

041 - Apostolic Prayer 6 - Ephesians 3:19b - 2015-05-03
(April 26th I had to stay home with a bad cold.)

Call to Worship: Psalm 33:1-5

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 4:1-7

Sermon: "Apostolic Prayer 6: To Be Filled with the Fullness of God" Ephesians 3:19

Benediction: Philippians 1:9-11

Ephesians 3:19b that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

INTRODUCTION

In our everyday lives, we know of things that by nature are empty, and need to be full of something in order to be useful.

- a tire
- a glass

We understand the great difference between how useful a tire is that is full of air, and how useless one is that is not full of air.

We understand also how important it is what the object is filled with. A glass full of fresh milk is very different from a glass full of sour milk. Even more, a glass full of clean water is very different from a glass full of contaminated water.

We understand also that it can be considerable grief to us if the thing we thought was full really was empty or had only very little in it.

- the gas tank
- the radiator

Therefore the human race spends a considerable amount of its effort checking to make sure things are full, and full of the right things. If we find them low, we fill them; if we find the contents contaminated, we dump out the old and fill with new.

This truth I just laid before you, of things needing to be full instead of empty, and full of the right thing instead of the wrong thing, is the basis for the final request of the apostolic prayer we are studying in Ephesians 3.

Recall what our Savior teaches us through this apostolic prayer's general characteristics.

1. Our Savior teaches us to pray to God not for what we think we want, but for what we really need
2. Our Savior teaches us to bow to God in prayer, not trying to bend Him to our will, but bending us to His will
3. Our Savior teaches us to appeal to God the Father, our wise, loving, rich, powerful Father, providing well for His whole household
4. Our Savior teaches us to ask that God gives to us, admitting that we are very needy, and must have His help

Recall that this apostolic prayer is in three requests; two of those have subpoints, so there are five requests in this prayer:

that He may give you [two things] (16)

-to be strengthened [G2901] (16)

-Christ to dwell in your hearts (17)

that you be able [to do two things] (18)

-to comprehend the vast dimensions of the love of Christ (18)

-to know the love of Christ (19a)

that you be filled [with one thing] (19b)

And what is that one thing, for which the apostle is praying that we be filled?

Our Savior teaches us, through this apostolic prayer, to pray that we be filled with all the fullness of God.

TEXT

Ephesians 3:19b that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

BODY

Our Savior teaches us, through this apostolic prayer, to pray that we be filled with all the fullness of God.

- I. See what the Lord Jesus teaches us that the people of the world are filled with who do not know the One True God
 - A. Ecclesiastes 9:3 Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil
 - B. Romans 1:28-29 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; (29) being **filled** with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; **full** of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness
 - C. As to their appearance, you can't necessarily see how full they are with evil; but just let them be squeezed a little bit, and see what comes out; just let them be tipped over, and see what spills forth
 - D. For example, if you won't go along with them in their evil, as Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego would not go along with King Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel.
 1. When Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego would not bow down to the image King Nebuchadnezzar had made, the king was filled with rage or fury, and so ordered the three murdered with extra malice
 2. *Daniel 3:19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was **full of fury**, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.*
 - E. For another example, if you won't honor them with honor that belongs only to God, as Mordecai would not bow down to Haman, in the book of Esther
 1. When Mordecai would not give to Haman honor due only to God, Haman was filled with wrath, and sought to kill Haman by killing His whole nation, his whole race
 2. *Esther 3:5-6 When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow or pay him homage, Haman was **filled with wrath**. (6) But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus--the people of Mordecai.*
 - F. APPLICATION When dealing with the people of the world, we often are amazed at how evil their words and actions are.
 1. Here is some help in understanding them: they are filled with evil; they are full of unrighteousness;
- II. See what the Lord Jesus teaches us that people are filled with who claim to worship the One True God, and seem to be believers in Christ, but in fact have a false religion of their own making
 - A. This is what the Lord Jesus encountered many times when He came; the Jews had the bible; they had God-ordained worship in the temple; they rested on the Sabbath and went to the synagogue for bible reading and prayer; they knew that Messiah was coming

