

Our Misery and the Fullness of the Lord¹

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Revelation

3:17 You say, "I am rich. I have become wealthy. I don't need anything." Yet you don't realize that you are miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.
 [International Standard Version]

2 Corinthians

8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah. Although he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, so that you, through his poverty, might become rich.

Today, I would like to have a discussion with you on the subject; "We are so poor while the Lord is rich in all respects." As we know the Lord more and more, we are compelled to realize that we are hopeless. However, Jesus is so unique that he never forsakes anyone no matter how useless they are. When we humble ourselves, the Lord gives us, blesses us and uses us.

There are many prayers recorded in the Bible. Some are utterly wrong. Peter, the disciple of Jesus recited one such wrong prayer. There is no way for such prayers to be heard. Peter said, "Leave me, Lord! I am a sinful man!" The Lord never left him. He made him his disciple and used him to great extent.

This miserable Peter, as we all know, picked up some verses from the Old Testament on the occasion of Pentecost to introduce Jesus to the people. Consequently, more than 3000 people were led and saved. It was an unimaginable miracle. However, a much greater miracle was that Peter did not become arrogant. (He did not boast about what he had done.) It was absolutely miraculous.

There was a reason. Previously, he denied Jesus saying that he did not know who Jesus was and that he had nothing to do with him. He said this even after three and half years of living with Jesus. He was such a cowardly man. He felt a sense of danger and in trying to protect himself, he lied shamelessly. However, because he regretted this failing, he could avoid becoming arrogant. Because he once failed, he felt that he had nothing to be proud of, no matter how much he was used by the Lord.

The first verse we read today was written to the brothers and sisters in the town called Laodicea. They are very harsh words.

Revelation

3:17 You say, "I am rich. I have become wealthy. I don't need anything." Yet you don't realize that you are miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

If they realize, they do have some hope. If they don't, it is just tragic. For example, if you know that you have cancer, you will go to see a doctor or visit hospitals. But, if you don't, you have no chance of getting treatment. People of Laodicea did not know. It was so tragic, wasn't it?

A man called David introduced the Lord in the famous Psalm 23;

Psalms

23:1 The Lord is the one who is shepherding me

After all, the Lord is mine.

Psalms

23:1 The Lord is the one who is shepherding me; I lack nothing.

5 ...my cup overflows.

He meant that he was absolutely overjoyed, because the Lord was now his Lord. Paul had the same experience.

He described it in Philippians 4:19. When he was put in prison, he suddenly seemed to have plenty of time. Before he was arrested, he never had time to write a letter. He was extremely busy all the time. However, when he was in prison, he had enough time to write a lot of letters. This too was written from the prison;

Philippians

4:19 And my God will fully supply your every need according to his glorious riches in the Messiah Jesus.

He could testify and confess this way because he experienced it himself. He could rejoice much in jail. Once, Jesus shouted;

John

7:37 Jesus stood up and shouted, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink!"

7:38 The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have rivers of living water flowing from his heart."

1 『はじめな我々と満ち満ちておられる主』、2014年3月16日、高知喜びの集い、ゴットホルド・ベック

The Lord is abundant in everything and desires to fill us miserable humans. What a blessing it is! The desperate desire of the Lord is to fill us too with his fullness. The fullness of the Lord is formed inside Jesus before it is revealed to us. And those who are connected with Jesus are fulfilled in their turn.

Let's read other verses. This one is from Colossians, Chapter 2, This too was written by Paul. It goes;

Colossians

2:9 because all the essence of deity inhabits him in bodily form.

2:10 And you have been filled by him,....

that is to say, you are connected with Jesus,

2:10who is the head of every ruler and authority.

No matter what difficulty we face, it is time to come to Jesus and confess to the Lord without hiding anything. Then your sins will be forgiven and your punishment will be canceled. You will be liberated from the bondage and will begin to serve him.

