

Part Six
Goal of the Believer

I Am Custom Made To Fit God

John 15:4-5

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

God created man with incredible capacity, but no ability whatsoever. God made man like a glove. Everything a hand can do, a glove can do, so long as the glove is fitted closely upon the hand and has the flexibility to move with the hand. God created man to contain Himself in the same way that a thin, flexible, fitted glove is made to contain a hand. When the hand moves, the glove moves. When the hand grips something, the glove grips the same thing. It is the joy and purpose of the glove to be filled with the hand.

When the hand is working in the glove, whatever the hand might be doing, the glove is fulfilling its created purpose in every way. The glove is filled with joy. Everyone knows that it is not the glove doing the work, but the hand in the glove. However, you do not actually see the hand. All you see is the glove. The glove does not take glory to itself, but the glove is always pointing to the hand inside it as people look at it doing those wonderful things. Yet the hand shares its glory fully with the glove. As everyone admires the hand that did this great work, they also admire the glove through whom the hand worked.

But our picture of hand and glove contains this limitation: the hand is only a part of a greater being. The glove contains only a part of that greater being. Not so with man. God created man to be filled with all the fullness of God. It is not the hand of God that fills me, but all of God. Can I comprehend this?

Ephesians 3:17-20

That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

In truth, I am much more than a glove. I am the temple of the living God. I, as an individual believer, am the temple of God. I, as a member of the corporate body of Christ; we together are the temple of God. Both I as an individual and we as a body are the temple of God.

I'd like to bring that into a modern day picture. God is saying that He has made us to be a superhero suit. I contain the Creator and Savior of the universe. He expresses Himself through me. But if He is not filling me, then I sit there useless on the shelf. I can only do that which He does through me. Without Him I can do nothing.

On the other hand, if you saw Mr. Incredible without his superhero suit, he is just a plain man; he doesn't look incredible at all. But when the suit goes on, Mr. Incredible looks incredible. He fills the suit with all of his ability.

God is invisible. Without a suit on, a temple, God cannot be seen at all. And in one sense, that is embarrassing to God. He wants to be seen, and touched, and handled. But without His superhero suit on, no one even knows He is there. Without His temple, His dwelling place, no one knows He is there.

I am God's superhero suit. I comprehend the height, the depth, the width, and the length to which God is able to stretch inside of me. I contain all the fullness of God.

This is true, but it is not the whole truth. I, as an individual person, am created to contain God. But God is too vast and complicated a being to be expressed through one individual. In one sense God shows himself through me, but in another sense, I by myself

cannot reveal God as He is. No, it takes a body, the body of Christ, countless multitudes of individuals, each containing all the fullness of God, each expressing their measure of His fullness as an individual, and yet the whole body, worn by God as His superhero suit, His temple, together make God visible to the universe in such an incredible way that all the universe drops to the ground in awe and worship. They had no idea God was so incredible; they had never really seen Him before.

It is not either/or. It is both/and. It is not “me and Jesus got a good thing going.” No way! I am a member of a wonderful body of Christ, and together we reveal God to the universe. But just as false are those who say, “You are nothing except as a member of the body of Christ.” No, by myself I contain all the fullness of God.

To God it is both/and. I am the temple of God, and I am a member in particular. If each individual member is not himself or herself filled with all the fullness of God, then the whole body cannot exist. I am filled with all the fullness of God, and I am a member of a glorious and precious body that reveals God the way He wants to be seen without limitation of any kind.

Man is created different from all other created things. Animals are complete in themselves. Everything they need, to do and be what they are created for, is inside them. Angels are complete in themselves. Everything they need, to do and be what they are created for, is inside them. The same is true of rocks and plants and planets, every facet of God’s creation is created complete in itself, able to do and be what it was made for. Everything except man!

Man was created with incredible capacity. Filled with God, man can do everything God can do. If God can reach to the far end of eternity to touch what God alone knows is there, than man, whom God wears as a suit that reveals His invisible being, can reach there as well.

