

**ENTERING INTO THE FOURTH STAGE OF THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE
TO ARRIVE AT A FULL-GROWN MAN
FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PURPOSE**

(Friday—Afternoon Session)

Message Six

**The Fourth Stage of the Experience of Life
(5)
Full of the Stature of Christ**

Scripture Reading: Heb. 6:1; Eph. 4:13, 16; Col. 2:7; S. S. 4:8; 6:13; 7:8

- I. When we speak about being full of the stature of Christ, we mean that our life in Christ has attained to the realm of full maturity—Heb. 6:1:**
- A. The growth of life is the increase of the stature of Christ within us.
 - B. We need the growth in the divine life to arrive at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ—Eph. 4:13.
- II. If we are lacking in spiritual stature—the stature of Christ—we cannot be built up as the Body of Christ—Col. 2:7; Eph. 4:16:**
- A. The words *being built up* in Colossians 2:7 do not refer directly to the building up of the Body of Christ; this expression denotes an increase in our spiritual stature, an increase of the stature of Christ within us.
 - B. For us to be built up does not first mean that we are built up as the church, the Body; rather, it means that we are built up in the Lord and that we experience an increase in stature.
 - C. The building up of the Body depends upon the individual and personal building up of all the believers; when we have become built-up members, we will be able to be built up with others in the Body—Eph. 4:16; Col. 2:7.
- III. The growth of the stature of Christ within us has five steps:**
- A. Christ enters into us to become our life—John 1:12-13; 3:15; 1 John 5:11-12; Col. 3:4.
 - B. Christ lives in us and gradually grows in us—Gal. 2:20; Eph. 4:15.
 - C. Christ is formed in us—Gal. 4:19.
 - D. Christ makes His home in us and is manifested through us—Eph. 3:17; Phil. 1:20-21a.
 - E. The result of Christ entering into us, living in us, being formed in us, and making His home in us and being manifested through us is that we are full of the stature of Christ and arrive at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:
 - 1. Every part of our being is filled with the elements of Christ; thus Christ becomes matured in us, and we are full of the stature of Christ—Eph. 3:19.
 - 2. This is what God planned and intended in eternity past for the believers in Christ to be—persons who are full of the stature of Christ—1:4-5.

IV. The experience of being full of the stature of Christ involves the following crucial points:

- A. Being full of the stature of Christ is not an individual matter—it is a corporate matter, a Body matter—4:13, 16:
 - 1. No believer can reach this stage individually; this experience is attainable only in the Body; only the Body can be full of the stature of Christ—vv. 13, 16.
 - 2. If we have experienced the breaking of our natural constitution, we will see the Body and realize that apart from the Body we cannot live or even be a Christian and that our spiritual life and experience are in the Body—Col. 2:19.
- B. Being full of the stature of Christ means that we are full of the life and nature of Christ—Gal. 4:19; Eph. 3:17; 1 Thes. 5:23:
 - 1. When a believer’s experience of life reaches the highest stage, the life and nature of Christ have permeated the inward parts of his being—Eph. 3:17.
 - 2. The more our mind, emotion, and will are dealt with and broken by the cross, the more Christ as the life-giving Spirit can enter into these parts; eventually, all the elements of our mind, emotion, and will become Christ, and the stature of Christ is fully grown in us—1 Cor. 15:45b.
- C. When a believer arrives at the full stature of Christ, he is in the same position as Christ, both in objective fact and in experience—Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1-3:
 - 1. Christ is seated in the heavens and is on the throne, and the mature believer also is seated in the heavens and on the throne—Eph. 1:20-21; Heb. 1:3; Rev. 5:6.
 - 2. As Christ Himself is unshakable in the heavens, so are those who are full of the stature of Christ and who share His position—Eph. 1:20; 2:6.
- D. One who is full of the stature of Christ reigns with Christ—Rom. 5:17, 21; 2 Tim. 2:12:
 - 1. Only those who have become mature in the life of Christ can reign with Christ—Rom. 5:10, 17, 21.
 - 2. When life matures, it can reign; when our life attains to the full stature of Christ, we will be able to reign with Christ.
- E. One who is full of the stature of Christ deals, together with Christ, with the enemy—Heb. 2:14; Phil. 2:9-11:
 - 1. When we are full of the stature of Christ and our life has reached full maturity, our spiritual warfare is over, for we are seated far above all in a victorious position and need only to deal with the enemy—S. S. 4:8.
 - 2. When we arrive at the stage of dealing, together with Christ, with the enemy, it is a proof that our life has reached the highest peak and that we are full of the stature of Christ.
- F. When the life of a Christian reaches this stage, every part of his being has come to maturity, and he is waiting to be raptured to enter into glory with Christ—Rev. 12:5; 14:1.

