative of means" (instrumental, "by")? If it is locative, it should read "be filled in spirit" or "be filled in the Spirit." Neither gives a satisfactory sense.

"With" is too general to be an adequate translation of *en* in the context of Ephesians 5:18. The International Critical Commentary (Driver, Plummer and Briggs) affirms it to be instrumental, "by." "By" is also the reading of The Holman Standard Bible, The Lexham English Bible, and The New English Translation (NET). "Be filled by the Spirit" appears to be the most natural translation of *plerousthe en pneumati*.

So the question is: be filled with what by the Spirit? The answer has been right before us all along: be filled by the Spirit with all the fullness of God in Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit was poured out on the Day Of Pentecost (Acts 1:1 - 4). He has been in the Church and in believers ever since, indwelling and infilling.

Before we can be filled by the Holy Spirit, we must have the Holy Spirit. "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:9). Jesus said that we must be born of the Spirit (John 3:3 - 8). When we believe on Jesus Christ, we are born of the Spirit and receive the earnest (deposit) of the Holy Spirit in our hearts (2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; 5:5). Also, it is important that believers be filled with and remain full of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the one who baptizes in (with) the Holy Spirit (John 1:33). At Pentecost the disciples were all filled with the Holy Spirit (*eplethesan apantes pneumatos hagiou*). Peter was "filled with the Holy Spirit" (*pletheis pneumatos hagiou*, Acts 4:8). The Lord sent Ananias to the newly converted Saul (Paul) that he may receive his sight and "be filled with the Holy Spirit" (*plestheis pneumatos hagiou*, Acts 9:17). Later, Paul, "filled with the Holy Spirit" (*plestheis pneumatos hagiou*), spoke temporary blindness on Elymas the sorcerer for opposing the gospel (Acts 13:9). The Holy Spirit works in believers from within.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of our Father (Matthew 10:20) and the Spirit of Christ (1 Peter 1:11). He brings into believers the fullness of God in Jesus Christ. So then, Ephesians 5:18 (being filled by the Spirit), accomplishes Ephesians 3:19 (being filled up to all the fullness of God), by means of Ephesians 4:13 (bringing believers up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ).

Because the Holy Spirit fills the Church and the believer with all the fullness of God in Jesus Christ, there must be nothing in our character and behavior that is not in the character and behavior of Jesus Christ; likewise, every quality of character and behavior that is in Jesus Christ must be fully established in the Church and the believer. It is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23). It is our calling; it is our destiny.

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). As we, the children of God, look into the word of God and live in the presence of God, we are being changed by the Spirit of God into the image of the Son of God.

You can be "confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

John 1:14 – 16.

"And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth . . . And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace" (John 1:14, 16).

When the apostle John wrote his Gospel, over twenty years had come and gone since the writing of the last of the Epistles. The divine deposit of The Scriptures of the New Testament was growing and becoming established in the Church. So John must have been very familiar with what Paul wrote in Colossians and Ephesians about the fullness of God in Jesus Christ. Therefore it is most reasonable to assume that when he wrote the grand prologue of his Gospel, John had in mind what Paul had written.

John was facing the increasing threat of the same Gnosticism that Paul opposed in his epistles. So John used the same word, fullness, to reaffirm that Jesus Christ is indeed the Fullness: the fullness of God, the fullness of the Church, the fullness of all things. The Body of Christ and each of its parts have all received of His fullness—and grace for grace, fresh grace for today in place of grace for yesterday, out of the fullness of Jesus Christ.

The Content and Qualities Of The Fullness.

God created man (male and female) in His image, according to His likeness (Genesis 1:26). This is the image and likeness of God's personhood (intellect, sensibility, free will), not His essence and deity (Godhead).

Likewise, the fullness of God in the Church and the believer is not the fullness of His essence, His eternal being. God's deity, eternal self-existence, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immutability, sovereignty, authority, and glory are His alone. By the fullness is meant the fullness that is given to believers in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. We have this treasure in "clay jars" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

We see this distinction in Christ's great high priestly prayer, recorded in John 17. When He prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (verse 3), Jesus Christ was requesting the full restoration of His pre-incarnate glory that is His as full Deity. God will not give His glory to another (Isaiah 42:8). So the request could come only from One who is fully God Himself; otherwise the request would be arrogant and presumptive blasphemy.

In Verse 22 of His prayer Jesus said, "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." This is the glory that the Father gave Jesus Christ as the Son of Man on earth, and that Jesus delegated to His disciples, then and now, for the purposes stated in the prayer. This is the glory that the Church now possesses by the Holy Spirit.

The ascension and glorification of Jesus Christ did not remove Him from us. On the contrary, by receiving from the Father the gift of the Holy Spirit and pouring Him out on us (Acts 2:33), Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit (who is also the Spirit of Christ) can be—and is—nearer to us now than He possibly could have been in the days of His humanity on earth—among us, yes, even in us.

