

# (Spiritual Fullness #1) Supply of the Spirit of Jesus

by Dana Congdon

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*Dana Congdon emphasizes the necessity of spiritual fullness through grace and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus in our lives and communities.*

**Duration:** 1:09:10

**Scripture:** Philippians 2:5

**Topics:** "Holy Spirit"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of relying on the grace of God to receive a word to share with others. They mention how sometimes we may feel unprepared or lacking in inspiration, but by God's grace, we are given something to share even at the last minute. The speaker references John's testimony about Jesus and how we have all received from his fullness and grace upon grace. They also mention Paul's exhortation to Timothy to be strong in the grace of Christ and to pass on what he has learned to faithful men who can teach others. The speaker shares their personal experience as a Baptist minister and the pressure they felt to share even when they didn't have anything of their own, highlighting the importance of sharing from a place of life in the Lord.

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## Transcript

Good afternoon, brothers and sisters. You're awake at this point, right? I'd just like to see, by show of hands, how many people are here for the first time this year. That's quite a group.

I suppose 25% or more are here for the first time. Well, it's a delight to be here together with you and to share in this wonderful matter of spiritual fullness. I want us to look at several scriptures, and so please take a Bible, and we want to go back to a place where our brother left off this morning, just in John chapter 1, just a few verses there.

John chapter 1, verses 14 through 16. John chapter 1, verses 14 through 16. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John testified about him and cried out, saying, This is he of whom I said, He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for he existed before me. For of his fullness we have all received, and grace upon

grace. And then in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verses 1 through 4. You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

And then we want to read a few portions of scripture from Philippians, beginning in Philippians chapter 1, verse 12. Philippians chapter 1, beginning in verse 12. Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else.

And that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from goodwill. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

According to my earnest expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me, and I do not know which to choose.

But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better. Yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

And then in chapter 2, those famous verses our brother referred to this morning, beginning in verse 5. Have this mind in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who although he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a bondservant and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason, God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow.

Of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. And then one last section in chapter 3. We pick up in the middle of an argument in verse 4. Chapter 3 and verse 4. Although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh, if anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more. Circumcised the eighth day of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to the righteousness which is in the law found blameless.

But whatever things were gained to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ and may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

Lord, as we come to you this afternoon, still the questions are upon our mind as to the large, comprehensive matter of spiritual fullness. We pray that your Holy Spirit will give us some instruction and some help that we may walk more completely in that position that we found ourselves in from the moment we became Christians and found you to be our completion. O Lord, by your Spirit, teach us to soften our hearts and speak to us today.

We pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen. We begin at this place, as we read John chapter 1, where we all must begin.

It's by the grace of God that we touch his life and begin to enter into his fullness. And John testifies, and of his fullness we have all received grace upon grace. Perhaps you're here for the first time.

Maybe you're here and you're a young Christian. And these high thoughts of spiritual fullness that we've heard expressed already, with more to come, your first response may be one of fear and one of unbelief. The only way that we can know anything of this spiritual fullness is by faith, through grace.

We have to start there. It's all by grace. By grace we have been saved.

And John testifies to a fullness that he has received. Not the perfect fullness, but a fullness that he has known. And he calls it grace upon grace.

And I'd like to begin this afternoon just by encouraging us as brothers and sisters together to not be satisfied with grace until we know grace upon grace. And we can all testify. I mean, this song Amazing Grace is the undercurrent theme song in all of our lives.

I think of that fragment of the verse that says, "'Tis grace hath brought us safe thus far, and grace will lead us home." Thank God for his love. When we hear of his fullness, we would back away in trembling and fear. And indeed we do.

But then, because of his grace and love, we felt ourselves drawn to the Lord Jesus. And we come back to him. Oh, how wonderful is his grace and his acceptance of us.

And also that gracious enabling. I know everybody here would testify in some measure of how God has enabled you to do things that you never could have done naturally. But you found the grace of God, and even the grace of God to say, My grace is sufficient.

We've known the Lord's grace to be sufficient in times of danger, in times of trial. Indeed, his grace is a full grace. And I want to encourage us to take hold of more of this grace, to come into the fullness that this grace allows.

Because in the last days, we know that there will be a great unsettling. The enemy will try his best to keep us all off balance. And as we know from the Word of God, one of his strategies is just clearly to wear down the saints.

Now, we as Christians sometimes, rather than pursuing after the maximum, settle for the minimum. And sometimes we live by the grace of God sort of by the seat of our pants, one day at a time. Now, the Lord exhorted us that we should not worry because sufficient are the evils of today to take care of themselves.

You needn't go on in endless worry. But there needs to be a greater fullness of the grace of God in our lives. We can't just live one day at a time.

I know that many of you, and perhaps some as younger Christians, are just trying to find God's grace just for today. You know, we get up and we try to read our Bible and we pray and we try to take His grace and then we have to go off to that horrid school or go to that job or face some situation and we just want grace for today. Just get me through today, Lord.

