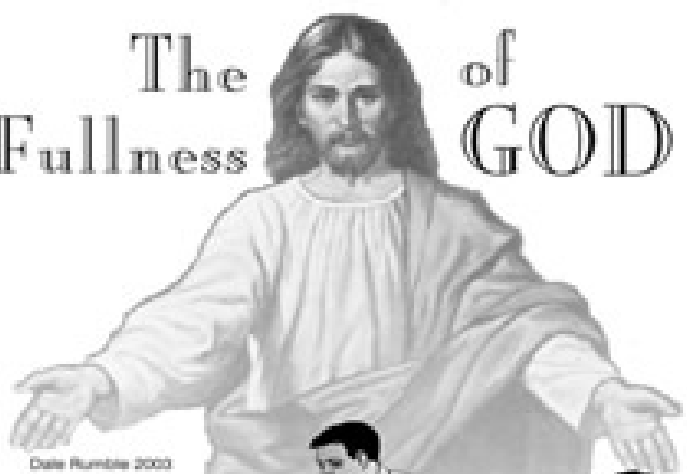


The Fullness of GOD



Date: 11/20/2002



A PROPHETIC WORD FOR THE CHURCH

Preface

The end of this age will be marked by a great worldwide revival and final harvest of souls. It will be the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Before Christ returns, the Holy Spirit will be poured out in a mighty demonstration of power and love through the Church. The gospel of the kingdom will proclaim and reveal the deep love that God has for the lost. This will take place during a time of great tribulation, persecution and martyrdom. We are being prepared to express that love.

The church will be the Lord's instrument of power and glory. As glory rises upon her, the darkness of evil will also deepen in the world.

Arise, shine; for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you and His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. (Isaiah 60:1-3).

This tract has been written to point out how the Lord will prepare His church for the difficult days ahead. Trials and testings, as well as visitations by the Holy Spirit, will be used to draw believers together into deeper bonds of commitment and love for one another. He is going to reveal the fullness of His love for the lost one last time before the day of His wrath.

The Greatest Force in the Universe

The ways and greatness of God are far beyond human ability to wholly understand or to express. For this reason we use words such as “omnipotent” (all powerful), “omnipresent” (present everywhere) and “omniscient” (all knowing) to describe Him. However God has chosen to reveal His greatness by revealing His love for us when He sent His only begotten Son to die for the sins of the world.

When Moses asked God to show him His glory, the Lord placed Moses in a cleft of the rock and He passed by in His glory proclaiming seven qualities of His goodness (Exodus 33:18-23; 34:6-7). These virtues reveal God’s character and glory. When taken together, they jointly define His love. God’s love is not just compassion, grace and forgiveness; it is also divine justice blended with truth and mercy. His love is never separate from His holiness!

The New Testament speaks of the “fullness of God.” Fullness is translated from the Greek word, PLEROMA, which means “a completeness” or “a filling up.” This word is used in scripture to express the greatness of God: His glory, His character and in particular, His love!

*For in Him (Jesus) **all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.** (Colossians 2:9)*

To see Jesus is to see God! All the fullness of God is, and has been eternally present in the Lord Jesus Christ.

*. . . He (Jesus) is the radiance of His glory and the **exact** representation of His nature (Hebrews 1:3)*

When the Son of God hung on the cross, dying in shame and agony, He exhibited both the love and the power of God. Through His sacrificial death and resurrec-

tion the power of Satan was broken, and lost mankind was given opportunity, through faith and repentance in the atoning work of Christ, to be spiritually born into the family of God. God's fullness: His love, *the greatest force in the universe* made salvation possible! His fullness is expressed in the following scripture:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

Salvation is offered to all people, Jew or Gentile, so that all who respond in faith become one new man in Christ fulfilling the promise made to Abraham.

