

Introduction

I worked as the General Manager for a graphic design company in Atlanta for about three and a half years. There were lots of good things that came out of the job. I was given a good understanding and foundation in graphic design and my Corel Draw skills were greatly sharpened. God also used it to supply our needs for a season. As the General Manager, I was over all the Project Managers and also the Graphic Designers. The owner of the company wanted to minimize overhead, so he also assigned some clients to me. At any given time, I had between fifteen and twenty-five projects that I was personally managing. The way that we kept up with all the various projects that we had as a company, was to have each project manager write out their strategic priorities for each week. The owner and I would review these strategic priorities with each manager. We also met each Monday morning as a team so that everybody had a general idea of what was going on.

What is a strategic priority? A priority is something that is prioritized. It is something that is more important than anything else and is therefore planned and scheduled ahead of other activities. Our strategic priorities were a list of our plans and activities for the upcoming week and they were scheduled based on their level of importance. The strategic priorities or strat p's as we called them included all the various personnel that would be needed for that project that week. If we were in a design stage and needed a graphic designer to work on some drawings, his instructions and time would be on a project manager's strat p's. If there was an installation that needed to take place, all the installers that were needed would be on the strat p's. Each activity was strategic to moving a project towards its goal.

Last week we looked at the project that God had in mind. We looked at what God wants to build. He wants to build His church. He wants to build a spiritual temple. He wants to fit us together. He tore down the walls between the Jews and Gentiles so that He could build His temple, where His Holy Spirit could dwell. The Holy Spirit does not inhabit strife, division or immorality. God wants to fill His temple with His Holy Spirit. God wants to do powerful things in us, His body, but the temple needs to be prepared first. God's project was the building of the church, which was to be comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. We saw how God made the Gentiles joint heirs. The Gentiles were not citizens of Israel, but now they have been made citizens. God has united both the Gentiles and the Jews into a new man. The picture that we have of the two becoming one is marriage.

There are two distinct sets of strategic activities that are done because of what God is seeking to build. In verse one, Paul begins with, "For this reason...." Then, in verse fourteen, Paul again begins with, "For this reason." Verses one through thirteen are the strategic actions that God does to move this project along. Verses fourteen through twenty-one are Paul's actions.

1. God's Strategic Actions

A. God appoints a man.

The first thing that God does is appoint a man to be in charge of the project. Paul said that God gave him this stewardship of God's grace for the Gentiles. He was given the task of managing this building project.

Ephesians 3 – Strategic Priorities

(Ephesians 3:1-3) "For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles-- {2} if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; {3} that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief."

When God wanted to save a remnant from the flood, he chose a man named Noah. He gave Noah his specific and detailed plans of the ark. When God wanted to bless all the nations and establish a nation, he chose Abraham. When God wanted to protect Israel from a famine, He chose a man named Joseph. He gave him the plan of how to save during the seven fat years so that they would have food in the seven lean years. When God wanted to deliver His people from Egypt, He chose a man named Moses. All through history, God has always put a person in charge of His projects. Paul is the project manager that God chose to use for bringing the gospel to the Jews.

God knew long in advance that He was going to assign Paul to this job. We saw in Paul's resume a few weeks ago that God told Ananias that Paul was a chosen instrument of His and that Paul would bear His name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel. Paul's birthplace, his upbringing, his education, and his gifts and abilities were carefully woven by God for this specific purpose.

(Acts 9:15) "But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;"

We saw in Ephesians 2:10 that God has prepared works in advance for each of us to walk in. He has uniquely and skillfully made each of us to accomplish works in our life. Our salvation is not tied to these works, but our fruitfulness is dependent upon how faithful we are to our individual callings. Like Paul, God will reveal to each one of us the projects that He wants us to be involved in.

Solomon tells us that the plans of a man's heart are like deep waters and a man of understanding draws them out. Sometimes, we need some help in drawing out these plans.

(Proverbs 20:5) "A plan in the heart of a man is like deep water, But a man of understanding draws it out."