But in the last days, we need more than just that grace. We need a fullness. As our brother shared so beautifully with us last night, spiritual fullness is not an option in the last days.

It's a matter of survival. If I might put it this way, I know it's slightly incorrect, but you get the idea. We need to move on from just free grace to that costly grace that the Lord enables us to enter into where there is built up in us a spiritual fullness that can face today and the future and all of those things that the enemy places in our path.

It's not very many prayer meetings that we go to where we don't hear of somebody who's become unsettled by the loss of a job or by some illness that's come to the family and these kinds of things. And you know, some saints, having lived just by daily grace, are wrecked upon such circumstances. But we need to learn how to soar above these things by the grace of God.

So we desire this equilibrium. Routine is a wonderful thing. It is.

You don't realize it until you've gotten unsettled out of a routine. And then that's when you realize how beautiful were those times. You got up in the morning, read the Word, listened to a devotion on the radio, went off to work, everything went fine, came home, the kids were all well.

Ah, it's a wonderful routine. But we need to be able to move beyond this routine by this fullness that we're talking about. And we could all testify, or some, maybe you've taught children on Sundays or you lead a Bible study occasionally or maybe you share the Word of God.

We can all testify to those times where by the grace of God, He gave us something to share, even in the eleventh hour. You know, the saints have called on you to share Sunday morning and it's now ten o'clock Saturday night and you're still knocking on the door, saying, Lord, I have nothing. I have nothing.

We've all known that. Somehow, by the Lord's grace, He gives us a word and something comes together and we jot it down and we share it. And some saint even comes up to us afterwards and says, oh, thank you for that.

Thank you. And we go... But, you know, we do minister by the grace of God and unless He gives us something, we have nothing to share. I remember in my early days, you know, I was a Baptist minister a

long time ago and it was quite an exercise because as a Baptist minister, there's three things you had to do.

You had to preach three times every week, whether you had something or not. That's not really important. You had to share Sunday morning.

You had to share Sunday night. You had to share Wednesday night. You had to take up most of the time in the prayer meeting since people didn't pray very long.

So, you found yourself resorting to books of sermon outlines, basically copying C.H. Spurgeon on a given Wednesday night or something because you just didn't have anything of your own. It put me under a lot more pressure when I realized if you don't have something of life from the Lord, you shouldn't share. Because you're still called on to share.

And it takes a further fullness in order to do that. We might use Gideon as an example. Gideon's fleece, you know.

It's a wonderful thing when your fleece is wet, when you've received something from the Lord and you can minister to people who are dry around you. It takes some spiritual reserves to be going through something yourself in the Lord and be quite dry inside and still find something to make moist those around you. This is overcoming ministry.

This is ministry out of a spiritual reserve and a fullness. Which brings us, of course, to this other story. I'm just trying to give you some pictures of what we're talking about here.

We're talking more than just being filled with the Spirit. Oh, Lord, fill me with the Holy Spirit. That's a wonderful experience.

We're talking about a spiritual fullness that can take us through right through to the end. You know the story. The ten virgins.

They were all Christian. They all had oil. They all had oil enough for today.

The problem was the coming of the bridegrooms had been delayed. Five of them didn't have the reserve flask. That fullness preparing them even for the end.

I feel that the Spirit is speaking to us all today. All the assemblies that are represented here. I know that the Holy Spirit is pressing upon us that now is the time where in the wisdom of Joseph, in the fat years, we need to lay up, store up, come to spiritual fullness.

In fact, the enemy will make it almost impossible in the end days in his unsettling things. If you don't have those reserves, if we're not stored up, then when the lean years come, we find many spiritual casualties. Now is the time to take hold.

To find this kind of fullness that the Lord has. We're not talking about storing up money for the rough days. We're talking about storing up treasures.

Spiritual treasures. Spiritual capacity. Spiritual experience.

Those treasures that Paul tells Timothy. Guard those treasures. Guard those treasures by the Holy Spirit within you.

And I mentioned this verse in 2 Timothy chapter 2. I remember I was out in the Philippines with our brother Hosea and Ellen. And I was studying and I was reading some Greek commentaries. And it's the first time that I saw or had explained to me.

I'm not a Greek scholar. That this verse that I read in 2 Timothy 2, verse 1. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Now my translation, that's the way it says it.

And it interprets it as though it were an imperative. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. But I read Lightfoot.

And Lightfoot said this be strong is actually a reflexive verb if you know what that means. Basically, it means this. Timothy, my son, strengthen yourself in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

And that reflexive translation means that we have to lay hold of grace. There's a further grace. It's not just a free ride.

Strengthen yourself in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. I can just picture Paul writing this letter aware that his departure from this earth is soon to come. And he's saying between the lines, as he says, pass on to others what I have told you.