Just as God's love began the church age, it will also end it. His love will be manifest through the church in a great, final harvest of souls that will end with that blessed hope, the return of Christ.¹

The harvest will take place in an era of tribulation and darkness in the world. The Lord will arise to shake everything that can be shaken, including nations, powers in the heavens as well as political and religious systems of man (Haggai 2:6-7; Hebrews 12:25-29). It may appear to be a paradox that God's glory would rise upon the church in a time when famines, pestilence (such as AIDS), persecution and earthquakes occur; but His ways are not ours! Both calamities and visitations by God will prepare the church for the day of the Lord. On that day when He will pour out His Spirit in the greatest revival ever seen, one that will be accompanied by miraculous signs and wonders on a scale never seen before. God's call to repentance and His love, expressed in and through believers, will draw multitudes to Christ in a final demonstration of His love for lost mankind before His judgment falls. Because of His love, a majority of those saved will come from the

disadvantaged of nations, the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame (Luke 14:16-24).

The eyes of believers are to be centered on the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. *He is to have first place in everything.* Having endured the cross, despising the shame, He has been seated at the right hand of the throne of God. He is head over all things in the church and He is Lord of the harvest.

Our heavenly Father's purpose is, that just as His fullness is manifest in His Son, so also the fullness of Christ will be manifest in the church which is His body. The glory of God seen in the Son; and the glory of the Son seen in the church! This can only happen through God's power, grace and love. Can we believe the following promises of God?

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

As believers grow in the likeness of Christ and come into unity of the faith, the body of Christ will express the fullness of Christ.

*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.** (Ephesians 4:13)*

It may appear impossible when we consider the church today, but this miracle is destined to happen! We

must keep our eyes on Him who is the perfecter of our faith and the source of all that we need.

For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. (John 1:16)

God has purposed that the body of Christ will attain a stature of His fullness, and be clothed with His glory! This will take place before the Lord returns; it is to be our vision and hope.

*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.** (Ephesians 1:22-23)*

Implicit in the fullness of Christ are those spiritual qualities of love that bond believer together in unity; virtues such as humility, forgiveness, compassion, patience, endurance, etc. I believe that we are living in days of preparation for revival where the Lord is working to restore these qualities of unity to the church. Christ is calling His people to new depths of commitment to Himself and to the unity that He has prayed for (John 17:20-26).

A body of believers who seek to be prepared for the great days ahead face two major challenges. The first one is to have the faith and hunger necessary to possess all the spiritual resources that the Lord has made available to us. The second, and more difficult challenge, is to yield to the Lord as He rules over and processes our personal lives through trials, testing and circumstances to expose and deal with those human factors that hinder unity and glory from being present in the church.

Let us first consider the issue of resources.

Possessing Our Resources

All the resources one will ever need in his walk and relationship with God has its origin in the cross of Christ; which is the greatest demonstration of the love of God that the world has ever seen!

Salvation is based on three truths: the death, the burial and the resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)². First by His death, the blood of Christ will cleanse every sin committed by a person when that individual believes, repents and seeks forgiveness.

Second, believers can have victory over their carnal natures by being identified with the burial of Jesus through their obedience in water baptism (Romans 6:1-7).

Finally, the Lord arose in His resurrection through the power of the Holy Spirit, which promises believers that they too can be indwelt by the Holy Spirit and have the power of resurrection life within them (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Indeed, Christianity is essentially based on an exchanged life, in which believers yield control over how they live, and by faith, welcome Christ to live His life in them (Colossians 3:3-4).

*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives within me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.
(Galatians 2:20)*

Seeking to please God in our own strength and understanding of righteousness, will inevitably lead to a regimen of rules and laws to define and govern our conduct.

This will not produce the righteousness of God, which can *only* come from the life of Christ!

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:2)

The one resource that believers are most conscious of is the word of God. All that we believe and act upon, is to be established as truth according to God's written word, the Bible (John 8:31-32).

However, revelation does not come to us through the letter of the word. It comes from an anointing of the Holy Spirit upon the written word. It is He who reveals truth (John 14:26).

*As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; **but as His anointing teaches you about all things** and is true and is not a lie and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. (1 John 2:27)*

We are to always be filled with the Holy Spirit, for He is the most important resource that we have. He reveals Christ to us; His Person, His ways and His will. He always exalts Christ. It is He who equips each of us with the particular gift or ministry which God has ordained for our service. He works to conform us into the image of Christ by producing the spiritual fruit of love that leads to the fullness of Christ.

