

Dispersing The Fullness Of Christ

Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger

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Forward

God desires to have the most intimate relationship with you possible. That is, you in God and God in you, united in love. This is why Jesus came to earth so that He could restore our ultimate purpose of a holy relationship with God in the fullness of his love.

John 17:26

And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

As Jesus walked the earth His mission was to reveal the heart of His Father, the God of love. God sent His Son to reveal His love in fullness.

It is through knowing God, heart to heart, that we come to experience His fullness of love. The mission is for the believer is to experience and reveal the love of God;

Jesus continues to reveal the Father through His body, the church.

Knowing the fullness of God is not a special doctrine given to only a few, but it is knowing that through Jesus Christ, all may partake of God's goodness.



Chapter 1

Dispersing the fullness of Christ

Matthew 22:10

"Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests.

In this culture, two invitations were expected when banquets were given. The first asked the guests to attend; the second announced that all was ready. In this story the king invited his guests three times—and each time they rejected his invitation. God wants us to join him at his banquet, which will last for eternity. That's why he sends us invitations again and again. Have you accepted his invitation?

Invites everyone

Luke 14:23

"And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled.'

The man sitting at the table with Jesus saw the glory of God's kingdom, but he did not yet understand how to get in. In Jesus' story, many people turned down the invitation to the banquet because the timing was inconvenient.

We too can resist or delay responding to God's invitation, and our excuses may sound reasonable—work duties, family responsibilities, financial needs, or whatever they may be. Nevertheless, God's invitation is the most important event in our lives, no matter how inconveniently it may be timed. Are you making excuses to avoid responding to God's call? Jesus reminds us that the time will come when God will pull his invitation and offer it to others—then it will be too late to get into the banquet.

All the good fish were gathered.

Matthew 13:48

And when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away.

The parable of the fishing net has the same meaning as the parable of the wheat and weeds. We are to obey God and tell others about his grace and goodness, but we cannot dictate who part of the kingdom of heaven is and who is not. This sorting will be done at the last judgment by those infinitely more qualified than we.

Waiting for the fullness of the Gentiles

Romans 11:25

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery--so that you will not be wise in your own estimation--that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

God chose the church, through Jesus Christ, and he will never reject it either. This does not mean, of course, that all Jews or all church members will be saved. It is possible to belong to a nation or to an organization without ever responding in faith. But just because some people have rejected Christ does not mean that God stops working with either Israel or the church.

He continues to offer salvation freely to all. Still others say that the phrase “and so” means “in this way” or “this is how,” referring to the necessity of faith in Christ.

They were to rest until they were joined by their breather.

Revelation 6:11

And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

“Count yourselves dead to sin” means that we should regard our old sinful nature as dead and unresponsive to sin. Because of our union and identification with Christ, we are no longer obligated to carry out those old motives, desires, and goals. So let us consider ourselves to be what God has in fact made us. We have a new start, and the Holy Spirit will help us become in our daily experience what Christ has declared us to be.

All of Israel will be saved.

Romans 11:26

And so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."

All Israel (or all believers) will receive God’s promised gift of salvation. Still others say that all Israel means Israel as a whole will have a role in Christ’s kingdom. Their identity as a people won’t be discarded. God chose the nation of Israel, and he has never rejected it.

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All the ends of the earth are to turn to God.

Isaiah 45:22

"Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.

The Lord is God over all the earth.

Isaiah 54:5

"For your husband is your Maker, Whose name is the LORD of hosts; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth.

Salvation is for all nations, not just the Israelites. Many times it seems as though Israel had an inside track on salvation. But God makes it clear that his people include *all* those who follow him. Israel was to be the means through which the whole world would come to know God. Jesus, the Messiah, fulfilled Israel's role and gave all people the opportunity to follow God

Israel shall return from places throughout the earth.

Zechariah 10:10

"I will bring them back from the land of Egypt and gather them from Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon Until no room can be found for them.