I see between the lines Paul saying something like this if I could say it. Timothy, you've been a faithful servant. You've followed my direction.

I've told you to go here and there. You've shared in my burden as I've shared the Gospel and shared with the various churches. But Timothy, I'm about to go.

And I need you to step up and receive that prophetic burden yourself. It's not enough just to go by what I tell you to do, Timothy. I won't be around.

Then who's going to know what the need is in such and such a church? Who's going to have that vision to understand the supply for a given situation? Or what needs to be ministered? Or where I need to go? You see, this kind of ministry which Paul had takes a certain spiritual fullness that Timothy didn't have until he would strengthen himself in the grace of God. Timothy, suffer as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Timothy, there's so many things that can entangle you in everyday life.

So many things that are good but unnecessary. So many things that are bandits of time. So many things that get you distracted from the one thing you need to be doing.

Timothy, be a good soldier. Your one goal now is to please the one who's hired you as a soldier. So don't be distracted in the many entanglements of everyday life.

It's a very strong exhortation that Paul makes. And the Holy Spirit is speaking to the church today as well. Because He wants the church corporately to come into a spiritual fullness.

It's not just enough to fly in on Sunday morning by the seat of our pants and expect the Lord to meet us in richness and fullness. There needs to be those who spend some time praying, being before the Lord, coming with hearts full. And even with that, praise God for the dear saints who are always ready in an

open meeting to give some praise to God.

But you know, the Lord is looking for a spiritual fullness that involves really every brother and sister saying something. Praising in some way. There's a greater dimension of fullness we've yet to enter into in body life.

And so the Holy Spirit is stirring our assembly lives not to be satisfied with whatever level we're at. We're not satisfied. Everyone is sharing, young and old.

Some are waiting back timidly. No, no, no. It's time to come forward and exercise your praise unto the Lord.

The Lord is looking for that. And in our meetings, the Lord is trying to cut away those things that are unnecessary, those things that are just built on human things and to get us to the place where our meetings truly have spiritual value. We waste so much time in our meetings.

You can sense there's unnecessary things going on. Too much talking. Too much things that are irrelevant.

The Lord says we need to take those away and move up to a fullness of our meetings. Isn't it a wonderful thing when you go to a meeting that's been full of the presence of the Lord? You know there's been a cost there. Someone's been faithful.

And some people have been praying. But the Lord wants us all to enter in to something of that nature and His fullness. Well, I want to this afternoon speak on spiritual fullness from this letter to the Philippians.

Because as our brother shared, it's while he was in prison that Paul came to a greater either awareness or an ability to express something of this fullness of Christ as he is seeing it in prison. And he wrote not only Ephesians and Colossians, but this personal testimony here in Philippians. And so I want to do this in the two times that I'm with you this weekend.

Today I want to share on individual spiritual fullness as knowing the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. That's today. And that comes from Philippians 1. If you'll just look at the verse, please.

In verse 19. Where Paul says, Yes, and I will rejoice for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And I just want to talk and share with you Paul's testimony of spiritual fullness as the laying hold of that supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

That's on an individual matter. And then, Lord willing, tomorrow afternoon I want to share from another fragment in this book of Philippians. Namely, that we would have the mind of Christ corporately.

It's key to our expressing and experiencing fullness together. Now you notice Paul's disclaimer, which we should immediately turn to in chapter 3, because our brother shared this morning who can preach on spiritual fullness? Who can say, hey, I've got it. You come get it.

Who can do such a thing? You know, not even Paul would dare to say such a thing. And so we read those verses in chapter 3, verse 12. Not that I have already obtained or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet, but one thing I do. And then he moves on in his beautiful biography of his pursuit of Christ. Paul would not dare say, oh yes, you want spiritual fullness? Look at me.

No, he says, not that I have already obtained or have already become perfect. So in that we all identify with Paul. Who can, in the light of the truth regarding the fullness that is in Christ, possibly say we have spiritual fullness? But Paul may be different from some of us in this regard.

Having said, not that I have already attained, for he certainly didn't feel he had come to this spiritual fullness. He had come to this point where he could say this one thing I do. And this, in fact, by the grace of God, is the key to entering into any taste and reality of spiritual fullness.

Paul doesn't say I've reached spiritual fullness, but he says I've reached an essential motivation in my life. There's one thing I now do. And in order for us to come to a spiritual fullness, there must also be this testimony in our life.

This one thing we do. Well, I want to say that in this Philippian letters, in a very wonderful and a very unselfconscious way, Paul does manifest spiritual fullness. I want us to look at that this afternoon, just to encourage you.

And I want to encourage you to believe that you can enter into spiritual fullness as well. It's not a self-conscious awareness thing. I know I have spiritual fullness.

No. But there is that pursuit which guarantees that there will be some expression of spiritual fullness in your life and mine. So let's look at Paul's life.

We have to look in some very broad statements to see this matter of spiritual fullness. But I want to say three things in which we so evidently can see that there's a spiritual fullness in Paul's life. The first thing.