Sometimes, God uses prophetic people to give us direction. I have been praying that the Lord will use John Dean in a powerful way to prophetically speak into your lives when he is here. I am really excited about having John come in. You are in for a real blessing. I have been around for a long time and I have yet to see anyone with the same level of prophetic anointing that is on John.

B. God gives revelation and vision.

The second thing that we find in this passage is that God gave Paul revelation, understanding and insights into the mystery. This revelation had been hidden in previous generations. Now, at the appropriate time, He unveils the mystery. Who does He unveil it to? He reveals it to Paul, the man in charge of the project. When God used Noah, He gave special insights, understanding and vision to Noah. He did the same thing with Abraham, Joseph, and Moses.

(Ephesians 3:3-6) "that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. {4} And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the

Ephesians 3 – Strategic Priorities

mystery of Christ, {5} which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; {6} to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,"

Paul needed this revelation and understanding so that He could clearly define his ministry, make strategic plans, and to be obedient to this vision. Notice what Paul tells King Agrippa in Acts 26.

(Acts 26:15-20) ""And I said, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. {16} 'But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; {17} delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, {18} to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.' {19} **"Consequently, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, {20} but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance."**

We all need vision in our lives. Most of the people in my high school were on drugs. According to my best estimates, there were only five people in my whole private school that I attended that were not on drugs. What was the difference in me? Why was I not one of the multitudes? It is very clear. I had vision and purpose in my life. From the age of seven I knew that I wanted to play professional golf. While other kids were out doing drugs, I was exercising, practicing, and working on my career. I was very focused and it kept me out of trouble. Notice what Solomon says in Proverbs. People who have no vision live unrestrained. The Hebrew word means to live carelessly or without discipline. The opposite is also true. Those who have vision live very disciplined lives. I am convinced that one of the most important things we can do for the next generation is to give them vision for their lives. They will not fall into all the teenage traps if they have vision and purpose for their lives.

(Proverbs 29:18) "Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, But happy is he who keeps the law."

C. God gave Paul a message to preach.

In verses seven through ten, Paul tells us that he was made a minister and he was given the grace to preach to the Gentiles.

(Ephesians 3:7-10) "of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. {8} To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach (*euaggelizo*) to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, {9} and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God, who created all things; {10} in order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places."

What was he to preach? He was first of all to preach the gospel, or the good news of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3 – Strategic Priorities

That is something that all of us have been given to preach. We saw a few months ago that there were two different words for preach, *kerusso* and *euaggelizo*. Not all of us are called to *kerusso*. But, all of us have been given the command to *euaggelizo* the gospel. *Euaggelizo* is the word that Paul uses in Ephesians three when he says he has been given the grace to preach to the Gentiles.

G2097. *euaggelizo*, yoo-ang-ghel-id'-zo); from G2095 and G32; to announce good news ("evangelize") espec. the gospel:--declare, bring (declare, show) glad (good) tidings, preach (the gospel).

G2784. *kerusso*, kay-roos'-so; of uncert. affin.; to herald (as a public crier), espec. divine truth (the gospel):--preach (-er), proclaim, publish.

Paul goes on to say in verse eight that he has been given the grace to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ. The original definition of fathom was an outstretched set of arms, which is approximately six feet. In the old days, before we had all the modern technology, ships used to use their ship cable to measure the depth. A ship cable was a hundred fathoms. A fathom is equal to six feet, so a typical ship cable was six hundred feet in length. They would have markings on the cable so that they would know how many fathoms the water was.

Paul says that the riches of Christ are unfathomable. This is that they were not measurable. They are so deep that they cannot be measured. The actual Greek word that is used is *anexichniastos*, which means untraceable, untrackable, or unsearchable. We cannot measure or search out or fathom the riches of Christ. Paul has been given the task of preaching something that is unfathomable or unsearchable. He has been given a tough preaching assignment.

G421. *anexichniastos*, an-ex-ikh-nee'-as-tos; from G1 (as a neg. particle) and a presumed der. of a comp. of G1537 and a der. of G2487; not tracked out, i.e. (by impl.) untraceable:--past finding out, unsearchable.