This pictured return from Egypt and Assyria was a symbolic way of saying that the people would be returned from all the countries where they had been dispersed. Egypt and Assyria evoked memories of slavery and separation.

If the root is holy, the entire lump is holy.

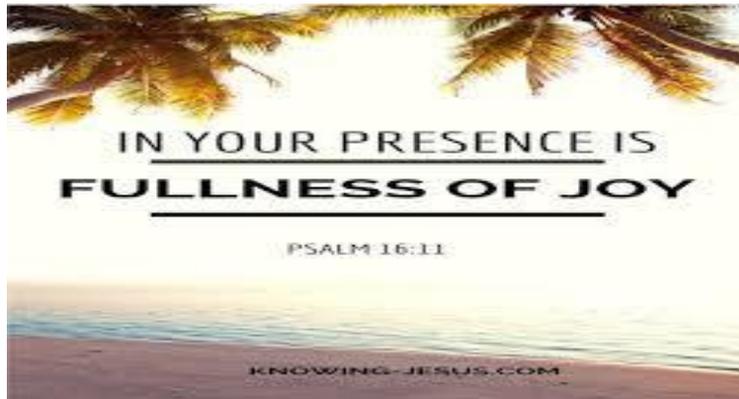
Romans 11:16

If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.

Speaking to Gentile Christians, Paul warns them not to feel superior because God rejected some Jews. Abraham's faith is like the root of a productive tree, and the Jewish people are the tree's natural branches.

Because of faithlessness, the Jews were the broken branches. Gentile believers have been grafted into the tree like a wild olive shoot. Both Jews and Gentiles share the tree's nourishment based on faith in God; neither can rest on heritage or culture for salvation.

Chapter 2



Fulness of Joy

Psalm 16:11

You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

David's heart was glad—he had found the secret to joy. True joy is far deeper than happiness; we can feel joy in spite of our deepest troubles. Happiness is temporary because it is based on external circumstances, but joy is lasting because it is based on God's presence within us. As we contemplate his daily presence, we will find contentment. As we understand the future he has for us, we will experience joy. Don't base your life on circumstances, but on God.

David stated confidently that God would not leave him in the grave. Many people fear death because they can neither control nor understand it. As believers, we can be assured that God will not forget us when we die. He will bring us to life again to live with him forever. This provides *real* security

The presence of God is full of joy.

1 Peter 1:8-9

And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.

Although the plan of salvation was a mystery to the Old Testament prophets, they still suffered persecution, and some even died for God. In contrast, some Jewish Christians who read Peter's letter had seen Jesus for themselves and knew why he came.

They based their assurance on Jesus' death and resurrection. With their firsthand knowledge and personal experience of Jesus, their faith could be even stronger than that of the Old Testament prophets.

Jesus brings the fullness of joy.

John 17:13

"But now I come to you; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have my joy made full in themselves.

Joy is a common theme in Christ's teachings—he wants us to be joyful (see John 15:11; John 16:24, 33). The key to immeasurable joy is living in intimate contact with Christ, the source of all joy. When we do, we will experience God's special care and protection and see the victory God brings even when defeat seems certain.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.

Acts 16:29-34

Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with his entire house.

This letter answered their questions and brought great joy to the Gentile Christians in Antioch (Acts 15:31). Beautifully written, it appeals to the Holy Spirit's guidance and explains what is to be done as though the readers already knew it. It is helpful when believers learn to be careful not only in what they say, but also in how they say it. We may be correct in our content, but we can lose our audience by our tone of voice or by our attitude.