Christ is central to Paul's thinking. Indeed, he has the mind of Christ, if you want to put it that way. I remember reading one time a commentary on the book of Philippians.

And, you know, I've got these big thick ones that talk about Philippians being about the joy and rejoicing and many different themes. But I'll never forget. I read this little thin commentary by a brethren writer back in the 19th century.

And his outline of the book of Philippians just opened up the book for me. Now, I want to give you that outline. And I give you this outline just so you can get some sense of how much Christ is in his mind and forming his thoughts and interpreting the events around him.

His life is full of Christ. You see, this is spiritual fullness. Anyway, here's the outline.

Chapter 1, verse 21. For me to live is Christ. Christ, my life.

That's chapter 1. Chapter 2, verse 5. Have this mind in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus. Christ, my mind. That's chapter 2. Chapter 3, verse 14.

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Christ, my goal. Chapter 4, verse 13.

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Christ, my strength. What a simple outline.

But what a Christ-focused outline. Indeed, you know, the letter of Paul to the Philippians is not a doctrinal treatise. There's a problem that he's trying to work on there.

But primarily, it's a testimony that he gives to encourage the Philippians who know he's in jail and are praying for him and helping support him and a bit worried about him. And so he sends this letter as an encouragement to them. And in the midst of this, you just see how Christ is so much a part of his life.

How Christ is central to his thinking. And when he says for me to live is Christ, to die is gain. If you said to him now, Paul, do you mean you're full of Christ? He'd say, no, no, no, I don't mean that.

I haven't arrived there yet. But Christ has become my motive. And Christ has become my goal.

Christ has become my one thing. And I know I'm alive by the very life of Christ. Otherwise, I'd be dead by now.

I'd be shipwrecked and thrown around in jail and stoned. I wouldn't be alive if Christ wasn't my life. I'm not even living out of the sort of resources of my own pluck.

Christ is my life. For me to live is Christ. Okay, Paul, what do you see as your future? Oh, it's Christ.

I'm out to gain Christ. I mean, that's his answer. And it sounds like a super spiritual answer.

But it's not. For us, it might be. You see, we know those answers.

But is our mind always thinking of Christ and always have these kinds of things in our mind? To him, there is this desire. Christ is my master. I'm living for him.

In 2 Corinthians, he says at one point, he says, you know, I have come to a conclusion. Christ died for all, therefore all die. Including me.

And now those who live should live for him. That's it. Christ, my life.

For me to live is Christ. To die is gain. The centrality of Christ in his thinking.

You know, in chapter 1, just as an example, I just was looking this afternoon. In chapter 1 alone, Christ is mentioned 18 times. Servants of Jesus Christ.

I love you with the compassions of Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ. For me to live is Christ.

It's Christ. It's Christ. It's Christ.

At every turn as he's encouraging these Philippians. It's Christ. He's wonderful.

You should see him. He is my life. I want to share him with you.

He's preoccupied. He's preoccupied with Christ. As a result of that, we come to the second evidence, could I say, of this spiritual fullness.

Because Christ is his life, and because there's been a surrender to that, which we'll talk about in a few minutes, there is a, secondly, full confidence in the sovereignty of the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

There's a full confidence in the sovereign supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Look again in chapter 1, verse 19, to see that phrase.

Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And then he goes on to spell out the argument that although he'd like to go and be with Christ, probably it's more important for him to stay on this earth. And because of that, he's resting and waiting for his release.

So he can go back to the Philippians and minister more life to them. Now how's that for confidence? Not confident that his life is of any particular value. He's ready to go home in one sense, but he's confident of this.

If God still needs to use me, I'll be getting out of jail. And so confident in this, I'm making preparations even now to come visit you shortly. What does he base that on? Are the guards telling you, psst, Paul, they're going to let you out any day.

No. His confidence is based in recognizing his whole life is laid in the hands of a sovereign God. And he's got confidence.

Whatever God wants him to do, that's what he wants to do. He just doesn't want to be ashamed or be ashamed of the Lord in any way. Whether by life or by death.

That's all he cares about now. The rest is up to the Lord now. It's out of my hands.

I'm in jail. It's in his hands. And I think he wants me to come minister to you.

So I'll see you soon. I trust in the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ along with your prayers to get me out of this thing. What a wonderful and sovereign sense of the Lord.

But notice throughout this whole book of Philippians, some of your favorite passages. You know, in chapter 1, verse 6. I am confident of this very thing that he who began a good work in you will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus. Where does that confidence come from? And even more so, that Paul can't minister there in Philippi, but you know he knows something based on his own experience and seeing how the Philippian church began as a whole.

What God begins, he finishes. God has begun a work there and he will complete it so that when Christ comes back, they'll be ready. He has that confidence.

