

That He Might Fill All Things - Part 2

by T. Austin-Sparks

Christ's descent into humanity and his subsequent ascension are designed to fill all things with his presence, character, and nature, requiring us to be emptied of our self-life to make room for his fullness.

Duration: 49:22

Scripture: Genesis 22:17, Genesis 32:28, 2 Samuel 7:8-9, Psalm 127:1, Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 4:10, Hebrews 11:8

Topics: "Jesus Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of emptying oneself and allowing God to work in their lives. He uses the example of Joseph, who started off as a conceited young man but went through a process of emptying and suffering in order to fulfill God's purpose. The speaker encourages listeners to learn from their own trials and adversities, allowing Christ to fill their lives. He also highlights the significance of Jesus filling all things, emphasizing the greatness of the Lord and the ultimate fulfillment of His purpose.

Transcript

Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 10, He that descended is the same also that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. We have been seeking already to see that into that last clause of a parenthesis, the Lord's servant has packed the mighty fullness of his apprehension of Christ. We have tried to enter into the tremendous emotion in which the apostle set himself to write this circular letter, and having at last the opportunity to be free from all his travellings and journeyings and on the spot occupations with affairs of churches, being now detached and shut up in his imprisonment, he found it the occasion for which his heart had doubtless often longed for giving expression as far as he could to some of that mighty store of accumulated spiritual knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and this letter is an opening of those flood gates pouring out superlative upon superlative and a daggering of language to find some way of expressing what Christ had become revealed to him.

Here in this fragment, mighty fragment, there is a summing up of it all, final vision of that wonderful Lord, he might fill all things, his Lord Jesus at last filling all things. We have seen that this one, this great he to whom the apostle refers is the subject of the whole Bible, we have traced the unveiling of him, the seven great stages of that unveiling from eternity past through time to the ages of the ages, in each stage of which the apostle has been seeing depths of meaning. Well now, we come from that wide range, that vast scope and seek to fasten down on one or two particular emphases as we go on, and firstly, quite clearly,

this phrase is itself indicative of the greatness of the Lord Jesus, that he might fill all things, the final all things.

It's impossible to get outside of that, that is final, there is no more that can be added, all things, just means what it says, everything, just all things, and this eternal divine determination and design, it has been revealed to the apostle to be that Christ does fill all things, it is a predeterminate counsel of God, that he shall. God has, it is said elsewhere, designated a day in which he will judge the world in the man whom he has appointed, that is this Lord Jesus, it is therefore indicative of the greatness of Christ. How can one person fill, fill all things? Well it's not so difficult a question, you will not go to any part of this world in all its length and breadth without you will find traces of the evil one.

Wherever you will go, you will find that which indicates and betrays that the evil one has been there, evil by the evil one fills this world, anywhere, everywhere, and we may say in its natural condition, he the devil has filled all things, but though you do not see him in personal form, you know he's been there, and very often you know that he is there. He has filled this world with his evil self and his evil marks, a trait, he has filled the very atmosphere with himself, he has done it. That is unchallengeable I think, that one, anywhere, in anything, in the creation which he has kept from Adam.

Alright, is that true? You meet him in his nature, you meet him in his disposition, you meet him in his evil atmosphere, in exactly the same way Christ is going to fill all things, that thing is going to be purged out by eternal fire. Completely purged out, no trace of it will be left or found when God has done his work in this creation, but it will not be avoided. His Christ is the one who is destined so to fill all things, that you may go anywhere in his created universe and know him, by his foot, sense him, feel him, recognize him, but what a difference.

What a different atmosphere, now this present time in which we live, though so poorly serving that purpose, is a time in which just some little reflection of what is to be, can be found. It is a very blessed thing to be where Christ is, it is a good atmosphere to be in when he is present and he is filling all hearts. There is a behavior, a conduct and a disposition that is so different when he has his place in a company, in life.

We don't have too much of what is sometimes called heaven on earth, there is a lot of room for more of that, but we here tonight know just a little, very little of this changeover. The enemy is still present and about to spoil, to mar everything, if only the Lord has people in whom really he has his lordship expressed, his place fully given. It is a very blessed place to be in and condition to enjoy the little of it in this world already, would there were more, but there it is, what I am saying is leading to something else of course.

But here is the indication of what the Lord intends and one says that dear friends because you will understand that we very much dislike living in abstractions and visionariness, words, beautiful ideas, that sort of thing, that realm of imagination. We must always, we must always have some practical ground on which to build these great conceptions and so when we speak about the time when he will fill all things with himself in this way of character, of nature, of disposition, of conduct and behavior. When we speak about that, we must have something to put our feet down for the present and so it is that the great delight of Christian hearts is found in that kind of fellowship and relationship where Christ is everything.

