

What Can You Expect?
Part VI—To Be Filled With the Fullness of God

“To know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19).

The enormity of this thought tends to put it in the realm of the unreal. It is therefore often passed over as unreachable and therefore left to idle in the mental “storage bin.” Actually, there are many passages like that in the Bible—passages which lift us to heights that the human brain cannot reference. They simply don’t “compute.” And this is where the spirit area comes in. That is to say that our interactions with God are fundamentally in the spirit and are not always or necessarily interacted with at the mental level. Salvation itself is really quite impossible for us to grasp in our minds. The reality of it must be perceived by the spirit. The fact of salvation does not always include the understanding of it. We are saved by the sacrifice of Christ whether or not our ability to articulate or identify that salvation is at all adequate. There are many theological misconceptions about our relationship to Christ which are based upon human inadequacy and which have kept the Church in countless divisions from the days of Pentecost to the present hour. The New Testament is replete with references to these considerable divisions in the body of believers. Those divisions, certainly unfortunate and distressing, nevertheless, did not seem to affect the salvation of the proponents of these divisive ideas, except, of course, where there may have been a departure from the realities of the sacrifice of Christ.

So once again we are confronted with a concept that the mind has difficulty grasping and therefore does not focus on it. How can it possibly be that humans can possess the fullness of God? But possess it, we do. The Word of God is plain about this. John says, *“Of His fullness have all we received and, and grace for grace”* (John 1:16). And in another rather startling statement to the Ephesians Paul refers to the Church as the body of Christ and *“the fullness of the one who fulfills all things in all”* (1:23). The plain teaching of Scripture is that Christ—the projection of God—took upon Him a human form and so identified with the human race that when He rose from the dead, He imbued with His own Spirit all those who would receive Him, and then returned to glory, retaining both a bodily and spiritual identity with the race of mankind. To the church in Colossi, Paul states that in Christ *“dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form . . .”* (2:9). Thus, when we arrive in the presence of Christ we will not see three Gods on three thrones—rather we will see Christ who, in a glorified physical appearance, embodies all the fullness of the Godhead. He will be something like God’s window on the hosts of the redeemed.

Thus, Christ not only came to the earth in human form, but became part and parcel of the human race, so that we might become part and parcel of Him John says in his first epistle—*“We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is . . .”* (I John 3:2). There is no question about the position of the Bible in this matter. Peter says—*“We are partakers of His divine nature”* (II Peter 1:4). So in salvation, our natures are essentially changed to possess the spirit quality that enables us to identify with God and to dwell with Him throughout eternity. “That is all well and good,” you say, “But what are the practical implications of it for us today?” What does that mean to

the average “run of the mill” believer? Does one have to function at a very high “spiritual” level in order to participate in the implications of this reality? The most significant implication is that rather than being prisoners of this “space-time” universe, the most real part of us, which is our spirits, is no more than temporarily affected by the world. Whatever the distresses or afflictions of this material world, they are but for a moment in the light of our eternal destiny. They are bearable because they are transient. Identity with Christ does not eliminate earthly ills, it lifts us above them. Paul admitted to fleshly distress (II Corinthians 7:5), and he complained about it to God (II Corinthians 12:7), and was given a guarantee by God—not of deliverance from earthly ills, but of the grace to handle them (vs. 9-12). So, while his flesh was thus affected, his spirit was strong in the grace of Christ.

Remember, God gives us grace to bear our own ills, but not grace to bear another’s. When we judge God on the basis of other people’s sufferings, we overlook this point. As far as this world is concerned we have a gauntlet—a course to run. Contrary to the faulty teaching of some groups, there are no guarantees of ease and prosperity in this world no matter how great may be one’s faith. In fact, it is faulty to think in terms of human faith, which is nothing more than presumptuous assumptions about the will of God. We do not know what the will of God is for our lives. Paul certainly never made any assumptions about his life except “bonds and imprisonments” awaited him.

The true faith, which is the faith that Christ, is what we live by (Galatians 2:20) is a gift of the Spirit of God (Ephesians 2:8) and is the essence of our identity with God. It is the faith of Christ in us that guarantees our salvation and our ongoing strength and stability in the rugged realities of a world which, from the Fall, has been under the malevolent machinations of Satan who’s called “the ruler of this world.” So our assurance of the fullness of God within is based upon the clear promise of Scripture that His presence is within us; and the assurance of His presence within us is based upon our acceptance of Him; and the assurance that we have accepted Him is based upon the fact that we care about Him and want Him within us. If His Spirit were not within us, we would not be interested in Him at all. God cannot be in us without His fullness being in us. It is like electric current. The electric current flowing through the wires of the homes has the full nature of electricity, even though it may be 110 volts instead of 440 volts. What we have of God in our spirits is the fullness of His nature, but all there is of God is certainly not in us.

So what can you expect? You can expect that the fullness of God’s nature is within us, although not all of God is within us. You can expect that what you possess of the nature of God enables you to relate to Him now and through all eternity. You can expect that the fullness of God within you will enable you to run “the gauntlet” of this earth with grace and victory, even though in your flesh you may suffer affliction and in your mind you may not always grasp the meaning of your afflictions nor avoid the emotional distresses of the afflictions that you endure. How you feel about your afflictions has nothing to do with God’s sustaining grace in the midst of your afflictions. Furthermore, you can expect that the fullness of God within you can give you His perspective on the world so that you can integrate its inequities and vicissitudes with your position as a child of God. Thus, you may suffer “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” as Hamlet calls it, as Jesus did when He was on the earth,

as well as Peter and the other apostles, and yet not be overwhelmed by the world. As John says—*“You are in the world, but not of the world.”*

The fullness of God within guarantees our resistance to the pressures of the world without. Jesus said—*“In the world ye shall have affliction [pressure], but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). A submarine is so constructed that the pressure within, as achieved by the construction of the hull, is equal to the pressure without, else it would be crushed like an eggshell in the tons of pressure at the depths of the ocean. The presence of the Spirit of God within us equalizes the pressure of the world around us. So we can expect the fullness of God to counteract the pressures of this life. He does not eliminate the pressures, but provides the inner strength to stand firm in the midst of them.

Do you possess the fullness of the Spirit of God? You do if you have asked Him to dwell within you and you know that He is within you if you want Him there.

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Next month “Part VII—That He Can Do More Than We Can Ask or Think”
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