- B. So, as to appearances, they seemed very religious---seemed to be worshipers of the One True God. You couldn't really see on the outside what those people were filled with. But just let them be squeezed, and see what oozes out. Just let them get upset, and see what pours out.
- C. For example, when the Lord Jesus preached in the synagogue, and He didn't preach about how sinful and rebellious the *gentiles* were, but about how sinful and rebellious they themselves were.
1. When the Lord Jesus Himself preached to them the truth about their sin, it came out that they were full of wrath or anger. They threw Him out of their synagogue, and tried to hurl Him over the edge of the nearby cliff!
 2. *Luke 4:28-29 So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, (29) and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff.*
- D. For another example, when the Lord Jesus did not commend their scrupulous observance of the Sabbath Day, but rebuked them for it
1. When the Lord Jesus Himself corrected their unmerciful ideas about the Sabbath day, it came out that they were full of rage, and plotted what harm they might do to Him
 2. *Luke 6:11 But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.*
- E. For another example, when the Lord's apostles were enabled by God to perform miracles of healing, and crowds of people gathered around them, when filled with jealousy or indignation,
1. When the apostles of Jesus Christ were drawing crowds to themselves by performing miraculous healings in the name of Jesus Christ, the high priests showed that they were filled with jealousy or indignation; they seized the apostles and put them in prison
 2. *Acts 5:17-18 Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, (18) and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.*
- F. APPLICATION
1. It is sometimes hard for me to understand what is happening when people who say they are Christians, and have been baptized, and go to church, say and do very ugly, evil things when they are squeezed or pressed or upset. But the Lord Jesus explained this in terms of what a person is filled with.
 - a) *Luke 6:45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.*

- b) Matthew 23:28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.
 - 2. People might want to take the preacher who spoke the truth to them about their sin, and throw him out of the church
 - 3. people might plot harm against a preacher who worked to correct their false religious ideas and practices, their wrong applications of God's law;
 - 4. people might oppose anyone whose popularity in the church began to surpass their own, and might take moves to charge them with some kind of wrong-doing to discredit them
- III. See what the Lord Jesus teaches us about ourselves, Christians in Christ's church, what we tend to be filled with
 - A. Believers in Christ are not filled with evil; we have the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord Jesus has sent into our hearts
 - B. But, by the sin remaining in our flesh; by the fiery darts the Evil One sends our way, we are tempted to be filled, in part, by sinful things; the apostle Paul refers to this as being "puffed up"
 - C. For example, we might become filled with a partisan attitude
 - 1. When the church in Corinth became filled with the idea that it was virtuous to promote your favorite pastor or teacher, and put down all others, being filled with a partisan spirit, they formed factions, parties within the church, each claiming its favorite teachers, such as Paul or Apollos or Peter.
 - 2. *1 Corinthians 4:6 Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be **puffed up on behalf of one against the other.***
 - 3. APPLICATION
 - a) John MacArthur, R.C. Sproul, Tom Nelson
 - b) various Reformed Baptist gurus
 - c) Dale, Jeff, or other men in this church
 - D. Or we might become filled with pride at what we know, what we have learned
 - 1. When the church in Corinth came to know that idols are just stone, and food offered to idols is still good food, made by God for us to eat with thankfulness, they became filled with pride that they had learned about their freedom in Christ, their Christian liberty, while some others had not.
 - 2. *1 Corinthians 8:1 Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. **Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.***
 - 3.
 - E. Or we might become filled with fleshly, carnal thoughts about what true Christianity is

1. Some in the church of Colossae were filled with thoughts about religion that came not from God but from their own flesh
 - a) that they shouldn't eat certain foods
 - b) that they should worship angels
 - c) that their dreams or imaginations were visions from God
 2. Colossians 2:18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, **vainly puffed up** by his fleshly mind,
- IV. See what the Lord Jesus teaches us we must be filled with (Eph 3:14a, 19b)
- A. His apostle Paul says to us, "I bow my knees to the Father . . . that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."
 - B. In many places in the New Testament, the Lord tells us what we can be filled with and full of, that amounts to being filled with all the fullness of God
 1. full of light
 2. full of grace
 3. full of truth
 4. full of joy
 5. full of wisdom
 6. full of faith and power
 7. full of good works
 8. full of charitable deeds
 9. full of goodness
 10. full of knowledge
 11. full of assurance of faith
 12. full of mercy
 13. full of good fruit
 14. filled with knowledge
 15. filled with the fruit of righteousness
 - C. And we are full of all these things when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, when we are full of the Holy Spirit
 - D. On the outside, a person full of the Holy Spirit, filled with all the fullness of God, may look about like anyone else. But put some pressure on such a person, squeeze such a person, upset him, tip him over, and you'll see that what comes out is much different from what comes out of a pagan or a religious hypocrite.
 1. When such a person is strongly tempted to sin, what will pour out of him? The law of God as contained in the bible. *Luke 4:1-4 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, (2) being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. (3) And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." (4) But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD OF GOD.'* "