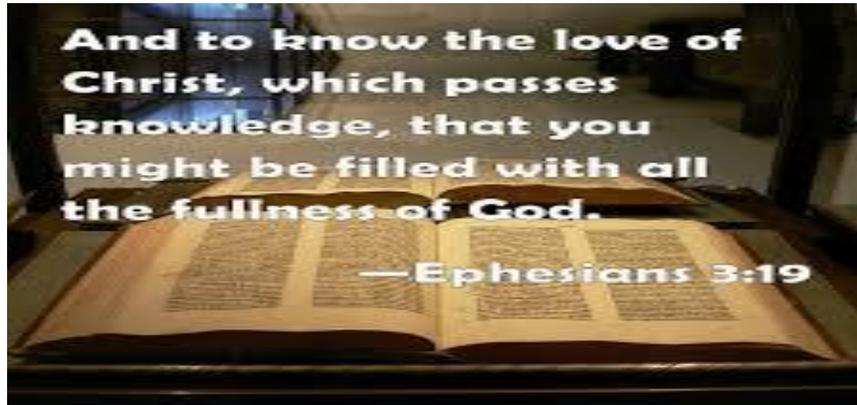
The debate over circumcision could have split the church, but Paul, Barnabas, and the Jews in Antioch made the right decision—they sought counsel from the church leaders and from God's Word. Our differences should be settled the same way, by seeking wise counsel and abiding by the decisions. Don't let disagreements divide you from other believers. Third-party assistance is a sound method for resolving problems and preserving unity.

The God of hope will fill you with joy.

Romans 15:13

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 3



Fulness of knowledge

Colossians 2:2-3

That their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The problem that Paul was combatting in the Colossian church was similar to Gnosticism (from the Greek word for knowledge).

This heresy (a teaching contrary to Biblical doctrine) undermined Christianity in several basic ways:

- (1) It insisted that important secret knowledge was hidden from most believers; Paul, however, said that Christ provides all the knowledge we need.
- (2) It taught that the body was evil; Paul countered that God himself lived in a body—that is, he was embodied in Jesus Christ.
- (3) It contended that Christ only seemed to be human, but was not; Paul insisted that Jesus is fully human and fully God.

Gnosticism became fashionable in the second century. Even in Paul's day, these ideas sounded attractive to many, and exposure to such teachings could easily seduce a church that didn't know Christian doctrine well. Similar teachings still pose significant problems for many in the church today.

We combat heresy by becoming thoroughly acquainted with God's Word through personal study and sound Bible teaching.

You are full of goodness and all knowledge.

Romans 15:14

And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.

Paul did not glory in what he had done, but in what God had done through him. Being proud of God's work is not a sin—it is worship. If you are not sure whether your pride is selfish or holy, ask yourself this question: Are you just as proud of what God is doing through other people as of what he is doing through you?

Be filled with the knowledge of God's will.

Colossians 1:9

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

Sometimes we wonder how to pray for missionaries and other leaders we have never met. Paul had never met the Colossians, but he faithfully prayed for them. His prayers teach us how to pray for others, whether we know them or not.

We can request that they

(1) Understand God's will,

(2) Gain spiritual wisdom,

- (3) Please and honor God,
- (4) Bear good fruit,
- (5) Grow in the knowledge of God,
- (6) Be filled with God's strength,
- (7) Have great endurance and patience,
- (8) Stay full of Christ's joy, and
- (9) Give thanks always. All believers have these same basic needs.

When you don't know how to pray for someone, use Paul's prayer pattern for the Colossians.

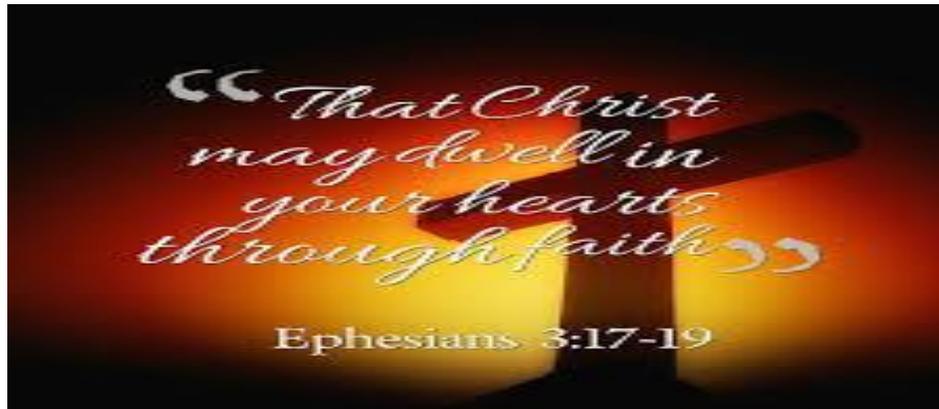
We know in part, but shall be fully known.