And it is a real thing, it is a real thing, it is possible to know that now, is it not? But I have said it is all too small, it is not by any means in all things, but that is the determinate counsel of God that so it should be that he, the beloved son shall fill all things with himself, his own wonderful character, divine character.

Now here is something that sounds perhaps difficult to grasp and understand, but do you notice the context of this phrase? He that ascended is the same also that descended. He that descended is the same also that ascended far above.

It was never necessary to have the incarnation if God wanted to fill all things as God, as deity. God could very well clear everything out and just fill everything with himself in sheer deity, sheer Godhead. But this statement, he descended and ascended in order that he might fill all things indicates this, it indicates the incarnation.

How did he descend? Well we know by incarnation he came down in flesh, in humanity. He humbled himself and took the form of a servant and being found in fashion of a man. That is his descent into humanity, into the incarnation.

Why? That he might fill all things humanity wise. In other words, have people in whom and through whom he would fill all things. Have a race of human beings through whom he will fill all things.

Who will be his fullness and who will minister and transmit his fullness. Now that is one of the great arguments of this letter you remember. The church which is the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

It is to have people, people, human beings for the expression of his fullness in his whole created universe. You and me. That is why he descended first and then ascended.

That he might fill all things. In order that he might fill all things. This great cycle of the deepest descent to touch the heart and root and core of all the trouble down to its very day.

And his ascent far above all. Far above all. There should be no realm left where he is not its fullness.

He did that through incarnation which itself means by way of human life in order to have human life like that. Well now this is very great. Indeed it is the greatness of this one who is able to do that.

He must be very great. But that leads us to this law which governs all spiritual history and experience. There is a law governing all our spiritual history and experience.

Our spiritual history and experience is not just something that is of its own free will happening to us. It is under this law. It is controlled and governed.

The experience that we are having spiritually. The history that is being made in our case spiritually is held by this law. And the law is that he might fill all things.

If it is this matter of men, of people, of humanity, of human life then there must be something in, behind and over what happens to us when we get into God's hand. And this is what it is. God is taking us the way in which he is taking us with this one object in view that his son Jesus Christ shall fill us.

Shall fill us. Shall fill all things. But you know he can't start from zero with us unfortunately.

We are already so full aren't we? We are already so full. So full of our own ideas, of our own desires, of our own ambitions, of our own interests, of our own strengths. Oh brother a lot there is of which we are full.

You see that's just the trouble. That's where it began with Adam. Adam made this great bid to have all the fullness in himself.

In himself. Well the Lord let him have it. And Adam is more than one person who lived so many centuries ago.

Adam is a very big corporate person who has filled the world. And is still making a bid to have everything in himself. He is very full.

Very full of himself. Very full of his own cleverness, ability, power, wisdom and what not. He is filling himself more and more with his own fullness.

Well let that be as it may with the big Adam. But what about the little Adams that we are? You and I. Well we don't know and we wouldn't believe it until the hand of the Lord comes upon us just how much there is of us in the picture. And when the Lord begins to work upon us we begin to discover there is a lot more of us than ever we would have suspected or acknowledged.

Indeed this is an endless matter. It's a bottomless pit. All the trouble is there.

Something there that has got to be got rid of and got out of the way. Is it true? Our simplest troubles with the Lord are on that basis. And our biggest and most complex.

And so if he is to fill all things with himself there has got to be a history, a deep history of making room for him completely by an utter emptying of us of everything that is not Christ. It is not just negative. It sometimes seems negative.

Emptying, undoing, breaking and all that. But this law is operating. It's a law in nature.

It's a law in nature. God put every tree in the garden into the hand of Adam. He got to cultivate it.

And it wasn't necessary for there to be evil presence in order that the pruning knife should be used. That was a natural process. To produce something better you have to get rid of something not that much good.

To produce something more you have to reduce a great deal. It's a law in nature. You see it everywhere.

Unto the better and unto the more there is always a process of reduction. What looks like destruction we know that in the long run it is not. It is constructive.

Truthfulness. That law operates everywhere. But here in the spiritual realm justice.

God has written this law in the creation in spiritual experiences like this. He is working dear friends with you and with me. On the one side emptying, breaking down, cutting off, emptying us of that other fullness which is in his own way and not his fullness.

But always with this object more of Christ. More of Christ. More of Christ.

Now perhaps you see, some of you may say well there ought to be a very great deal of Christ if that is the explanation because I am having a pretty bad time. But here is where faith and patience are called for. And we may take it or you may take it as a fixed law that any kind of walk on his path which has an emptying effect, an undoing effect, a weakening effect where we in our self and self life is concerned is determined by God to produce more of his son.