V. As a portrait of the progressive experience of an individual believer’s loving fellowship with Christ, Song of Songs reveals how a lover of the

Lord becomes full of the stature of Christ—1:9; 2:2, 14; 3:6-7, 9; 4:12; 6:4, 10, 13; 7:1, 8, 11; 8:1-5a:

- A. She has been called to live with Christ in His ascension, and as the sanctuary of God, she is as beautiful as Tirzah and as lovely as Jerusalem and as terrible as an army with banners—4:8; 6:4.
- B. She has attained to a transcendent and heavenly state and has been transformed into the heavenly bodies; she looks forth like the dawn, she is as beautiful as the moon, and she is as clear as the sun—v. 10a.
- C. In the maturity of Christ's life, the lover of Christ becomes the Shulammitte, signifying that she has become the reproduction and duplication of Christ to match Him for their marriage—v. 13; Rev. 19:7-8.
- D. She is likened to a palm tree, indicating that, in her mature stature, she has the fullness of the stature of Christ—S. S. 7:8; Eph 4:13.
- E. The Shulammitte wants to carry out with her Beloved a work that is for the entire world by sojourning from one place to another and working together with the Beloved for His Body—S. S. 7:11; Eph. 4:12.
- F. Through her growth and transformation, the lover of Christ becomes mature in life, and for the fulfillment of God's purpose, her hope is to be raptured through the redemption of her body—S. S. 8:1-5a; Rev. 12:5, 7-11; 14:1, 4b; 19:7.

Excerpts from the Ministry:

FULL OF THE STATURE OF CHRIST

When we speak about being full of the stature of Christ, we mean that our life in Christ has attained to the realm of full maturity. If we have really experienced all the lessons of life mentioned previously, then the life of Christ can be fully wrought into us. At this time, we will be full of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

The growth of the stature of Christ within us can be divided into five steps. First, Christ enters into us to become our life. Second, Christ living within us through the Holy Spirit gradually grows in us. Third, Christ is formed in us. Fourth, Christ is manifested through us. As Christ grows and is formed in us and manifested more and more, one day every part of our being will be filled with His elements; then we will attain to the fifth step—Christ becoming matured in us, or we being full of the stature of the fullness of Christ. At this time our experience of life in Christ has reached its climax.

Every saved Christian has the experience of the first step—Christ entering into them to become their life. If anyone has not experienced this first step, he is not saved; neither can he speak of the experiences of life that follow. Concerning the second step—Christ living and growing within us—every seeking Christian is in the process of this experience. As to the third step—Christ being formed in us—many have not attained to this stage. When we come to the fourth step of Christ being manifested through us, even fewer have experienced it. Finally, as to the fifth step—Christ being matured in us and we being matured in His life and full of His stature—people with this experience can rarely be found in all the churches on earth

today. Therefore, in this lesson of being full of the stature of Christ, there is not much that we can say. We simply list a few main points and discuss them briefly.

IN THE BODY

Concerning being full of the stature of Christ, we must first realize that none can attain to this stage individually. This experience is attainable only in the Body. It is entirely an experience that is gained in the Body.

A Christian who has experienced the brokenness of the flesh and the natural constitution will automatically see the Body of Christ. From this time forth, he deeply realizes from his experience that apart from the Body of Christ he cannot live—he can neither live in the Lord nor touch His presence. If he is detached from the Body of Christ, he cannot even be a Christian. Therefore, from the time he sees the Body of Christ until he becomes mature in the life of the Lord, his spiritual life is in the Body and so also is his whole spiritual experience. Hence, his being full of the stature of the fullness of Christ is also an experience in the Body.

Not only is it impossible for anyone to experience being full of the stature of the fullness of Christ outside of the Body, but, practically speaking, even in the Body, none can be full of the stature of Christ individually. To be full of the stature of Christ is a Body matter. Therefore, only the Body can be full of the stature of Christ.