He has that rest. And he assures these young believers that this indeed will happen. In verse 12 of chapter 1, we read this portion because I wanted you to see the confidence Paul has in the going forth of the gospel.

Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel. Now how many of you would think your circumstances, that is being thrown in jail, is working out for the better? But Paul sees behind the scenes as the Holy Spirit opens up and interprets His way. Now let's not make Paul non-human.

Paul spent many days in jail, I'm sure, restless, wishing he were out and serving, wishing he could go and see the saints going through this problem. It's not like Paul didn't have to struggle, but he always came back into this rest. You know, I'm behind bars, but it's had three interesting effects regarding the gospel.

Number one, everybody around me here in Rome knows about Jesus now. Because that's all I talk about. So even the Praetorian guard says, oh, there's the Jesus freak over there in jail.

Five. They all know about the gospel. Number two, because of his imprisonment, some other people have decided, well, we need to preach the gospel and be faithful.

If Paul should be so faithful, we need to be faithful. And now some new brothers have stepped up to preach the gospel. How wonderful.

And then there's these guys who are preaching to try to drive Paul crazy. Preaching the gospel and maybe also advocating circumcision. Something like that.

And they think to annoy Paul. They're even doing it on purpose to get at Paul. Paul says, you know, it's in God's hands.

Praise God, Jesus is being preached. Now do you see somebody there who's resting in the providential hand of God who is His supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ? We notice in chapter 2, after sharing this marvelous insight into Jesus and His coming to earth, he says in verses 12 and 13, So then, my beloved, just as you've always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure. He sees these saints desiring to be perfected in Christ and He says, you keep laying hold of the Lord because it's God in you.

He's willing and He's doing. Oh, what a rest in the greatness and the sovereignty of God. And even in this matter of His provisions in chapter 4. We'll read just a few verses there in verse 11.

Not that I speak from want, I have learned to be content in whatever circumstance I am. I know how to get along with humble means. I also know how to live in prosperity.

In any and every circumstance, I've learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Here is absolute security in the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

My needs, it's settled. The Lord has always and will always meet my needs. It's settled.

Thank you dear brothers from Philippi for sending me the support. Thank you so much. It was a sweet odor and aroma of love unto God.

And I just want you to know, you need to learn the secret too. We should not always be worrying about our money, our finances, our situation, everything. It should be settled.

It's settled. Our needs. Have we learned the secret? They're supplied by the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Now there's some large thinking there. There's some spiritual mindedness. There's some spiritual fullness there.

That's the second reason. The third reason that I say that we look through this book and we see Paul just tasting and being a testimony to spiritual fullness is you see that his letter is full of self-sacrificing love for the Philippians. Now I ask you the obvious question.

Who should be writing who? Who's in the greater need? We don't know at what stage Paul was in in this Roman imprisonment, if this were the tough times when he was perhaps even in stocks with rats crawling over him, or whether he was at liberty in a little apartment as it were to do what he needed to do and to write and all of these things. But whatever the situation was, you know what? Paul was thinking about them. Isn't that amazing? He said, you know, when I hear of your faith and the participation of the gospel, I just thank God always for you.

And I have confidence the Lord will finish where He started. He says, you know, even when you go through suffering, you're just participating in the gospel along with me. And for this, I rejoice.

Paul is full of thoughts for his brethren. He's always thinking of them. He says, you know, I have you in my heart.

That's why I long for you so much. I long for you with the very bowels of Jesus. And here he says, the intestines of Jesus.

In other words, he's entered into something of the Lord where he feels such compassion for them. It's so beyond himself. Could we all be quite secure about this thing? Paul, as a natural man, was all for me, me, me.

You and I are all for me, me, me. But look what's happened in Paul's life. I think about you Philippians as if the bowels of Christ just press forward with a compassion for you that I feel.

The tremendous expression of love. And he says, you know, the reason I'm writing this letter is I gotta send Epaphroditus back to you. I know you've been worried about him.

I'm sending him back so you can see he's fine, he's okay. I'm so glad he pulled through or I would have been wrecked. And I'm gonna send Timothy too.

Just as soon as I find out how things are going, I'm gonna send Timothy. And what's Paul doing? He's giving away his best people. Paul will probably have to suffer somewhat because these brothers are gone.

But you know, it just isn't about him anymore, is it? He sends his best servants out there back to Philippi just to refresh them and help them understand where he's at. And when he hears about this little spat between Uoti and Syntyche, he says in chapter 4, verse 1, Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who shared my struggle in the cause of the Gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life. He says, oh, listen, can I make this request of you? In the bowels of Christ Jesus, I feel like perhaps, perhaps there's been a loss of the recognition of the value of dear Uoti, of dear Syntyche.

They've forgotten how precious they are. So, my co-workers, will you remind them? Will you remind them that they worked together in harmony? Will you remind them Clement and help them to get back into that oneness that we need there? Oh, Philippians, you're such a church of love. We can't have this little spat going on? Paul is so full of this love for his brothers and sisters.