Let me suggest that you watch the movie, *The Incredibles*. God can speak to us through a story like that. Story has the ability to reveal truth like no other illustration can. In a particular scene you

see the construction of the superhero suits. If the hero needs to run ultra-fast, the suit can flex at that speed. If the hero needs to burn, the suit can sustain those high temperatures. If the hero needs to stretch great distances, the suit can stretch with her and yet keep its appropriate shape. If the hero needs to go invisible, the suit can go invisible with her.

In all things the hero needs to do to accomplish his purposes, the suit is right there, bending, flexing, and moving with the hero in all things the hero is doing.

But, if the suit does not contain the hero, then it is worthless in practice. Great potential, but worthless in practice, lying there on the floor in a crumpled pile. Great capacity, yes, but utterly unable to do anything in and of itself. This is the nature of man.

Filled with God, man has all the capacity of God. But empty of God, man is unable to accomplish anything of value. Great capacity, but no ability.

But the superhero suit is an inanimate object. And as such does not mind being folded up and put away. Not so with man. Man was not made ever to be folded up and put away. Man was created to contain God all the time and forever. Man is not inanimate. I am a person, created in Gods' image to be filled with His person. I am custom made to fit God.

When God says that I am made in His image, it means I am custom made to fit God. And as a person, when I am not being filled with all the fullness of God, when I am not stretching where God stretches, touching whom God touches, defeating what God strikes down, healing what God is healing, then I am frustrated. I am bored. I am empty. I want what I do not have.

Every human being in the bottom of his heart knows they were created for more than what they presently experience. Every human being is one hundred percent correct. A glove is made to be filled with a hand. No hand equals emptiness, boredom, and missed opportunity. An empty human is a big problem. A human empty of God is a big problem.

All human endeavor on this earth apart from those filled with God in present experience consists of two things. The biggest effort is to animate the glove sufficiently to make it feel that it has a hand inside it. To activate the superhero suit just enough to make it imagine it has a hero inside. To make the suit believe that it is being what it was meant to be even though the superhero is not inside it.

And then there is Buddhism, and eastern mysticism and Western asceticism and much nonsense proclaiming itself as Christian thought, that says this. “The problem, dear glove, is your desire to be filled with a hand. The problem, dear suit, is your desire to be filled with a hero. True peace comes when you simply accept what you are – nothing! Everlasting peace comes when you no longer desire. When you no longer want to do or to be. Your desire is your enemy. Die to yourself. A good Christian never wants anything.”

Yet, no matter how much a Buddhist kills desire, or those who practice Buddhism inside Christianity, they never succeed. No matter how much a Christian dies to self, self never dies. Why? Because they are defying God. A glove can do nothing without a hand in it. Yet the glove itself is not nothing. It has enormous capacity, great potential, it can do wonderful things, but only when it is filled with a hand.

Satan and his demons provide an alternative for man. Satan cannot fill the glove as his hand. The glove was not made for him, it does not fit him, and there is no relationship between the glove and the nature and person of Satan. Man was made to contain God. Satan is an angel - not even close. But God gives Satan this license and power. Satan can animate the suit a little bit. He cannot fill the suit, but he can make the suit twitch and jerk a little bit. Just enough to make the suit think, “Glory of glories, I’m being filled with a hero, I am getting all my desire.” What a pathetic picture. Superhero suits, unwanted and discarded, twitching and jerking, imagining that by doing so, they are fulfilling their purpose. They are experiencing life as it was meant to be.

I am speaking of man. But you are not discarded. You are not unwanted. You have been found, you have been washed, you

have been fully repaired. You, as you are right now, are filled with God. And you need to learn the depth, the height, the length to which God can move through you. So that you are not just filled with God, but so that you can move out from all of His fullness.

Now, we must look at another place where our story metaphor is limited. Super hero, super hero suit. Slide a knife between the two and all that happens is the suit is separated from the hero.