Paul was also told to preach about the administration or fellowship of the mystery. When we think of a President's administration, we think of the various people that a president puts in charge of key areas of government. This group of carefully picked leaders are tasked with carrying out the business and affairs of the President.

God has an administration. It is made up of people doing lots of different jobs. All of us in the church are to be part of His administration. We all have different gifts, abilities, and callings. We are all to serve in different areas of His administration. However, His administration has a different flavor than our cultural understanding. The Greek word that is used is *koinonia*, which is typically translated as fellowship. It means a partnership or participation. The root word means to have in common or to share. I like the way that the King James translates this. It says that Paul was "to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery."

(Eph 3:9 KJV) "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:"

G2842. *koinonia*, koy-nohn-ee'-ah; from G2844; partnership, i.e. (lit.) participation, or (social) intercourse, or (pecuniary) benefaction:--(to) communicate (-ation), communion, (contri-),

Ephesians 3 – Strategic Priorities

distribution, fellowship.

There was to be a sharing between the Jews and Gentiles. In the spiritual temple there was not going to be a dividing wall between the Jews and Gentiles. They were partners in the building of this project that God assigned to Paul to manage.

Paul says that this mystery has been hidden in God, but now is to be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. The gospel of Jesus Christ is to be made known to all men by the church. You and I, as citizens of heaven, have a responsibility to tell people about the kingdom of God.

Paul goes on to say that this message is in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord. This has been God's plan since the foundation of the world. He knew that we would sin and need a Savior. He knew that we would need to be redeemed. He knew that we would need to be reconciled to Himself. He knew that we would need a lamb without sin to take away the sins of the world. The Scriptures are full of specific prophecies of the Messiah. "This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord."

(Eph 3:11) "This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,"

God does not give us this responsibility without giving us the resources to build the temple. We have been given power by the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses. In verse 12, Paul says "in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him." This boldness and confidence that we are to have comes through the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

(Eph 3:12) "In whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. {13} Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory."

Notice in Acts 4 that when the apostles and saints in Jerusalem were told not to proclaim the gospel any more, they prayed to the Lord.

(Acts 4:23-31) "And when they had been released, they went to their own companions, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. {24} And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said...{29} "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, {30} while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus." {31} And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness."

This bold access and confidence that they had come from the Holy Spirit. You and I can have that same boldness and confidence as we partner with God in the building of His temple.

2. Paul's Strategic Actions

A. Paul takes responsibility for the stewardship.

Paul said that God gave him this stewardship; God made him a minister; and God made him a preacher. It is true that on the road to Damascus that God used some special means to bring Paul to a point of submission. But, it is also true that Paul accepted and received this stewardship. We saw in Acts 26:19 that Paul did not prove to be disobedient to this calling and vision. Paul took very seriously the calling and responsibility that God gave him.

(Acts 26:19) ""Consequently, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision,"

In verse 13, Paul tells the Ephesians not to lose heart at the tribulations he was going through on their behalf, for they are for your glory. This was a man, full of faith, who was fully given to the task that God gave him. This was a man who was willing to be obedient to the Lord's calling, even if it meant lots of hardships and tribulations.

(Ephesians 3:13) "Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory."

In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians he mentions a few of the trials and tribulations that he was going through on behalf of the churches that he was ministering to, which included the church at Ephesus. Paul was a man who fully took on the responsibility given to him.

(2 Cor 11:23-28) "Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. {24} Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. {25} Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. {26} I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; {27} I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. {28} Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches."

We find in Ephesians 4:1 that Paul is writing to the Ephesians from a prison cell in Rome. The tribulation that Paul talks about includes sitting in a prison. Here is what one Bible scholar writes about Paul's prison conditions.

"Roman imprisonment was preceded by being stripped naked and then flogged, a humiliating, painful, and bloody ordeal. The bleeding wounds went untreated; prisoners

Ephesians 3 – Strategic Priorities

sat in painful leg or wrist chains. Mutilated, blood-stained clothing was not replaced, even in the cold of winter. In his final imprisonment, Paul asked for a cloak, presumably because of the cold. Most cells were dark, especially the inner cells of a prison, like the one Paul and Silas inhabited in Philippi. Unbearable cold, lack of water, cramped quarters, and sickening stench from few toilets made sleeping difficult and waking hours miserable. Prison food, when available, was poor. Most prisoners had to provide their own food from outside sources. Because of the miserable conditions, many prisoners begged for a speedy death. Others simply committed suicide.”