The fullness that believers have in Christ is a complete fellowship (communion), an eternal love relationship with all of its content and qualities, that will be finalized in "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:7 - 9)—Christ and His Bride (the Church) forever united, not in deity but in spirit, because "he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Corinthians 6:17). Our glorified bodies will be "conformed to His glorious body" (Philippians 3:21), a new humanity in the redeemed creation. God was made man that redeemed man will be joined to "the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5), not in the unique hypostatic union of God and man in Jesus Christ, but in spirit and in glorified bodies that will no longer be subject to or confined by the physical laws of the present creation.

So, what are the qualities of this relationship? What all is contained in the fullness of God in Jesus Christ that is given by the Holy Spirit to the Church and each believer?

LOVE.

"God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16). In this terse and comprehensive statement the word "love" is not a predicate nominative. That is, "love" does not define the essence of God's being. God is not a mystical, metaphysical substance or essence called "love." It is a predicate adjective, an all-inclusive definition of God's moral character. Everything in God's moral character is established in love, motivated by love, and expresses itself in attitudes and actions of love. God is full of love; in Him is the fullness of every moral quality of love.

All true morality and spirituality is summed up in love. Jesus said that supreme love for God and equal love for others is the anchor point from which all moral obligation suspends (Matthew 22:37 - 40). Echoing this, Romans 13:10 says that "love is the fulfillment of the law."

Love is the basic, voluntary, purposeful set of the soul on the highest well-being of God, the equal well-being of all human beings, and the proper care and treatment of God's creatures and creation.

Love is the highest moral act of the will, encompassing all right moral character and resulting in morally right attitudes and actions. It is the character of God and of all who are right with God. They have repented and become reconciled to God by faith in Jesus Christ, and thus are morally compatible with God and spiritually in fellowship with Him.

Love is being motivated by the same things that motivate God, living for the same things God lives for, working for the same goals God works for and pursuing them by the same means—all in joyful unity with God in heart and mind.

According to Ephesians 3:17, to "be filled with all the fullness of God," we must be "rooted and grounded in love." This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5). The Holy Spirit did not open the top of our heart and "pour in" a mystical substance called "love." The Holy Spirit made Jesus Christ and truth so real to us that our hearts opened up to His love like a flower.

This real, "God-kind" of love is: unselfish, impartial, motivating, compassionate, merciful, just, truthful, patient, humble, pure and holy.

"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not

puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:4 – 8).

"The Lord is gracious and full of compassion" (Psalm 111:4; 145:8). Jesus said, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the sons of your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:44 – 45).

This is the fruit of the Spirit. "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22, 23). This is like a string of pearls, with love as the unbreakable cord that unites them all.

Part of Paul's prayer in Philippians 1:9 - 11 is that believers' "love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, . . . being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by [*dia*, through] Jesus Christ."

In 1 Thessalonians 3:12 his prayer is that "the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

Following Peter's statement that God has given believers "exceeding great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption of the world through lust," the apostle continues, "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours [in you] and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:3 – 8).

Because this is the character of God, it is therefore the character of Jesus Christ. Love is fully established and openly revealed in Jesus. Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1). He was—and is—"full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). He is "holy, harmless, undefiled" and completely set apart from the defilements of sinners (Hebrews 7:26). He was zealous and highly motivated to be about His Father's business (Luke 2:49). He was full of compassion (Matthew 9:36; 14:14). "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). This same love compelled Jesus Christ to die on the cross for us. All genuine believers are motivated by the same God-kind of love.

"He who lives in love lives in God, and God in him" (1 John 4:16). All the qualities of

love are outstanding qualities of people who are filled by the Spirit with all the fullness of God in Jesus Christ.

Jesus invites, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28, 29). We learn love from Jesus.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). Think like Jesus. Take on His mind-set and attitudes. Learn from Him. He is both the Teacher and the Curriculum. The Bible is our textbook. The Holy Spirit is our Tutor.

LIGHT.

"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

This does not mean that God is a form of electromagnetic radiation. "God is light" means that the fullness of absolute truth is in God and is revealed by God in its moral perfection and clarity. God lives and acts immutably according to the truth and He clearly, unerringly reveals the truth.

Light is truth—truth revealed, truth perceived, truth received, truth obeyed, truth displayed. Light includes knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Knowledge is having the truth; understanding is knowing what the truth means; wisdom is knowing what to do with the truth, how to apply it.

"Darkness" is the absence of light (truth). It is an intellectual and moral vacuum that is readily filled with error and evil. When the mind perceives truth and rejects it, the mind commits itself to error. Then darkness is more than the absence of truth; it becomes the adversary of truth, resulting in intellectual and moral perversion, and spiritual suicide. Jesus said, "If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23).

Darkness has no place in God. God is true and always true to Himself. God's word is truth ("light"). "The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light" (Proverbs 6:23). Jesus said to the Father, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

When God sent Jesus Christ into the world, He sent the fullness of His light into the world. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). Jesus declared, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12). He said, "While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light" (John 12:36).

Jesus Christ is "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24). Remember Colossians 2:3 says that in Jesus Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

God has called us "out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). How did this happen? "It is the God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Jesus said to His disciples (and to all believers), "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). Ephesians 5:8 declares, "You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." Philippians 2:15 says that we are to be "blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," among whom we "shine as lights in the world."