Not so with man and God. There is an organic spiritual bond between man and God. Paul says in 1 Corinthians, "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit with Him." You put a knife between God and man and both will bleed. Both will bleed, but although God will hurt more, yet man will be severed in that place. And unless the wound is quickly healed, man will begin to have the sense, the feeling, of that dreaded empty-suit experience. The life flow is cut off.

We could even say that man is created to be God's skin. To so fit God's shape, to so flex with God's movements that all creation can look at man and see God. All creation can be touched by man and feel God. I, as a human, with all the inability of a human, am made exactly the way God intended me to be. He made me weak but with great capacity, and therefore great desire that is answered only when I am filled with God. Don't ever squelch your desire. Your desire is to be filled with God. All human desire, even that which turns itself in lust to the wrong directions. That desire is there because it is really a desire to be filled with God.

Everything that man wants is found in God. Turn your desire to Him, all desire, even what you would call lust; turn it to Him because He is what you desire. God can change and redirect only what you give Him.

But a superhero does not wear a superhero suit in order to go around looking like a superhero. A superhero is always at war. God is at war with His enemies and He fights His war through us. A superhero is also, at the same time, helping people and meeting their needs, saving those who are lost, healing those who are hurting, protecting those who are being attacked.

God heals people who are hurting through us. He saves people who are lost through us. He protects people who are being attacked through us. We must understand the nature of God's war in order to understand exactly how He wars through us.

We must also understand the nature of Satan's power so that we know how he fights against us. Peter says we are not to be ignorant of Satan's devices, of his strategies, his ways of attack, his methods of manipulation and control.

First we must know the nature of this war. God is not fighting Satan on any kind of an equal level. The contest of Satan against God is focused entirely on the suits. Satan has two purposes, having removed and separated the suits from God, by bringing sin into the picture, now Satan's focus is either on the one hand, to get the suits, the empty suits, to twitch and jerk, imagining in their minds that they are now fulfilling their purpose. Or, if he loses some of those suits to becoming Christians, then His goal is to convince them that the whole focus of the Christian life is to not twitch and jerk with Satan's anointing. That they are to die to their flesh. He gets God's people focused on sin, but never to consider being filled with God. "How can I be filled with God if there is something terribly wrong with me?" That is Satan's goal in the church.

Satan cannot fill the superhero suit that is man. Because man is not made to fit an angel. Some people think that when man fell, he was no longer the image of God, but became the image of Satan. That idea is not correct. Fallen man is still the image of God, he is made to fit God only, he cannot fit Satan, because Satan is not like God. If God is absent, man is empty. But Satan and his demons have this ability. They are able to breath a certain "anointing" upon the superhero suit that is man. Just enough to make man jerk and twitch, just enough to make man think he has found the meaning and purpose of his life.

Let's define a critical term. "Sin." Sin is not the jerking and the twitching. The doing of those things separate from God, those things that are animated by Satan, those are simply the expressions of sin; they are not sin itself. A man could, theoretically, cease all

that twitching and jerking and yet be fully in sin. A Christian can hammer self down into the ground so thoroughly that self cannot squeak, yet that Christian has arrived nowhere.

Man can cease all twitching and jerking and still be in sin. Sin is being empty of God. Sin, for man, is the absence of God, never the presence of something else. This is Satan's triumph over God, by getting man, who is created to be filled with all the fullness of God, who is capable of showing every nuance of God's character, of demonstrating every aspect of God's ability, to now jerk and twitch in this pathetic manner, believing that by doing so he has found the purpose of life.

Satan's triumph is the mockery of God's image.

The Greek word "*sarx*" is translated throughout the New Testament as "flesh." But the word flesh throughout the New Testament is used for two completely different meanings. Much harm has come into Christianity through confusing these two definitions of the word "flesh." First, there is the Word became flesh, in John 1, and dwelt among us. In 2 Corinthians, Paul says that the life of Jesus might be revealed in our mortal flesh. On the other hand, Paul says in Romans, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. In another place, God says that the flesh wars against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh so that we cannot do what we want.