Fullness in the Bible does not refer to any material quality but of course, to Jesus himself. And Jesus desperately desires to fill us miserable humans. It is written through the words of David, author of the Psalms;

Psalms

81:10 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, open your mouth that I may fill it.

These words describe the never-changing grace of the Lord. The Lord does not intend to give us just a little bit of grace, but wants to fill us up. Unfortunately, most people do not open their hearts wide enough for their prayers, or through their prayers.

Matthew

25:34 The king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who have been blessed by my Father! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,

What can fulfill us in the true sense is not something our eyes can see, but is "the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" as is written in here. The Father God gave us the best gift ever through Jesus. Jesus suffered for us and sacrificed his life on the cross.

Jesus provided us with all things we need. I guess we all know this verse by heart; Romans, Chapter 8, Verse 32. This verse includes all things I mentioned.

Romans

8:32 The one who did not spare his own Son, but offered him as a sacrifice for all of us, surely will give us all things, along with his Son, won't he?

To put it plainly, the Lord God is trying to give us the fullness of God and he desperately desires to give us perfect satisfaction. Even though the Bible says this to us repeatedly, so many believers have to remain in such a miserable state and they cannot receive the fullness of the Lord himself. Isn't it so mysterious?

There are many considerations about the fullness of the Lord, but in here, I would like to simply divide them into four points. Firstly, fullness of life, means to be filled with life. Secondly, fullness of love. It means to be filled with love. Thirdly, fullness of joy. It means to be filled with joy. And fourthly, fullness of peace, which is to be filled with peace.

Now, let's begin by thinking about the fullness of life. Let me give you an example. Suppose you visit someone in the hospital suffering from a serious illness. If you call his name and he opens his eyes faintly, but closes them soon, how would you feel? He certainly has life, but he is not filled with life.

In the Old Testament, there was a man called Samson. He split a lion in half. David also slew a lion and a bear. These two men were surely filled with life. Many people, although they were once reborn, are not prepared and have no intention of testifying. Paul often testified. We do not have enough time today, but please open the Acts of the Apostles when you get home and read Chapters 9, 22 and 26. These chapters consist of detailed testimonies of Paul.

Jesus is looking for his witnesses. He desires us to be such witnesses and to proclaim to others how we received the life of the Lord Jesus.

John

10:10 I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

This is exactly the purpose of the Lord for coming down to this world. In that sense, we should not be satisfied with receiving the fullness for ourselves, but are given the mission to transmit the fullness of life to as many people as possible. Let us pray so we can push forward to accomplish this mission and that we be used by the Lord as vessels.

Isaiah

60:22 The least of them will become a thousand, and the smallest one a mighty nation. "I am the Lord; When the time is right, I will do this swiftly.

It was so predicted and promised. Only Jesus, who is filled with life, can fill us with life. Furthermore, he is able to let us help others to share in the fullness of life. And the Lord promised that he would do so swiftly.

Secondly, fullness of love, which means to be filled with love.

This means that you can love anyone, even your enemies. An example of this is Stephen, who was one of the very first martyrs in the early churches. Stephen was a man filled with love. When he was stoned to death, he prayed until his last breath. He knelt down and shouted loudly, "Lord, don't hold this sin against them!" This was his desperate desire. This precisely was the fullness of love.

We too should love everybody; all our neighbors, brothers and sisters and even enemies. Needless to say, we do not possess this kind of love by nature. And we cannot obtain such love no matter how much effort we make. Paul wrote the secret to obtain such love in Romans 5:5;

Romans

5:5 Now this hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

It has been poured, so it is possible.

Thirdly, fullness of joy. It is to be filled with joy. A man called David confessed in his prayer;

Psalms

16:11 ...at your right hand there are pleasures forever.

This is a confession of David, but all those who walk in the light in front of the Lord God will be filled with the same joy. The Lord desires to give this joy to us too. Just like waves in the ocean, the joy of the Lord never ends. It is ever-lasting.

The prophet called Habakkuk experienced the same thing. For many people, this is their favorite part. Why don't we open the page?