*But **the fruit of the Spirit is love**, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22)*

Each of the above virtues is a specific expression of love; for example,

- Joy is love in release
- Peace is love in government; where Christ reigns there will be peace
- Patience is love in testing
- Kindness is love in action
- Goodness is the consequence of love
- Faithfulness is love in commitment
- Gentleness is love in relationship
- Self-control is love in discipline

Prayer is a resource. God has promised to answer all prayer that is presented to Him in faith and according to His will. For this reason, prayer is a vital resource that is available to us every moment of our lives!

The final resource that we will consider is one whose importance is often not fully recognized. It is the dependency that each of us have on the fellowship, prayers, and supporting ministries of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We cannot fulfill our call in God as “lone-rangers”; we need one another!

But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. (1 Corinthians 12:18, 21-22)

*For just we have many members in one body and all members do not have the same function, **so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and indi-***

vidually members of one another. *Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly (Romans 12:4-6)*

In our spiritual growth, as God deals with various weaknesses, it is this particular resource of a healthy relationship with other believers that often requires the greatest work.

God's Process of Maturity

Whether we view it as the church being prepared for the final harvest, or as the bride being prepared for her bridegroom, our vision and hope is for the coming revelation of God's glory upon us.

The essence of being a Christian is to deny oneself, to take up our cross and follow Christ. However, there appears to be a special cross to embrace for those believers living at the end of the church age. A simple overview of this time period shows why this is true, and how the church is to be prepared.

War in the heavens will result in Satan being cast out of heaven down to the earth (Revelation 12:7-12). This apparently leads to revelation of the man of lawlessness (the antichrist), whom the Lord will bring to an end by His return³ (2 Thessalonians 2:1-8). The antichrist will cause great tribulation. Although all nations will not be affected the same, his influence of evil will be worldwide. His power and persecution of the saints will be a call for them to exercise faith and patience in the promises of God (Revelation 13:7-10; Daniel 7:21-22). With Satan, the accuser of the brethren, cast down to earth, the heavens will be open over the church and great power, in signs and

wonders, will confirm the gospel of the kingdom being proclaimed to all nations (Matthew 24:14). The saints will overcome!

And they overcame him (Satan) because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. (Revelation 12:11)

A key purpose of the final harvest is to bring a distinct separation of the righteous from the unrighteous. God will use the deceptive influence of evil to gather all the unrighteous, as tares, into bundles (2 Thessalonians 2:8-12; Matthew 13: 30, 37-42). The good grain is the righteous who will be caught up, (or harvested) to meet the Lord in the air when He returns. Thus, this harvest is truly the end of the age. When separation of the tares and the good grain is complete, the righteous will be clothed with glory and shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13:43). This is what the Lord is preparing His church for. Let us consider how the Lord will infuse His love into our personal and corporate lives to prepare us for the days of tribulation and glory that are to come.

It is wonderful to be saved, to know the promises of God and to possess the spiritual resources made available to us through the cross of Christ. However, knowing truth is one thing; possessing the reality of that truth is something else. To be a part of God's purpose to reveal His glory through the church, we must willingly endure the process of God's dealings so that we may possess His glory; we must go from theory to reality. One very important requirement is to *always* keep our eyes on Jesus, for it is He who is changing us!

The Beatitudes describe believers who are succeeding in God's process of change (Matthew 5:3-11). The verb

tense in these verses is not in the future tense (i.e. “will be”); it is in the present tense. For example, blessed (or very happy) are those who *are* poor in spirit; who *are* pure in heart; who *are* gentle; who *are* merciful, etc. How does one attain this happy state: It comes as a result of the trials and testings that God brings into our lives, so that we will recognize where we have failed, and then repent in surrender to His Lordship. All nine virtues listed in these verses are Christ centered since they express principles of His kingdom and Lordship, in contrast to self-centered principles that emphasize the prominence or preservation of self. The Pretribulation Rapture teaching is an example of self-centered emphasis.

Today there is great division in the body of Christ. Historically, when revival has broken out in a region it is accompanied by unity. Revival often begins as a result of persecution and suffering, which God allows to rid the church of activities and programs that hinder love for the Lord and His gospel which is the only basis of true unity. I believe that the horizon event horizon does indeed contain much affliction, economic hardship and tribulation for the body of Christ; it is a necessary part of His process to bring forth glory on the church (John 17: 22-23).