What about you and I? Have we taken our place of responsibility. God is not looking for just a group of people who come to church or life group when it is convenient. God is not looking for just a group of attenders who have not taken on any responsibility. God is looking for a partnership, a koinonia, in the mystery. He is looking for a group of people who will help Him build the spiritual temple. He has given each one of us gifts, abilities, talents, and desires. He has prepared good works for each of us to walk in.

- What areas has God gifted you?
- What gifts and abilities has He given you?
- What calling has He given you?
- What is He calling you to do?
- Are we walking in those good works?

We have John Dean coming here. I have been asking God to speak a prophetic word through John to each of you. God wants each and every one of us to be fully engaged in His work. The work of the church is not up to the pastor. It is the pastor’s job to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. It is everybody’s responsibility to do the work and to build the church.

If you are not sure what you can do in the church, ask God. Don’t stop there. Come talk to me. I will pray with you about it. We may need to do some trial and error work until you are properly fit into place in the temple. The key here is that each of us must be like Paul and take responsibility for this stewardship that He has given to us.

B. Paul prays to the Father

Paul shares in verse 14, “For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father...” He has an incredibly difficult assignment from God. He knows that the only way that this project is going to be completed is by prayer. Paul has done what he can by preaching and teaching in Ephesus for three years. He is writing them a letter to encourage and instruct them. There is nothing else that he can do for them while in prison, but pray. There are people who just want to pray. There are others who are so busy with ministry that they have a hard time finding time to pray. We need both. We need to pray and we need to be busy about our Father’s business. That is the example that Jesus left for us to follow. Jesus would spend lots of time in prayer, and then He would go and minister to the multitudes. His powerful ministry was

an outworking of His powerful prayer life.

(Eph 3:14-21) "For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, {15} from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, {16} that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; {17} so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, {18} may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, {19} and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God. {20} Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, {21} to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."

Paul's prayer starts with an address to God the Father. He says that He bows his knees before the Father. The bowing of the knee implies Lordship. Paul is acknowledging that God is sovereign and his life is surrendered completely to the Father. Paul also says that every family in heaven and on earth derives its name from Him. Whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, God has created you. Our source, our origination was not from a big bang, but from God. Because God is our source and He has authority and power over us to do anything that He chooses, we go to Him with all our prayers and petitions.

Paul includes three petitions for the Ephesians. First, He prays that God would strengthen them with might through His spirit in the inner man so that Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith. Second, he prays that they, being rooted and grounded in love, might be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height and know the love of Christ. Third, he prays that they might be filled with the fullness of God.

1. He prays that they would be strengthened in the inner man.

How are you and I strengthened in the inner man? Paul tells us that we are strengthened with power from His Holy Spirit. How are we strengthened with power from His Holy Spirit. We must be filled with His Holy Spirit. We have been learning how we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Our temple must be made into a habitation or dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. We must remove all the strife, division, walls, and immorality in the temple. Second, we must pray. The early church prayed and waited to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Third, we must fill the temple with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We must fill the temple with thanksgiving. We will find that a temple that is filled with praise, worship, and thanksgiving is also filled with the Holy Spirit.

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

Ephesians 3 – Strategic Priorities

We are also strengthened in our inner man truth. As we read, meditate, memorize, and study God's word, we strengthen our inner man. We should all have a reading plan. Every day we should have a plan of where we are going to read. People without plans have a difficult time with consistency. Our plan should also include a time and place. If we have an appointment with God each day, it will be easier for us to develop consistency.

We should also set aside time to study God's word. In America, we are very devoted to religious books. Religious books are good; there is nothing wrong with books. Books are a great supplement to our study of God's word. But, books should not be a replacement for our own study of God's word. Solomon writes that the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body." In life group this week we saw that the word of God is not wearying to the body. The word of God gives life. It is living and active in our lives. It enlightens our eyes and rejoices our hearts. If we want to strengthen our inner man, we must spend time in God's word.