2. When such a person is persecuted, what will come out of him?
 - a) in Acts 6 we meet Stephen, a man “full of faith and the Holy Spirit and wisdom”
 - b) in Acts 7 we read that Stephen was stoned to death for his preaching about Christ
 - c) When he was being crushed by stones, what came out of him? He quoted the words of Christ asking that God be merciful to his murderers. *Acts 7:60 Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*
3. When such a person has to handle a large influx of new people into the church, what will come out of him?
 - a) we see Barnabas in this situation in Antioch, Acts 11
 - b) the bible tells us that Barnabas did what he did because he was full of the Holy Spirit and of faith; what did he do?
 - c) he was glad
 - d) he encouraged them all to continue with the Lord
 - e) he did not keep himself in the spotlight, but brought in Saul of Tarsus to work with him
4. When such a person is called to account for his good deeds done in the name of Christ Jesus, what will come out of him?
 - a) We see Peter in this situation, Acts 4.
 - b) We know that Peter has a bad record of how he acts under pressure.
 - c) But how does Peter act when filled with the Holy Spirit?
 - d) Acts 4:7-12 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" (8) Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: (9) If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, (10) let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. (11) This is the 'STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED BY YOU BUILDERS, WHICH HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE.' (12) Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
 - e) What came out of him when squeezed? a bold proclamation that Jesus Christ has been crucified and raised from the dead, and that there is salvation in Him and in Him alone

V. How, then, are we to be filled with all the fullness of God?

- A. Conceive of the great necessity of being filled with all the fullness of God

1. Fathers, on the next page we will be commanded to bring up our children in the training and admonition of the Lord.
 - a) You all doing great at that, no problems?
 - b) Your children are seeing the very image of Christ in you, their father?
 - c) Everything you say and do, if they grow up just like that, that will be great?
 2. Chapter 5 verse 1 we will all be commanded, “be imitators of God, as dear children, and walk in love as Christ”
 - a) You all doing great at that, no sweat?
 - b) Everything you do is just like how God does?
 - c) Your whole life is in love just as Christ?
 3. Chapter 5 verse 11 we will all be commanded, “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness”
 - a) You’re all doing perfectly as to that?
 - b) No dark behavior at all in your life, no perverse or impure thoughts in your mind at all?
- B. Paul here is teaching us that we must pray for it.
- C. Think always of your relationship with God in Christ not as you who deserve good from God because of how you have chosen Christ, but as you, the sinner, undeserving of any good from God, but blessed because of His free grace, His love bestowed freely on sinners in Christ Jesus
- D. Make use of the scriptures
1. listen to them read and taught
 2. think about what you have heard
 3. read them yourself if you can
- E. Commune with the saints
1. be with other believers, especially in the assembly on the Lord’s Day
 2. make the most of our time with other believers
- F. Exercise yourself toward godliness
1. 1 Timothy 4:7-8 But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. (8) For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.
- G. Clean out corruption
1. 2 Timothy 2:20-21 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. (21) Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.
- H. In all of this, keep looking to the Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for you
1. Paul says, 1 Cor 2, Brothers . . . I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

2. Paul says, Gal 3, that what he put before the eyes of the Galatians was Jesus Christ crucified
3. Paul says, Col 3, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God
4. Hebrews 12 says, “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

CONCLUSION

Our Savior teaches us, through this apostolic prayer, to pray that we be filled with all the fullness of God.

Bayne:

“the fullness of God” noteth the graces of the Spirit flowing into us from Christ
“all the fullness” noteth the perfection of degree which is then attained when God is all in all

“As I have wished you the strength of the Spirit, and the lively sight of Christ his love, so I do, to stand in particulars, wish that you, who, though you have received grace in part, yet are in part empty, may be further and further filled with the graces of God’s Spirit, till you come to all the fulness thereof.”