And so we can sort of provisionally begin to define spiritual fullness, at least in saying these things. One, spiritual fullness is when Christ has become the stack pole around which our whole life is integrated. Now, Paul doesn't say for me to live as Christ because he has nothing else.

He's not married. He doesn't have a job. So he can think all day about Christ.

We often get that thing, oh, just to be single and free of indebtedness and not to work, have a job. Then I can say Christ is my life. But no, no.

Paul had many concerns and worries. He's drafting many letters, many reports coming. He's praying and doing battle.

Whether he was free or in prison, his ministry was full of events and activities and things to do. But you see, his life had found a stack pole. Now maybe we don't know what a stack pole is, but back in the old days when I was a farmer, I never was a farmer, but I lived out near some farms once.

And now they bale hay up like this and they wrap wires around it, but in the old days, they stuck a pole in the ground and then they just threw the hay over there and that pole would keep the hay sort of together and they could build up a stack around this pole. And spiritual fullness to some degree is when Christ has become the stack pole that integrates the rest of your life. You say, but wait, I want Christ to be my life but I have to get married first.

Oh no. Christ can be your life in marriage. Oh, but I have a job right now.

My life is my job. Oh no, this shouldn't be. Christ my life even with a job, even with responsibilities, even with financial problems, even with romance.

Oh, my life is romance right now. It shouldn't be. Christ my life.

All these things take shape. All these things are interpreted. All these things are allowed.

All these things are brought into the aura of his lordship. This is what Paul means by Christ is his life. It doesn't mean that he's perfect, but he even when a difficult situation comes like those brothers preaching the gospel out of wrong motives, Paul would get upset about it, but then he'd go to the Lord about it.

The Lord would say, you know what, I'm one step ahead of them. I'm going to use it to further the gospel. Paul could rest.

You see, he'd always go back to Christ. Christ was the very center of his life. Spiritual fullness.

Christ is the stack pole around which all of your life is integrated, and I tell you dear brothers and sisters, unless Christ is the center of your life, you don't have a stack pole and your life is all divided into pockets. Christ my life. Everything finds its place around Christ.

But the second thing we see is that we begin to understand fullness a little bit more. This is more than being filled with the spirit, as we know this phrase. It's very important being filled with the spirit.

Or it's not exactly to be full of the spirit. You know, I just noted something just before I came here. This matter of spiritual fullness is something very large in concept.

Listen to where we're going. In 2002, you know what the theme was? Spiritual ascendancy. That's pretty heady stuff.

And in 2003, we went up to spiritual mindedness. Oh, wow. And then last year, spiritual perfection.

How could spiritual fullness be beyond that? Ah, but it is. You see, because spiritual fullness has to do well, our concept unfortunately of fullness is always, I am a tank that needs to be filled up with a certain supply. Oh Lord, increase my capacity so I can be filled up with more stuff.

Now fullness has to do with capacity, and fullness has to do with filling, but there's a secret that we're discovering in Paul's life, and we'll spell it out in just a minute, and here it is. The fullness, spiritual fullness comes by an act of emptying. The divine response to our emptying is a rushing fullness of life.

I use this illustration at my own peril because I realize I'm getting older, but my mom used to have a vacuum cleaner called an Electrolux. This is a big tubular vacuum cleaner like this. Now the one thing it had going for it that made it a little different than vacuum cleaners that I see mostly today is you can stick the hose on either end.

Of course, you usually wanted to put it on the sucking end. You had a bag. You turn it on, and you use the thing, and all the dirt comes into the bag.

That's our view of fullness. Maybe we even came this weekend, Oh Lord, I'm just a bag of dirt. Fill me, fill me, fill me with your love, fill me with your grace, fill me with your spirit.

Now, the interesting thing about the Electrolux is, if you wanted to do a paint job, you could take the hose, put it around on the other end, turn it on, and it blows out. And you stick to this, they had this special paint attachment to it. You could spray the walls with this.

It's all blowing out. Now this whole matter of spiritual fullness we see in Paul's life. He got the inspiration by the mind of Christ.

We need to explain that for just a minute, but he found that as he was poured out, as he stuck his the hose on the blowing out end, that fullness was an overflow. That fullness was an outpouring. Fullness is not a containment of something.

Some kind of static containment. Fullness is a pouring out of something. Something fully expressed.

And as that was poured out, then you know what happens? Air has to suck in. And that rush of life that comes in from behind when we're poured out at the command and the call of God, of course, is what spiritual fullness is all about. So it's not a sense of, ah, praise God, I'm now a hundred gallon drum.

The issue becomes what you have and you've been freely given have you now poured out. Then something you can expect from the back. What is that called? The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

You can be so confident of that supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ if you are pouring out. What if you don't feel like it? You see, here's the deal. Ministry we all love this kind of ideal thing.