(Ecclesiastes 12:12) "But beyond this, my son, be warned: the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body."

We are also strengthened in our inner man through prayer. Isaiah writes that those who wait upon the Lord shall run and not grow weary. They will gain new strength. What a contrast to wearying ourselves with excessive devotion to books. Spend time praying and waiting upon the Lord.

(Isaiah 40:31) "Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary."

2. He prays that they would be rooted and grounded in love.

Paul prays that they will be rooted and grounded in love. We root and ground things in soil. Paul wants them rooted and grounded in the soil of love. We spent a long time last fall looking at soil. We looked at the chemistry of the soil. We looked at the components of the soil. Finally, we looked at the cleanness of the soil. Without good soil, it is very difficult for a plant to grow.

(Eph 3:17b-19) " and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, {18} may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, {19} and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God."

Paul does not just pray that they will be planted in the soil of love, he prays that they might comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of God's love. When we speak of the breadth and length and height and depth, we are talking of the dimensions of his love. God wants us to fully know all dimensions of His love.

What are some of the dimensions of His love?

- God's agape love is a perfect love. It is pure, selfless, and sacrificial.
- God gave His only begotten Son to us because He loves us.

Ephesians 3 – Strategic Priorities

- God demonstrated His love for dying on the cross for us.
- God redeemed us because He love us.
- God chose us because He loves us.
- God adopted us because of His great love for us.
- God blessed us with every spiritual blessing because of His love for us.
- God gives leaders and pastors to us because He loves us.
- God disciplines us as sons because He loves us.

Paul then tells us that the love of Christ surpasses knowledge. The love of God is something that must be experienced. It goes beyond what we can intellectually grasp; it surpasses knowledge. Let me give you a quick testimony.

In the late 80's Karen and I lived in Orlando, Florida. I was one of the pastors at Discovery Church at the time. One evening I was sitting in the living room in a recliner and Karen came by and gave me a kiss. It was just a quick kiss as she passed by. However, when she kissed me, the Holy Spirit immediately filled me. God used a simple kiss to impart His supernatural love to me. I experienced a touch from God. My whole body was overwhelmed by God's love. I could not go to bed for a while. I was just so full of the presence of God that I could not even think about going to bed. I just sat there in the chair, drunk in the Holy Spirit.

I could never read and comprehend the love that I felt and experienced that night. His love surpasses knowledge, but God allows us to experience His love. My life was changed forever in a second by the Holy Spirit touching me with God's love. Paul is wanting the church in Ephesus to know the dimensions of God's love. However, he also wants them to know the love of God that surpasses knowledge.

What about you? Have you experienced God's love? Have you received God's love into your life? Have you accepted Christ's invitation to become a child of God? John tells us that as many as have received Him and believe in His name, He has given the right to become children of God. John also writes, "see how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God." We can enter into His love by simply receiving Christ into our lives.

(John 1:12) "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,"

(1 John 3:1) "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him."

John also writes that we can know that we have eternal life. Those who have received Christ have eternal life. Those who have never received Christ into their life do not have life. He gives us a number of ways in the book of 1 John to confirm our salvation. One of those is that we will have the love of the Father in us. Thirty-six times in the book of 1 John, he speaks about love. In the same way that the love of God was manifested in my life, He wants all of us to experience His love.

(1 John 5:12-13) "He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God

does not have the life. {13} These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life."

(1 John 4:7-9) "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. {8} The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. {9} By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him."

3. He prays that they will be filled with the fullness of God.

Finally, Paul prays that they will be filled with the fullness of God. There are a number of ways to look at this verse. First, we could say that the Word of God is God. John tells us, "in the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." Jesus is that Word that became flesh and dwelt among us. We can be filled with the fullness of God by filling ourselves with His word.

(John 1:1) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Second, we can be filled with the fullness of God by receiving Christ into our lives. If Christ is in us, we have the fullness of God in us. Jesus is God and if we have Jesus in us, we have the fullness of God. John writes that of us fulness we have all received. John is writing about Christ. The disciples had received Christ.