It is going to be. It is the eternal law. It is the law which is governing.

Now you can see that the Bible is a record of this very thing. We have seen that Adam let in all the trouble of this self fullness which is the curse of humanity. The curse of humanity.

And it is going to prove the utter undoing of humanity. You may get a mistake about it. A little indication of this almost weekly.

The cleverness of man can be his undoing. What he calls his wisdom and knowledge increasing can just be to his own hurt. However leave that as it may be.

But Adam opened this door to let in this accursed self sufficiency. Self sufficiency. Now whenever you find that God comes on to the scene in relation to his end, his eternal end and puts his hand upon any man or any instrument.

He takes that instrument or that man through a history which for a long time is a thoroughly undoing history. Who comes to mind? Well let's start with Abraham. We have every evidence that Abraham or Abram was a great man in Caldia.

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A great man in Cal All his own. Ostwild's fullness and sufficiency was gradually removed. Gave him not a foothold in it.

No, not any place in it. A tent and moving from place to place. No continuing city.

Life of utter dependence upon God. He's being empty. Notice the various stages of God's dealing with him.

Right up to the point of requiring him to offer his Isaac. Did ever a man get nearer to the great heart of Calvary in the utter self-emptying when Abram was asked to give what to him was his all and his lot? In Isaac. Now this man's being empty.

Very well. But God appeared unto him. If you can count the land of the seashore, so shall thy sea be.

Lift up thine eyes to the heavens, if you can count the vast constellations of the heavenly body, so shall thy sea be. Emptying, emptying unto vast for the spiritual history. That's no mere teaching.

Truth. Ask Abraham. Jacob.

Jacob is elect, destined, marked to build the tribes of Israel by his twelve sons. Fullness is to come that way. Tremendous fullness.

This seed of Abraham. It's got to come through this man Jacob. Alright.

Jacob as we meet him is a man very self-sufficient. Full of his own cleverness and artfulness. He can do it.

He is sufficient for the situation. And for the twenty years of his life with his uncle Laban, that's the kind of life he was living. Pricking and triumphing by his own self-cleverness and artfulness.

All the time getting the advantage himself simply because he could do it. Very well. What about Jabbok and Peniel? No.

One of those theophanies of which we were speaking this afternoon met him there and said now then we are going to settle this matter once and for all. I have allowed you plenty of scope. Plenty of rope.

Given you all these years to extend yourself. But I've chosen you for something better than that. Now then.

The issue is up. Tonight we settle this. Jacob started out again to try it on the Lord.

He found he'd met his match and more than his match. No. That story is told very often.

It's put the wrong way. But Jacob wrestled. He never did until the angel wrestled with him.

There came a man and wrestled with him. God took the initiative in this matter. God took this thing into his hands.

It was God who said we are going to settle this mighty issue before you go back to that place. A covenant. A promise.

Jacob for the Lord. Oh what an emptying that night. Not all at once perhaps.

For there are still some traces of Jacob after that. But when at last you meet him in the presence of Pharaoh. What a poor poor creature he is as he talks to Pharaoh.

Few hard have been the days of my life. Leaning upon his tarp. A very empty man.

A very broken man. Now the Lord can do something. A very empty man.

A very broken man. Now the Lord can do something. The Lord can do something.

Out of that will come the purpose of God. We just mentioned it. It's so patent isn't it.

What about Joseph? Well first introduction to Joseph. Good and nice young fellow in many ways. Pet of his father.

Not more but very conceited. Very indiscreet. Telling his brother about his dreams and implying you are going to be the ones who bow down to me.

Promoting the situation which was God's sovereign opportunity of starting up this work of emptying. A dungeon is not much of a place to live in for thirteen years. Being forgotten and enduring all the hardships and difficulties of such a life.

So that it is written that the iron entered into his soul. You learn about the iron entering into your soul under the discipline of God's hand. Well we need not enlarge.

Here's this man indeed being emptied isn't he. Of all his conceits but at last what fullness. Fullness for Egypt and fullness for his own brethren and for the rest.

It's the way. What about Moses? Now Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. What a man Moses was in the first forty years of his life.

How full of everything. How full. So full that he thought he could do it.

He smote the Egyptians. Challenged the Hebrews. He thought he could do it.

He's very full. Forty years the backside of a desert is well calculated to empty you of that sort of thing. And you're not surprised.

In our eighteen years I, I, am and I will sin. Same story. What an emptying unto us really.

Israel. Well we dare not dwell upon Israel as a nation. The Lord's hand upon Israel.

Passed to David. One thing about the Lord's dealing with David is this. The working of this Lord.