Ministry is this. I go in my room, chase my wife out. I get down on my knees, oh God, fill me with your Spirit.

Oh, fill me with knowledge of yourself. Oh, fill me with Christ. And suddenly I hear 5 gallons, 10 gallons, 15 gallons, 20 gallons.

And now I'm ready. And I run in here to the meeting at 3.45 and I say, I know Lord... Oh, how wonderful to be 15 gallons all poured out. So wonderful to be full poured out.

You know, usually ministry is, you don't even feel you have a tank. But the Lord says now I want you to go and give yourself to this situation. And you have such confidence in the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ that you're willing to go and be expended.

Now that's spiritual fullness. Because what happens is, if not your fullness, it's not like you say, Oh, I feel so good, 15 gallons. No, no.

The spiritual fullness is an expression of what is being expressed through you. As people see Christ pouring out of your life. This is what Paul had become as we see by this letter.

Do you see what I'm saying? Now, how did Paul come to this place? How do we, how do any of us come to this place? This is a mighty sort of a position, truth to say. How do we possibly get there? Here's where the Spirit is so faithful. Of course, do I need to say it more than once? By the great power of the cross emptying us, His fullness becomes expressed.

Now, we have these little chapter headings and numbers. I forget when were the chapters put into the Bible? It was into the Middle Ages, wasn't it? It's an invention of man to try to keep things all in order and everything. But in this one instance, I would like to say that there's one thought that we need to understand transcends the chapters.

Namely, in chapter 2, Paul says, I saw Christ, the Son of God, empty Himself and become a man and lose everything and die on the cross and now be glorified. And then I, who had all of this gain in chapter 3, saw that I had to lose it. It had to be stripped away.

What is gain? In chapter 3, Paul says, all those things that were gain to me, I now count them lost for Christ's sake. Yea, and I count all things to be lost for the exceeding greatness of the excellency of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. What is he saying there? What is gain? Gains are those things that make me full of me.

Now, when Paul came to the Lord on the road to Damascus, don't you think this whole transaction was made in chapter 3? No. The main transaction that was made on the road to Damascus were twofold. One, the lordship of his life changed for himself to Jesus.

And second of all, he saw that his righteousness was as filthy rags and he was saved by grace and not by works. But he still was a Pharisee. He still strove and had great energy.

He still had great biblical knowledge. He still had his pedigree as a tribe of Benjamin. He still had all of that which God one by one stripped away from him.

Can you imagine the stripping process of the cross where the Lord said this to Paul? Paul, I'm making you an Electrolux vacuum cleaner to the Gentiles. The only time this button is going to work is when you pour yourself out to the Gentiles. But don't try pouring yourself out to the Jews.

You'll just get yourself in trouble. How, Paul, it would have saved some shred of Jewish pride if he'd been made an apostle to the Jews. Strip it away, Paul.

Gentiles aren't interested in your Jewish background. What? All those things I've learned, all that righteousness, all that cleanliness, all those things were gained to me. All of those things made me me.

I was a Pharisee. Now I'm just a sinner. And God said, yes, Paul, empty yourself for the Gentiles.

And I'll fill you with fullness. What a straightening. You say to Paul, Paul, how were you made so full? Paul would say, because the cross disallowed me from being involved in anything that touched my background in Judaism.

I just went out to the Gentiles. And the Jews would laugh at me. Ha, ha, ha, ha, that was Paul.

He used to be a great man. He used to be a great Pharisee. What has he become now? Look at him.

He's living with the Gentiles. Oh, I detest him. Can you imagine the school of the school kids he went to, to the Pharisee school? What they thought of them.

Gamaliel, what he thought of them. Oh, he was just crucified to that. The world, that Jewish world just hated him.

And he had no more life with that. He was constrained. He couldn't even follow that road anymore.

But what happened? How was it that Paul was willing to take everything that was gained and even make it lost? And I feel, as he's talking about this, he's not only talking about his pre-conversion status, but his status as an apostle, his status as spiritual father when certain churches disregarded him. All things I count for loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. How could he be stripped away and stripped away and stripped away and stripped away and stripped away? That's how he came to this peace.

All the faithful work of the cross by the Holy Spirit taking one issue at a time, showing Paul that that's not the way to go. And Paul says, what do you mean that's not the way to go? And then the Holy Spirit gave him a revelation which became one of the most outstanding revelations in the whole of the New Testament there in chapter 2, verses 5 through 11. And he saw Jesus emptying himself.

Now, how can you resist an emptying when Jesus emptied all? And he saw that his own stripping going on in his life was some small shadow of the great stupendous stripping of Jesus when he came down from sonship to manhood and came down from manhood to servanthood and came down from servanthood to a cruel death on the cross. And Paul saw that the end of that was glory. And Paul understood that when we pour ourselves out, then we are full.

And when we give all, then we are rich. And at any time we're called upon to be stripped not only of bad things and evil things, but natural things and lovely things. And when they're stripped from us, there pours into our life more life.