(John 1:15-16) "John bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" {16} For of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace."

Third, God is Spirit. Those who worship God must worship in Spirit and truth. We are the temple or dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with His Spirit, we are filled with the fullness of God. I believe that the first two interpretations are correct. But, I believe the third is also correct and is what Paul's intent is in this passage. If we look at the context, God is building a temple of His Holy Spirit. He wants the temple to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He wants the temple to be filled with the fullness of God.

(John 4:24) ""God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.""

Conclusion

Paul ends his prayer with a phrase about God's power. A couple of weeks ago we looked at how we must pray according to God's character, name, will, and power. We find His will in God's word. We find His character revealed in God's word. We find God's names revealed in God's word. In life group on Friday night, we looked at the importance of praying God's word. God is wanting us to become powerful and effective in our prayers. We do this by praying accordingly.

(Ephesians 3:20-21) "Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, {21} to Him be the glory in the

Ephesians 3 – Strategic Priorities

church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."

In this passage, Paul ends by saying that these prayers are according to the power that works within us. This is becoming one of my new favorite verses in the Bible. God is impressing on me and our church that He wants to far more than we can ask or think. In our generation, He wants to be glorified in the church and in Christ Jesus.

That power that works within us is the Holy Spirit. God wants us to be filled with His Spirit and His power so that He can do mighty things through us in the East Mountains. He is honored and glorified by this.

Introduction**1. God's Strategic Actions**

- A. God appoints a _____.** (Eph 3:1-3, Acts 9:15, Pr 20:5)
- B. God gives _____ and _____.** (Eph 3:3-6, Acts 26:15-20, Pr 29:18)
- C. God gave Paul a _____ to preach.** (Eph 3:7-10-12, Ac 4:23-31)

2. Paul's Strategic Actions

- A. Paul takes _____ for the stewardship.** (Eph 3:13, Acts 26:19, 2 Cor 11:23-28)
- What areas has God gifted you?
 - What gifts and abilities has He given you?
 - What calling has He given you?
 - What is He calling you to do?
 - Are we walking in those good works?
- B. Paul _____ to the Father** (Eph 3:14-21,
- 1. He _____ that they would be strengthened in the inner man.** (Eph 5:18-20, Eccl 12:12, Is 40:31)
 - 2. He _____ that they would be rooted and grounded in love.** (Eph 3:17b-19, John 1:12, 3:1, 5:12-13, 4:7-9)
 - 3. He _____ that they will be filled with the fullness of God.** (John 1:1, 15-16, 4:24)
 - a. We can be filled by filling ourselves with His _____.
 - b. We can be filled by _____ Christ.
 - c. We can be filled by being filled with the _____ _____.

Conclusion (Eph 3:20-21)**Introduction****1. God's Strategic Actions**

- A. God appoints a _____.** (Eph 3:1-3, Acts 9:15, Pr 20:5)
- B. God gives _____ and _____.** (Eph 3:3-6, Acts 26:15-20, Pr 29:18)
- C. God gave Paul a _____ to preach.** (Eph 3:7-10-12, Ac 4:23-31)

2. Paul's Strategic Actions

- A. Paul takes _____ for the stewardship.** (Eph 3:13, Acts 26:19, 2 Cor 11:23-28)
- What areas has God gifted you?
 - What gifts and abilities has He given you?
 - What calling has He given you?
 - What is He calling you to do?
 - Are we walking in those good works?
- B. Paul _____ to the Father** (Eph 3:14-21,
- 1. He _____ that they would be strengthened in the inner man.** (Eph 5:18-20, Eccl 12:12, Is 40:31)
 - 2. He _____ that they would be rooted and grounded in love.** (Eph 3:17b-19, John 1:12, 3:1, 5:12-13, 4:7-9)
 - 3. He _____ that they will be filled with the fullness of God.** (John 1:1, 15-16, 4:24)
 - a. We can be filled by filling ourselves with His _____.
 - b. We can be filled by _____ Christ.
 - c. We can be filled by being filled with the _____ _____.

Conclusion (Eph 3:20-21)