To do this we must "walk in the light as He is in the light" (1 John 1:7). We must "cast off the works of darkness" and "put on the armor of light" (Romans 13:12). We must live in love. "He who says he is in the light and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him" (1 John 2:9, 10).

All who are filled by the Spirit with all the fullness of God in Jesus Christ are full of light, live in the light, walk in the light, share the light, and radiate the light in a world full of darkness.

LIFE.

In Psalm 37:9 David said to God, "For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light."

We usually think of life in terms of our present physical existence here and now on earth. That certainly is a vital form of life, even though it is temporary. James said, "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:14).

Though it is precious, our biological and temporal life cannot compare to the transcendent value and importance of spiritual and eternal life. Jesus referred to eternal life, spiritual resurrection, and future bodily resurrection and judgment in His inclusive statement in John 5:24 - 29. We note in particular verse 26: "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself." Later He said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26).

Light and life are vitally connected and mutually indispensable. God has revealed His light and life in Jesus Christ. Referring to Jesus, John wrote, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). So then, without the life that was in Jesus, we would have no true light. No life, no light. Likewise, without the light that was in Jesus, we would have no real life. No light, no life.

Jesus Himself declared, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12). "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

And so we read in 1 John 5:11, 12, "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

Eternal life is much more than just the continuation of life after death. Eternal life is being personally reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ, and knowing and living in vital spiritual unity with God and His Son Jesus Christ both now and forever. Eternal life is the full quality of life that begins the moment a person comes to Christ in faith. Jesus prayed to the Father, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

Jesus declared, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Life—superabundant, meaningful, full and fulfilling—now and forever! It is the free gift of God to all who believe with the whole heart. Come! Believe it! Receive it! Live it!

Before we received the gift of God in Jesus Christ, we were "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). We were as others who live and walk "in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them because of the hardening of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Ephesians 4:17 – 19).

Now, "[w]e know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death" (1 John 3:14).

We declared this in baptism. "How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:2 – 4).

This God-kind of love, this light, this life is dynamic, transforming, liberating. It is the fullness of God in Jesus Christ brought into believers by the Holy Spirit.

The Blessings Of The Fullness.

"His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Jesus Christ is now seated at the right hand of God (verse 20), and believers are positionally seated with Christ (2:6). From there every spiritual blessing comes to us through Christ by the Holy Spirit. Believers have all heavenly blessings for abundant earthly living. It is not "pie in the sky when you die," but grace for the race that you face!

Here are some of the vital blessings that believers now have in Christ by the Spirit.

Access, position, standing, hope. "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1, 2). "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

Liberty. "Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17). We have been liberated from the Law of Moses because we have been liberated from sin and therefore no longer need the Law. "The law is for the lawless" (1 Timothy 1:9). The law is in our hearts (Hebrews 10:16). Believers "died to sin" (Romans 6:2). We can declare with Paul, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). "For you, brethren, have been call to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13).

Spiritual nourishment. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). "On the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart [*koilia*, inner being] will flow rivers of living water.' This He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive . . ." (John 7:37 – 39).

Instruction and illumination. "But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught

you, you will abide in Him" (1 John 2:27). Born-again believers do not need someone to teach them anything (pagan philosophy or cultic "new revelation") that claims to be supplemental to the Bible but in fact is contrary to it. By the anointing of the Holy Spirit they recognize false teachings and reject them immediately. The Holy Spirit and all true teachers are faithful to the word of God and faithfully focus on the truth concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God" (1 Corinthians 2:12). The Roman believers were "filled with all knowledge" (Romans 15:14). Paul prayed for the Colossian believers that they "may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Colossians 1:9).

Guidance, presence, joy. "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11, quoted by Peter in Acts 2:28). Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11; also 16:24; 17:13). Likewise, John writes, "These things we write to you that your (our) joy may be full" (1 John 1:4). "The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy . . ." (Galatians 5:22). In spite of persecution, the new believers in Pisidian Antioch "were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52). Paul said to the Thessalonian believers, "You became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thessalonians 1:6). "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).

Unity. Believers must endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). God places high priority on the unity of believers. The Holy Spirit actively promotes unity among believers, and so must we. "No divisions among you" (1 Corinthians 1:10). "No schism (split, division) in the body" (1 Corinthians 12:25). It is a true saying: "In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity."

Comfort and encouragement. "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied" (Acts 9:31).

Strength, power, and supernatural manifestations. Paul prayed that God would grant to believers "to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16). Jesus said, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me [My witnesses] in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This includes the nine supernatural "gifts" of the Spirit [*pneumatika*], listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7 - 11). Paul knew that when he would come to Rome to preach the gospel, he would do so in the fullness of Christ's blessing (Romans 15:29).

The Scriptures, including chapters three and four of the epistle to the Colossians and

chapters four through six of the epistle to the Ephesians, contain a wealth of practical instructions on how to live the fullness of God in Christ.

Jesus said that our heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him (Luke 11:13). He gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). Asking in faith and obedience, let us be filled with the Holy Spirit and remain full of the Holy Spirit so that we may continue to be filled by the Holy Spirit with all the fullness of God in Jesus Christ. This is life as it ought to be, and as God intended it to be.

"And the Spirit and the bride [church] say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).