1. labor for a more near and sensible union with the Lord Jesus Christ . . . Fill yourselves with Christ, and there will not be room for aught else.
2. exercise and faithfully employ the graces you have already received
 - a. 2 Timothy 1:6 Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.
 - b. 1 Timothy 4:7-8 But reject profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. (8) For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.
3. take away the impediments that hinder you
 - a. 2 Timothy 2:20-21 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. (21) Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.
4. pray the work of the Holy Spirit in you
5. there be certain duties that do likewise help us . . . these whet us, and warm us to duties
 - a. communion with the saints
 - b. prayer

he doth give us to understand what is our estate by nature, and what the best of us are in part, we are empty of God

JRY:

You understand the principle that something that works because of what it is full of does not work if it isn't full, or if it is full of the wrong thing

balloon

automobile

tire

rubber boat

Also, you may think it is full, but try to use it for its purpose, and you will find out a tire may look full of air; but load down the trailer, and you see the tire flatten you may think there is gasoline in the tank

How filled with the fullness of God you are may be seen by how you act

-when someone wrongs you.

see Stephen

-when you are tempted to sin

see Jesus Luke 4:1 "filled with the Holy Spirit"

-when you are asked something about your faith in Christ

see Peter Acts 4:8

-when you see the church inundated with new people

see Barnabas Acts 11:20-25

-he was glad

-he encouraged them

-he went to get Saul

Closest Context

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

A. It is fullness to Christ

1. of course the Son of God, as God, is not lacking in anything

2. but the Son of God has so descended in taking on human nature as to consider Himself not to be full or complete until He has union with His church as His body

3. APPLICATION

Could this be of help to you as you struggle through this life?
The Lord Jesus Christ counts His relationship with you, Him being the head, and you being the body, as fullness to Him.

B. It is filling to us

1. by nature, we are not full of the Lord Jesus Christ
 - a. tempted to think we have all we need
 - b. actually we are poor, blind, and naked
2. He fills us---all in all
 - a. He is the One who fills all in all ways
 - b. He is the One who fills all the members of His church with all we need
 - i. by the Holy Spirit
 - i. for godly life in this age
 - 1) virtue
 - 2) comfort
 - ii. for eternal life in the age to come
3. He fills us---as a head the body
 - a. nutrition
 - b. direction

Normal filling

sponge filled with vinegar
ships filled with fish

Filling with some sentiment or emotion, making them act a certain way

Luke 4:28-29 So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, (29) and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff.

Luke 6:11 But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Acts 5:17-18 Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, (18) and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.

Acts 13:45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.

Filled with God, making them act a certain way

Exodus 31:1-6 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: (2) "See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. (3) And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, (4) to design artistic works, to work in gold, in silver, in bronze, (5) in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of workmanship. (6) "And I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiab the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and I have put wisdom in the hearts of all the gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you:

Ephesians 5:18-21 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, (19) speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, (20) giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, (21) submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Acts 2:4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Acts 4:8-10 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: (9) If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, (10) let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

Being full of the Holy Spirit as a qualification

Acts 6:3-6 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; (4) but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." (5) And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, (6) whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

7:55

Acts 9:17

Acts 11:24

Acts 13:9

Calvin:

being made perfect in God; for this is the meaning of the phrase
Men do certainly imagine that they have entire completeness in themselves, but it is only when their pride is swelled with empty trifles.

Poole:

all that fulness of knowledge, faith, love, holiness, and whatsoever it is with which God fills believers gradually here, and perfectly hereafter

Clarke:

-all those gifts and graces which he has promised to bestow on man, and which he dispenses to the Church
-to have the whole soul filled with meekness, gentleness, goodness, love, justice, holiness, mercy, and truth

Gill:

that fulness of good things, which they may receive from God in this life; as to be filled with a sense of the love and grace of God; with satisfying views of interest in the righteousness of Christ; with the Spirit, and the gifts and graces thereof; with full provisions of food for their souls; with spiritual peace, joy, and comfort; with knowledge of divine things, of God in Christ, of Christ, of the Gospel, and of the will of God; and with all the fruits or righteousness, or good works springing from grace

Henry:

We are not to understand it of his fulness as God in himself, but of his fulness as a God in covenant with us, as a God to his people: such a fulness as God is ready to bestow, who is willing to fill them all to the utmost of their capacity, and that with all those gifts and graces which he sees they need. Those who receive grace for grace from Christ's fulness may be said to be filled with the fulness of God, according to their capacity, all which is in order to their arriving at the highest degree of the knowledge and enjoyment of God, and an entire conformity to him.

Lutsch:

More full not compared with other people, but with Christ

Dale Crawford:

Why will husband love his wife, and wife submit to husband, unless from Christ?