Of emptying, humbling and making so utterly dependent in order to bring him to the highest place of Israel's fullness in the Old Testament. There it is. And so it goes on.

Only taken out those illustrations of things. Dear friends, the Lord is working by this law. He's working toward this end.

That he might fill all things. But unto that how we have to be, how we have to be empty. What an emptying what he has to do.

There is nothing that stands in the Lord's way more than self-sufficient. Only another way of saying pride. Pride.

That stands in the Lord's way. When he has done with us there will be no room or ground for any pride. No more.

Down there. So far as we are concerned. But oh look at the end.

The divine end. The increase that he may fill all. Now this we note as we close this.

This reversing of things from whatever fullness there is in ourselves. To make way for his fullness has to have a crisis. It has to have a crisis.

Truly as the Lord met Jacob that night. As truly as the Lord met Moses in a crisis. As truly as the Lord met Saul of Tarsus in a very real crisis.

There has to be a crisis. There has to be a time and a place where you and I come before the Lord over this matter of self-life and Christ life. And we say this is settled.

So far as position is concerned. So far as acceptance is concerned. So far as the foundation is concerned.

Now is settled. God helping me once and for all that it is to be no longer I. No longer I but Christ. Amen.

It is to be for me to live is Christ. It's a crisis. Everything doesn't happen in the crisis but the position is secure.

Ground is taken. And it must be. No doubt many of you know that.

Many of you know there was a time more or less extended. May have been a day, a night. Or it may have been a period.

But it was a time in your life when the crisis was raised as to the self-life and the Christ. But from the crisis process begins. Process of the Christian life under the hand of the Lord is just this.

All the way along. Deeper and ever deeper. If it is so, take heart.

Let us try and take all the comfort we can from it. Deeper and deeper is this self-empty to bring to the greater fullness of Christ in us. It's a process going on.

And dear friends it seems to me both from the word and experience that at the end there won't be much of us left. There won't be much of us left in any way at all. If the Lord isn't everything, God help us.

That's what we're coming to. That's what we're coming to. It's going to be the Lord or nothing.

He's working that way but He's working that way. And when He works by that process, He intends it to be according to His predetermined counsel that He might fill all things. A crisis, a process, God blessed be God a climax.

Word reveals this very letter which we are occupying reveals that day. That glorious day of the climax when it shall be glory in the church unto all ages forever and ever. Now if what we have said is true, there is another thing that we ought to think about at least.

It is this. That measure now is going to determine hereafter. Going to determine the measure hereafter.

What the Lord is doing with us is not just an arbitrary thing. The Lord is creating capacity for spiritual thinking. Creating capacity.

All the fullness of what is spiritual lies ahead in the hereafter, the ages of the ages. The measure in which that fullness is expressed in us will be the measure of the capacity which the Lord has been allowed to develop in us now. It matters you know.

I don't understand the New Testament at all. This New Testament of mine is a perfect enigma if what I am now saying is not true. Why all this in the New Testament? If willy nilly we are going to come into all the fullness.

If it doesn't matter at all about now we are going to have it all if we are the Lord. About whom the Lord loveth each day. All this about discipline and suffering.

If it doesn't matter we are going to have it. You see what a situation that raises. It certainly says this most powerfully.

The measure in which the Lord gets his way with us now is going to determine our measure in the glory. Our measure in the glory. And none of you who know anything about the difficulty and suffering of the Christian life fails to see the Lord is seeking by painful means to enlarge, to enlarge us, to enlarge us.

We start out with a very little spiritual capacity for having, receiving, knowing, understanding. Very little capacity for spiritual things. The Lord gets to work upon us.

And this stretching business is awful difficult. Very hard, this enlarging. The psalmist said in pressure hast thou enlarged me.

But the Lord is working to increase our capacity. Thank God this is true. Although it is so imperfect we feel we haven't made very much progress in this yet at best.

Some of us can see today we can understand. We do know in an intelligent way what at one time was altogether outside of us, beyond us. We are learning.

We are growing in understanding. We are becoming more and more capable of receiving the things of God. Like that, well that's the normal Christian life.

Quite normal. What the Lord is doing with us. This law we are seeing of Christ ultimately filling all things is governing our spiritual history and our spiritual experience day by day.

What then is to be done? Well we are concerned. Well it's the old matter of applying our hearts very definitely and very earnestly to learn the lessons of our suffering. To learn the meaning of our trials and adversities.

To find out where more are to come in by this breaking of ourselves. That is cooperation with God. Toward his end he descended.

Came right down here to take us in our humanity. And has ascended far above all. Both things are governed by this purposive statement.

In order that he might fill all things.

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