Being full of the stature of the fullness of Christ is mentioned only once in the Bible—in Ephesians 4:13. In this passage the writer is not referring to individual saints, but rather pointing out the fact that one day the Body of Christ, which is the church, shall attain to such a stage. In Ephesians 3:18, we read that to apprehend the breadth, the length, the height, and the depth of Christ, we need a togetherness with all saints. From these two Scripture references we see that the stature of the fullness of Christ and the unsearchable dimensions of Christ cannot be experienced by ourselves individually but by being in the Body and joined together with all the saints.

Therefore, simply speaking, the maturity of the Christian life takes place in the Body. We should never expect that we can attain to the maturity of life individually. In fact, when one sees the Body, he can no more be individual.

BEING FULL OF THE LIFE AND NATURE OF CHRIST

Concerning the content, being full of the stature of Christ means that we are full of the life and nature of Christ. When a person's experience of life reaches its climax, the life and nature of Christ have permeated all the various parts of his being. The different parts of his spirit as well as the mind, will, and emotion of his soul are filled with the life and nature of Christ. Even his physical body at times is supported by this strength from the spirit. (Christians today cannot as yet be full of the element of Christ in their body; this can only be attained when we are raptured and transfigured.) At this time his life comes to maturity.

There are many among us who have believed in the Lord for years, but to this day there is but little of the element of Christ in them. Their thoughts are filled largely with themselves. Though there is little filthiness or corruption in their

thoughts, there is also little of Christ. This also means that in their thoughts there is very little of the stature of Christ. With regard to their will, though it may not rebel against God, oppose Him, or seem to be wrong in any way, the element within it is largely of themselves and very little of Christ. With regard to their emotion, their mood, desire, and inclination may be blameless, but they are still not filled with the element of Christ. This proves that the stature of Christ within them has not reached full measure and that they have made very little progress in spiritual growth.

How can we gradually be filled with the life and nature of Christ? We know that man has three parts: spirit, soul, and body. The spirit is the center, the body is the outer circumference, and between these two is the soul. When we are regenerated, Christ as the Spirit enters into our spirit. From this time, He lives and grows within us. First He fills us in our spirit; then He spreads outward from our spirit to the mind, emotion, and will in our soul. He uses the cross to deal with our self and our natural constitution, that is, to deal especially with our soul-life which is in our mind, emotion, and will. The more our mind, emotion, and will are dealt with and broken by the cross, the more Christ as the life-giving Spirit can enter into these parts. At a certain point, all the elements of our mind, emotion, and will are Christ; then the stature of Christ is fully grown in us.

At this time, all the considerations, concepts, ideas, and viewpoint of our mind; all the pleasure, anger, sorrow, joy, delight, and inclination of our emotion; and all the judgment, decision, intention, and choice of our will are filled with the element of Christ. Our mind is like the mind of Christ, our delight is His delight, and our intention is His intention. In other words, when we think, it is Christ who thinks; when we delight, it is He who delights; and when we intend, it is He who intends. At this time, every part of our inward being has been dealt with by the cross, and there is no place for self or the natural constitution; all the ground has been given over to Christ. We can say that our whole being is filled with Christ's life and nature...This we call the maturity of life, or being full of the stature of Christ.

SHARING THE SAME POSITION WITH CHRIST

When a person arrives at the full stature of Christ, he is in the same position as Christ, not only in objective fact but also in experience. Christ is seated in the heavens, so also is he; Christ is on the throne, and so is he. At this time he is not easily shaken; neither can he fall easily.

As Christ Himself is unshakable in the heavens, so are those who are full of the stature of Christ and who share the same position as Christ. He changes not because of place or time; no matter what kind of environment he encounters, he remains seated in the heavens, unchanged. He shares the same position as Christ. This is the condition of one who is full of the stature of Christ.

REIGNING WITH CHRIST

Another condition of one who is full of the stature of Christ is that he reigns with Christ. One must attain to the position of reigning with Christ in order that

his life might become mature. If we desire to learn whether or not we are mature in life, we should ascertain whether or not we can reign in the spiritual life. We cannot ask a six-year-old child to rule; even if we crown him king and give him reign, with everything subject to his control, he will run off to play ball. If the life is insufficient, there is no possibility of reigning. When one's life attains to maturity, he reigns automatically. Consider the woman in the Song of Songs. It was not until her inner life became bright as the morning, beautiful as the moon, and clear as the sun, that she manifested her majesty and was terrible as an army with banners (6:10). If one has not attained to this transcendent and heavenly state and yet claims himself to be experienced and standing in a high position, he is only displaying his own glory and power; it is an ugly display and certainly not reigning. Therefore, reigning is not only a matter of position but also of life. In order to reign, one needs the position and much more, the life.