1 Corinthians 13:12

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.

Paul offers a glimpse into the future to give us hope that one day we will be complete when we see God face to face. This truth should strengthen our faith—we don't have all the answers now, but one day we will. Someday we will see Christ in person and be able to see with God's perspective.

Chapter 4



Warnings against worldly fulness

Revelation 3:17

'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

Some believers falsely assume that numerous material possessions are a sign of God's spiritual blessing. Laodicea was a wealthy city, and the church was also wealthy. But what the Laodiceans could see and buy had become more valuable to them than what is unseen and eternal. Wealth, luxury, and ease can make people feel confident, satisfied, and complacent.

But no matter how much you possess or how much money you make, you have nothing if you don't have a vital relationship with Christ. How does your current level of wealth affect your spiritual desire? Instead of centering your life primarily on comfort and luxury, find your true riches in Christ.

Care for the orphan and defend the rights of the poor.

Jeremiah 5:28

'They are fat, they are sleek, they also excel in deeds of wickedness; they do not plead the cause, the cause of the orphan, that they may prosper; and they do not defend the rights of the poor.

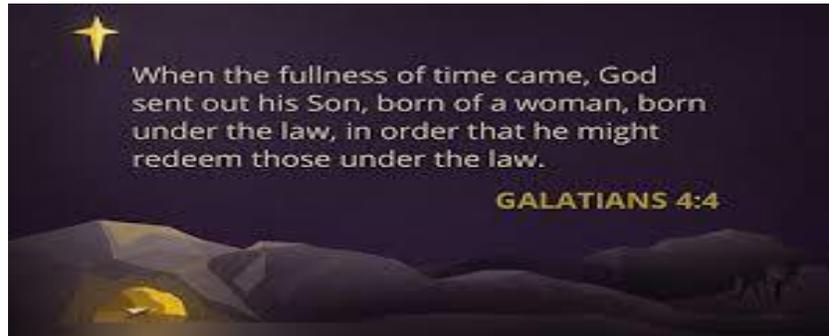
People and nations who please God treat the fatherless (orphans) justly and care for the poor. Wicked men in Israel treated the defenseless unjustly, which displeased God greatly. Some defenseless people—orphans, the poor, the homeless, and the lonely—are within your reach. What action can you take to help at least one of them?

Those who are grown fat, thick and sleek forsook God.

Deuteronomy 32:15

"But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked-- You are grown fat, thick, and sleek-- Then he forsook God who made him, and scorned the Rock of his salvation.

Chapter 5



Fulness of time

Daniel 9:24

"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

Each day of these 70 weeks (“seventy ‘sevens’”) may represent one year. The Bible often uses round numbers to make a point, not to give an exact count. For example, Jesus said we are to forgive others “seventy-seven” times (Matthew 18:22).

He did not mean a literal 77 times only, but that we should be abundantly forgiving. Similarly, some scholars see this figure of 70 weeks as a figurative time period.

Others, however, interpret this time period as a literal 70 weeks or 490 years, observing that Christ’s death came at the end of the 69 weeks (i.e., 483 years later). One interpretation places the 70 th week as the seven years of the great tribulation, still in the future. Consequently the number would symbolize both the first and second comings of Christ.

Jesus gave himself a ransom for all.

1 Timothy 2:6

Who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.

We human beings are separated from God by sin, and only one person in the universe is our mediator and can stand between us and God and bring us together again—Jesus, who is both God and man. Jesus' sacrifice brought new life to all people. Have you let him bring you to the Father?

Jesus gave his life as a ransom for our sin (Mark 10:45). A ransom was the price paid to release a slave from captivity. Jesus, our mediator, gave his life in exchange for ours. By his death, he paid our penalty for sin.