Habakkuk

3:17 Even though the fig tree does not blossom, and there are no grapes on the vines; even if the olive harvest fails, and the fields produce nothing

edible; even if the flock is snatched from the sheepfold, and there is no herd in the stalls—

But he did not despair.

Habakkuk

3:18 as for me, I will rejoice in the Lord. I will find my joy in the God who delivers me.

"I will find my joy." It is not a matter of emotion or appreciation, but that of your will. In reality, he had no reason to rejoice.

This fullness of joy does not depend on worldly wealth, or any material aspects of our life. This kind of joy can never be understood or explained logically. People in the early churches of those days were misunderstood, persecuted and tormented. Nevertheless, as the Bible tells us, they "rejoiced with an indescribable and glorious joy."

Fourthly, fullness of peace. It is to be filled with peace. Jesus desires to give his perfect peace to each one of us. It is written in Isaiah 26:3;

Isaiah

26:3 You will keep perfectly peaceful the one whose mind remains focused on you, because he remains in you.

As Jesus is the Prince of Peace, no one can obtain perfect peace without Jesus. Jesus came down to this world to give his peace to us miserable humans.

If you trust in Jesus, the Lord would never fail to give us his peace. Jesus had unimaginable peace. It can be seen from this verse 30, in Matthew, Chapter 26;

Matthew

26:30 After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

As we can see in here, before leaving for the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus sang a song of praise. Although Jesus knew very well that he was going to be captured soon, nailed on the cross several hours later to suffer a great deal for all our sins, and that he was to be forsaken by his Father God, he sang a song of praise.

Jesus experienced unimaginable pain and agony and he shouted, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Being aware that he was going to have to suffer so much, why could Jesus sing a song to praise God? It was because Jesus had perfect peace.

The Lord desires to give us the same peace. To receive it, plainly speaking, we need to be filled with

Jesus; that is to say, we need to be filled with the life of the Lord, love of the Lord, joy of the Lord and peace of the Lord. What do we have to do to be filled? What is the secret to receiving the fullness of the Lord?

To begin with, we need to realize that we are totally empty. If we are truly honest, we have to admit that nothing good dwells inside us. However, we are given these wonderful words of promise in 1 John 1:9;

1 John

1:9 If we make it our habit to confess our sins, in his faithful righteousness he forgives us for those sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

This was the confession of brothers and sisters in early churches. They made this confession because they came to realize this from their own experience. Jesus already paid the price with his precious blood. For this reason, Jesus sincerely desires to forgive all faults and all kinds of arrogance. Some people say that their sins are too many and they are not sure whether the Lord would forgive their sins.

But, the Lord would absolutely forgive all kinds of sins and he is waiting for the best time to do so. The foundation of fullness is the conviction that all sins have been forgiven and forgotten.

However, it is not just important to come in front of the Lord the way you are as an empty vessel; in other words, not just to admit and confess your sins. You also need to have faith like little children which is the second condition. You are requested to grab the promise of the Lord in your hands.

Once we repent, we are given the conviction that the Lord has totally washed our sins away. It is not that we originally believed that way. But the entire Bible tells us so. The foundation of this conviction is neither human emotion nor human comprehension. True foundation is in the words of promise of the Lord. Halfway faith is absolutely meaningless. What the Lord seeks from us is the faith in which we thoroughly rely on the Lord. There is a wonderful promise in Mark 9:23;

Mark

9:23 Jesus told him, "If you are able? Everything is possible for the person who believes!"

So promised Jesus. Faith can be compared to an empty hand held out to receive a gift from the Lord. However, true faith means to have a clear intention of receiving the gift provided by the Lord and holding it tight in your hands. What do you think is the most dreadful sin as seen from the eyes of the Lord? Needless to say, it is the sin of unbelief.

Because of this sin of unbelief, unsaved people will have to perish. In addition, unbelief causes saved people to stop evolving, which prevents them from being used by the Lord. The devil has to run away if he sees faith. Wherever there is faith, the Lord can reveal his glory and perform miracles.