This is true not only of the spiritual life but also of the physical life. A statement made by a child is of very little significance. The same statement, in the same situation, at the same time, when spoken by an adult, has some measure of weight, and when spoken by an elderly person of seventy or eighty years of age, is more weighty. The weight of the word is measured according to age. When a certain age is attained, the word has depth. In like manner, authority is based on life. When life matures, it can reign. Therefore, the experience of reigning depends on the maturity in life.

In Numbers 17, in order to prove that Aaron was invested with His authority, God caused his rod to bud, blossom, and bear almonds. This budding, blossoming, and fruit-bearing is the story of life. The rod represents authority. Among the twelve rods, only one budded and bore fruit. This proves that only those whose life matures can reign.

When our life attains unto maturity and fullness, we will be raptured and transfigured. At that time, we will be seated with Christ on the throne and reign with Him. All that we are will be full of the stature of the fullness of Christ, and all that we do will be to reign with Christ. The same principle applies today to the maturity of life. When our life attains to the full stature of Christ, then we are able to reign with Christ.

TOGETHER WITH CHRIST, DEALING WITH THE ENEMY

Another issue of one who is full of the stature of Christ is that of dealing, together with Christ, with the enemy. To deal with the enemy is to fight the warfare. However, we should not use the term *warfare* here, because it does not convey the meaning of full maturity in life. When we are really full of the stature of Christ and our life has attained unto full maturity, our spiritual warfare is over. Then we are seated far above all in a victorious position and need only to deal with the enemy.

It was in the same process that the Lord Jesus fought the battle. From the time of His temptation at the beginning of His ministry, He continually fought with Satan. But when He ascended to the throne, He ceased fighting. Nevertheless, He continues to deal with the enemy, until eventually he will be subdued beneath His

feet and become His footstool (Heb. 1:13). When we attain to the stage of dealing, together with Christ, with the enemy, it is proof that our life has attained to its highest peak.

For a victorious one, there is no need to fight. All he needs to do is to be situated in a certain place; then all the robbers and prowlers will disappear completely, daring no more to act foolishly or do evil. His awe-inspiring reputation has been gained through much warfare in the past. This example explains the principle of Christ in dealing with the enemy. If neither Christ nor His name were in this universe today, imagine how much more violent Satan would be! It is simply because Christ is dealing with the enemy today that wherever the name of Christ is lifted up, the enemy flees, and the power of darkness vanishes.

Sometimes we see the same condition in the church or in the work. As long as there are one or more who have a deeper life, trouble can hardly arise in the church or in the work. Once those persons leave, however, many problems arise. This is because they are in authority dealing, together with Christ, with the enemy. Their presence there subdues the enemy. It is as if there were no need for dealing, but in reality their presence is the dealing. Therefore, dealing with the enemy is superior to fighting the warfare.

When the life of a Christian reaches this stage, every part of his being comes to maturity. He is waiting to be raptured to enter into glory with Christ. The Bible uses the reaping of the harvest to illustrate the rapture of the saints. When the harvest is ripe, it is ready to be reaped. Therefore, we should not view the matter of rapture merely as prophecy. Rapture is a matter of life. As the life of the church or the life of the saints grows and matures continuously in Christ, at a certain stage it becomes fully ripened and, in the sight of the Lord, is ready to be reaped from the field of the world into the barn of heaven. This occurs at the time of the Lord's return, the time of the rapture of the church (Rev. 14). When we are raptured, we will be brought by the Lord into His glory to enjoy the glory with Him. Thus, the purpose of God's salvation is fulfilled.

Therefore, when the life experience of a Christian attains to the full stature of Christ, it has reached the climax. He shares the same position with Christ, and he reigns and deals with the enemy together with Christ. His whole being is filled with the element of Christ. Aside from the fact that the body has not yet been transfigured into the body of glory, all else has reached its highest or final point. The life experience of a saint in Christ thus comes to a conclusion. Other than waiting to be raptured and entering into glory, there is nothing else left to be desired. (*The Experience of Life*, pp. 373-381)