The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Mark 1:15

And saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

What is the good news of God? These first words spoken by Jesus in Mark give the core of his teaching: that the long-awaited Messiah has come to break the power of sin and begin God's personal reign on earth.

Most of the people who heard this message were oppressed, poor, and without hope. Jesus' words were good news because they offered freedom, justice, and hope.

Jesus sacrificed himself to put away sin by his sacrifice.

Hebrews 9:26

Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

All people die physically, but Christ died so that we would not have to die spiritually.

We can have wonderful confidence in his saving work for us, doing away with sin—past, present, and future. He has forgiven our past sin—when he died on the cross, he sacrificed himself once for all (Hebrews 9:26); he has given us the Holy Spirit to help us deal with present sin; he appears for us now in heaven as our high priest (Hebrews 9:24); and he promises to return (Hebrews 9:28) and raise us to eternal life in a world where sin will be banished.

The “end of the ages” refers to the time of Christ’s coming to earth in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. Christ ushered in the new era of grace and forgiveness. We are still living in the “end of the ages.” The day of the Lord has begun and will be completed at Christ’s return.

Jesus came in the fullness of time.

Galatians 4:4

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.

Paul asked for prayer that he could proclaim the Good News about Christ clearly, and we can request prayer to do the same. No matter what approach to evangelism we use, whether emphasizing life-style and example or whether building relationships, we should never obscure the message of the gospel.

In the fullness of times, all things will be gathered together.

Ephesians 1:10

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

God was not intentionally keeping his plan a secret (“the mystery of his will”), but his plan for the world could not be fully understood until Christ rose from the dead.

His purpose for sending Christ was to unite Jews and Gentiles in one body with Christ as the head. Many people still do not understand God's plan; but when the time is right ("when the times will have reached their fulfillment"), he will bring us together to be with him forever. Then everyone will understand.

On that day, all people will bow to Jesus as Lord, either because they love him or because they fear his power (see Phil. 2:10-11).

In due time, his word was manifested through preaching

Titus 1:3

But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;

God is called "our Savior," as is Jesus Christ (Titus 1:4). "God" here refers to the Father. Jesus did the work of salvation by dying for our sins and, therefore, he is our Savior. God planned the work of salvation, and he forgives our sins. Both the Father and the Son acted to save us from our sins.

Chapter 6



Fulness of Christ

Colossians 2:9

For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

Again Paul asserts Christ's deity. "In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" means that all of God was in Christ's human body. When we have Christ we have everything we need for salvation and right living. See the note on +Col. 1:15-16 for more on the divine nature of Christ.

We have received the fullness of grace upon grace.

John 1:16

For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.

When Christ was born, God became a man. He was not part man and part God; he was completely human and completely divine (Col. 2:9).

Before Christ came, people could know God partially. After Christ came, people could know God fully because he became visible and tangible in Christ. Christ is the perfect expression of God in human form.

The two most common errors people make about Jesus are to minimize his humanity or to minimize his divinity. Jesus is both God and man.

All things are placed under Jesus Feet.

Ephesians 1:22-23

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Fullness refers to Christ filling the church with gifts and blessings.

The church should be the full expression of Christ, who himself fills everything (see Ephes. 3:19).

When reading Ephesians, it is important to remember that it was written primarily to the entire church, not merely to an individual. Christ is the head and we are the body of his church (Paul uses this metaphor in Romans 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; and Col. 3:15 as well as throughout the book of Ephesians).

The image of the body shows the church's unity. Each member is involved with all the others as they go about doing Christ's work on earth. We should not attempt to work, serve, or worship merely on our own. We need the entire body.

All should attain the fulness of faith and the knowledge of God.

Ephesians 4:13

Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Laodicea was located a few miles northwest of Colosse; Hierapolis was about five miles north of Laodicea. See the note on +Col. 2:1 for more about Laodicea.

Jesus is knocking at your heart's door.



Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

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Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print