More life. Well, this Paul experienced many times in his ministry as he felt the Lord doing this emptying in his life. So, what happened when he heard about those evangelists who were preaching the gospel out of strife and envy? Well, if there was anything in Paul, anything to be jealous, anything to say, well, what right have they got? All that self-interest is gone.

Paul could say perhaps the Lord had to deal with him for a night. Do you think? Certainly by the next morning he could say, you know what? It's working out for the good. The gospel is being broadcast.

And in this, I rejoice, I will not allow these men to wrestle peace from me. It's in the hands of God. Or how about this? The ultimate sting.

We see Paul's emptiness and therefore his fullness with this very thought of him being in jail for all these years. He was in for years. Where's the sting of jail? The sense of abandonment.

The sense of discouragement. And don't you think Paul had to wrestle with those things at times? I'm sure. But in the end, he said, my life, I believe in the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ.

It's in his hands. He's given me grace for today. He'll give me grace for tomorrow.

I believe I've found the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ. You know, being full isn't a matter of some kind of a static dimension we come to. But being full is being confident of the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ.

There is nothing that will come to our lives that there isn't that supply to meet the situation. That's fullness. You say, no, no, no, just give me ten gallons in case God doesn't show up tomorrow.

Now, here's true fullness. God shows up tomorrow. So I expend all today.

Oh, dear brothers and sisters, we're storing up things but I wonder if we're storing up by giving out. Are we this example of spiritual fullness? Of course, we look at Paul and I who can compare to this? Who would dare challenge anybody? We all have so far to go. And yet the call of God is upon us to take hold of His grace, to be strengthened in the grace of the Lord Jesus, to be willing to suffer.

And when we do, we experience that life behind us and that confidence that even keeps us through the time of jail. At least, could we say, that what the Lord is trying to strip away and bring us down to in our own spiritual lives is this one thing I do. There is the door to spiritual fullness.

This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, looking ahead to the things which are before, I press on toward the mark of the high call of God in Christ Jesus. He's looking forward to reigning. He's looking forward to that throne.

He's going to press right up into that throne. This one thing He does. He's not checking His tank.

He's not checking the fuel gauge. He's not looking self-consciously at Himself. How full am I? How full am I? No, He's pressing on toward something that's greater than His own fullness.

And indeed, it's the fullness of Christ. And as that fullness is expressed in His life, we're all blessed because He poured out. Now, in these last days, the Lord is looking for those who've got one thing as the stack pole of your life.

We have many different brothers and sisters here, many different backgrounds, many different jobs and states of health and schooling and situations, but none of that in the end should really be our stack pole. And those spiritual fullnesses, finally to see, Lord, all of these dealings in my life and all of these strippings in my life, it's just been You after me to get me down to the one thing. Forgive me, Lord, for the childish way I've held on to this and to that.

Unnecessary things, time-consuming things, things that make no difference. Oh, Lord, I want to press on to one thing. We can't say we know spiritual fullness, but do we have that desire after one thing? Is the Lord transforming our mind? You know, so much of spiritual fullness, I think, in the end has to be defined as that which is renewed in our mind.

Is our mind being renewed to understand what God is really after? Are we beyond the sort of simple understanding that grace is just a free ride? He cares for us and loves us and forgives us and feeds us and all those things are true. And we come back to this Lord who's given us all these things for free. We

say, Lord, I want to press in to Your fullness that I might know grace upon grace.

I may know what it means in experience to know You. Paul had very little. At the end of his life, I suppose, when he finally died, he had some books, some scrolls, a coat, a few things.

But when he died, he had fullness. And Paul could say, I'm very confident of this thing to the Philippians. He who began a good work in you will complete it also against the day of Christ.

May the Lord help us. Let's pray. O Lord, we sometimes pray, O God, give us fullness, fullness, it's fullness we need.

But we hesitate when You call us to empty ourselves. O Lord, may our prayer be, O Lord, pour forth, pour forth, pour forth as we rely on the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. How we want to pray that You would bring Christ to such a prominent place in our life, that He's our motive, and He's our stack pole, and He's the one to whom we go, and He's the answer, and He's our very power to live.

O, we thank You for Him. We thank You for this promise that not only does all Your fullness dwell in Him, but we have been made complete in Him. O, we pray, Lord, bring us to a belief in the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Bring us to the mind of Christ who laid down everything, and thus gained everything. O, Lord, help us. Lord, if the Spirit is stripping away things in our lives by the power of the cross, then help us have done with these things, that we might have one thing before us.

And if we're in a place of serving and we pour ourselves out thanklessly, perhaps, on the human level, O, fill us, fill us with Your love. We thank You, Lord, that You want to make us entirely other. We see that transformation can only come by the resident life of Christ within us.

O, help us, Lord. Make the transaction in us, Lord. We pray for Jesus' sake.

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