Two different uses of the word flesh. The superhero suit, this metaphor we are using as a way to understand the temple of God and the body of Christ. When we look at the superhero suit as a way to see the image of God, it gives us the understanding we need to know the difference between the two uses of this word flesh.

The superhero suit is man, man in his humanity. Man in his humanity is created to be filled with all the fullness of God. God created my flesh to reveal Christ. My humanity, exactly the way God made me, is designed to reveal the character and power of God himself. That is why Paul said, "I boast in my weaknesses." My humanity is designed by God to reveal the power of Christ. My humanity, my human flesh, is altogether good, even though it is mortal at the

present time. My human flesh is holy; my human flesh is the temple, the dwelling place, of Almighty God.

However, Satan has been given the ability by God to enable human flesh to twitch and jerk a little bit. That kind of “anointing,” coming from Satan who is on the outside of me, coming upon my human nature in ignorance of God and His gospel, can empower my human nature just enough that I imagine the I have my own wisdom and my own strength. That anointing, that enablement, coming upon my human nature from Satan, is called “the flesh.” That is the second definition of flesh. This kind of flesh exists only when my human nature is anointed or enabled by Satan. That enablement cannot come from inside me. It cannot come from my heart. Jesus lives in my heart, not Satan. I am in the Spirit; I am never in the flesh.

It is only if I put my mind on the things of the world, that is, when I believe the enablement of Satan, that my human nature is flesh in the wrong way. Human nature is flesh when I am empty of God. That is, the flesh that God is at war with. But my human nature, redeemed and made new by Christ and filled with the Spirit of God is clean and holy and beautiful and filled with all the ability of God.

So this struggle with the flesh is not a battle against something evil in me. No way! To believe that is to deny the gospel and to dishonor Christ. I am not fighting against the flesh. I am fighting against demon spirits that are trying to get me to believe something false about myself and about the gospel. It is a battle in the mind. It is a fight against thoughts that are trying to get me to forget God and to turn and find any fulfillment in the emptiness of life without God.

When I believe that what God says about me is true, Jesus is made visible in my mortal flesh.

But when I try to find fulfillment for myself in this world apart from Christ, then what is visible is only the twitching and jerking that is a mockery of God. That is “the flesh” in its second mean-

ing. The enabling of Satan is the flesh. I keep the thoughts of Satan out of my mind, and I do so only by keeping my mind filled with God's thoughts, with what God says about me, that I am just like Jesus.

2 Corinthians 4; I believe that this passage is central and key to understanding the purpose of God with us here in this world, in this life, in this age. Verse 7, "But we have this treasure (of the glory of God) in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us."

This is what I have been saying. The superhero suit, without being filled with a hero, is just an empty suit. But the treasure is the Hero inside filling our earthen vessel.

"That the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." The present setting of the human nature and the human experience.

Verses 10-11

Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus that life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus sake (that is the outward condition of life in this world), that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

"In our dying bodies."

This is what God is after. The goal and purpose of God is not to get you out of this mess where He can't do anything with you and get you off to heaven where He can clean you up there.

No!

God is determined to triumph in the midst of the darkness and the difficulty and the hard-pressed-ness of this world. God is determined to reveal the very life of Jesus out of and from within and through your dying body. Your mortal flesh is the revelation of Jesus Christ, as His power triumphs in the midst of the hard-pressed-ness, the perplexed-ness, the persecution, of this world. To reveal the

power of Christ, all that God is and all that God can do, right here, right now, in this age, through you and me.

We were created by God to be filled with all the fullness of God, to contain God in all that He is and all that He does, because God comes into this world seeking and saving that which was lost. God comes into this world in the midst of darkness, light will triumph when night is the darkest, love will win when hatred is most pronounced. God will demonstrate here, in the middle of our human experience, that He triumphs, that His word is sure, that everything He says is fulfilled and wins right here. God wins here!

You and I were created to contain all the fullness of God. To stretch into every dark crevice of this world and bring the light and the healing and the life and the victory of the Saviour who fills us.

This is the purpose of God.