And wherever there is faith, the Lord will be worshiped and glorified. In our life of faith, we are always standing at a crossroad. That is to say, as we see the real world which is visible to our eyes, we have to choose which way to go; one way in which we are driven and controlled by reality, or the other way in which we accept the words of the Lord and rely on him.

This is exactly the faith the Lord wants from us. With faith like this, we can please the Lord. Most people living today only care about themselves, which makes them so unhappy.

Then, how can we be happy? It is accomplished by being connected with Jesus.

The first step to accomplish this is to come to Jesus just as you are now, confess everything to Jesus without hiding anything and declare all your sins to him. The second step is to have honest faith and trust him just like little children. It is to look up to Jesus, grab the promise of the Lord and thank the Lord for his forgiveness.

Now, what is the third step? It is to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to receive blessings. All believers are the temple of the Holy Spirit and have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside. However, to most of the believers, the Holy Spirit cannot reveal the glory of the Lord, which, I must say, is a sad reality. Needless to say, being filled with the Holy Spirit does not mean to experience some miracles or to speak unknown languages, but it is to sincerely obey the Lord and consequently, to surrender your control to the Lord. When you do, two events will take place as a result. All believers of Jesus will become willing to testify for the Lord, that is to say, become witnesses of the Lord and then lead others to the Lord. It is promised in the Acts of the Apostles, 1:8;

Acts

1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Many people believe that they are filled with the Holy Spirit but in actuality, live a self-centered life. Then what is the characteristic of those who are truly filled with the Holy Spirit? They do everything they can to

save those who are heading toward destruction and they testify for Jesus. It can never be accomplished without denying their own selves and sacrificing themselves. Furthermore, it is also an indication of being filled with the Holy Spirit that we bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

These are very well-known verses. Galatians 5:22 explains what is the fruit of the Spirit;

Galatians

5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 5:23 gentleness, and self-control.

If someone can't bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit, it indicates that the person is not filled with the Holy Spirit. Needless to say, this fruit is not the outcome of any human effort, but comes as a benefit of being controlled by the Holy Spirit. When we come to Jesus just as we are now, confess everything without hiding anything, look up to Jesus with faith like little children, and when we surrender our control to the Lord, we will receive the fullness of the Lord.

This was exactly the battle and prayer of Paul for the saved people. Let us read some verses.

Ephesians

3:17 and that the Messiah would make his home in your hearts through faith. Then, having been rooted and grounded in love, 3:18 you will be able to understand, along with all the saints, what is wide, long, high, and deep— 3:19 that is, you will know the love of the Messiah— which transcends knowledge, and will be filled with all the fullness of God.

This way, Paul kept fighting and praying for the saved people.

The fourth stage required for us to be filled with the life of the Lord, love of the Lord, joy of the Lord and peace of the Lord, is to realize the importance of fellowship between believers of the Lord and to have actual fellowship with one another.

It is the reason why this expression, “along with all the saints” is used in Verse 18. We need to learn to love, not just specific people, but all believers of Jesus, all brothers and sisters.

This too can only be accomplished through self-denial. Let's stop all efforts to protect ourselves. If you are willing to sacrifice everything and you feel like sacrificing yourself in order to be filled by the Lord, then you are truly blessed. Such a person will never

lose anything but will be filled with the life of the Lord, love of the Lord, joy of the Lord as well as peace of the Lord.

We should never keep these things all to ourselves but share them with all distressed, suffering and sorrowful people, so that they too will be filled with the life of the Lord, love of the Lord, joy of the Lord as well as peace of the Lord through us. So why don't we pray more truthfully than ever so that we can be used for this purpose of the Lord.

John

7:37 On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and shouted, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink!

7:38 The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have rivers of living water flowing from his heart.”

So he promised.

2 Corinthians

8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah. Although he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, so that you, through his poverty, might become rich.

We ought to 'become rich'. In order for us to be so, you are told; “open your mouth that I may fill it.”

End