Because the Lord loves us very much, He will bring testings and trials, as well as times of renewal, among us to strengthen our faith and trust in Him. Our reactions to such testings will reveal to us whether or not we are yet ready for the tribulation to come. There will be persecution and martyrdom from the Moslems, but the love of God will bring in a great Islamic harvest.

It is important that we exercise faith in the nine spiritual gifts, for He is the source of spiritual power. However, if there is prolonged sickness in a congregation, the spiritual need may not be an absence of faith in praying for the

sick; it could be a lack of compassion and loving care that the saints are to have for one another. The law of Christ calls us to bear one another's burden (Galatians 6:2).

The characteristics of love, as described by Paul in his epistle to Corinth, do not spontaneously spring forth out of some great flush of emotion; they emerge from a process of trials and endurance (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). Going through hardships, and being tried by the difficulties we experience, will build endurance in us. The Lord causes difficult events in our lives to work together for good in building His love in our hearts. We must see these events as coming from His hand.

We are to be conscious of the spiritual needs of others in the body. For example, certain believers may be easily attracted to deceitful spirits or to the charisma of false teachers. They are to be warned of such things and encouraged against the deceitfulness of sin. This is a real need today, one that will increase over time.

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons. (1 Timothy 4:1)

But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called, "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Hebrews 3:13)

Some common examples of such error are: "there is no hell"; "proclaiming a super-spirituality because of some secret revelation or by following uninspired laws of food and/or conduct"; "universalism" (everyone will eventually be saved; "new age theology or practices"; "Christ has already returned," etc.

One of the greatest tools of evangelism lies in expressing the love that believers have toward one another.

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:35)

God's love will lead us to be aware of and to protect, those among us who are weaker in the faith. This need will be greater in times of persecution and tribulation.

Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God: that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble and by it many be defiled. (Hebrews 12:12-13, 15)

Testings and trials are brought into an assembly to strengthen believers in their mutual support for one another, and to help them to develop endurance in their walk with God.

*Count it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the **testing of your faith produces endurance.** (James 1:2-3)*

The day in which we live is not a time to be at ease in Zion; we are engaged in warfare! Whether we encounter economic hardships, persecution, suffering or other tribulation, we are to view such things as part of the purpose of God for us. We are called to be overcomers. There can be no lack of forgiveness or compassion in our relationships with one another. Because lawlessness will increase, we must guard the fervency of our love for the Lord and for each other. Glory will come out of affliction and suffering (1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-13).

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. (2 Corinthians 4:17)

The growing practice of intercession by believers for their locality, region or nation is a clear sign of the revival to come.

Conclusion

While it may appear to be impossible, I believe that the Lord will bring forth a fullness of Himself in the church to both gather in a great harvest and to prepare the church for His return. Ephesians 3: 17-19 appears to be a summary of the process toward this fullness. For example,

1. “. . . so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” This is always the first and necessary step in responding to God; it is our hope of glory.

2. “. . . and that you, being rooted and grounded in love.” Our knowledge of God’s word, and our experiences with the Lord, with His testings and trials in our life through the many situations that we encounter, build roots of trust in His love for us. We become grounded in love.

3. “. . . may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and **to know** the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge.” It is one thing to receive the love of God in a personal sense, however, it is only when we experience His love through us for others, for brothers and sisters in Christ and for the lost, that we can fully appreciate all dimensions of His love. It is beyond description!

4. “. . . **that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.**” The goal may seem to be impossible, but it is His goal, and He can bring it to pass.

We dare not drift aimlessly toward the future. We will not be filled with the fullness of God’s glory and love apart from embracing the vision and cross that is placed before us. It is those who hunger and thirst for righteousness who will be filled



End Notes

1. Dale Rumble; OUR BLESSED HOPE, THE RETURN OF CHRIST; Fountain of Life Tract, 2003

2. Dale Rumble; UNVEILING THE GOSPEL, Fountain of Life Tract, 2002.

3. Dale Rumble; BEHOLD THE HARVEST, Destiny Image, 1998, pp 42-46, 163-168.

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