

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

(Saturday—Afternoon Session)

Message Nine

**Arriving at a Full-grown Man**

(3)

**Carrying Out the Stewardship of God  
to Present Every Man Full-grown in Christ  
and  
Practicing the Church Life  
in the Consciousness of the One New Man**

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:24-29; 3:10-11; 4:7-17

- I. In order to arrive at a full-grown man for the fulfillment of God's purpose, we need to carry out the stewardship of God to present every man full-grown in Christ—Col. 1:24-29:**
- A. The economy of God has become the stewardship of God given to all believers—Eph. 3:2, 9; Col. 1:25:
    - 1. In Ephesians 3 Paul uses the Greek word *oikonomia* with two denotations:
      - a. In relation to God *oikonomia* denotes God's economy—v. 9.
      - b. In relation to us *oikonomia* denotes the stewardship—v. 2.
    - 2. The stewardship of God is according to the economy of God; with God it is a matter of economy, and with us it is a matter of stewardship.
    - 3. Those who bear responsibility in the churches need to share in the stewardship of God—Titus 1:7, 9:
      - a. The elders should take the lead to dispense the riches of Christ into others.
      - b. All those who take the lead in the Lord's recovery and have the responsibility for the care of the churches need to realize that they have a part in such a divine stewardship.
  - B. If we would carry out the stewardship of God, our concept of preaching the gospel needs to be uplifted—1 Cor. 9:16-17; Matt. 28:19-20:
    - 1. The first aspect of the God-ordained way to practice the New Testament economy is to save sinners by contacting them where they are—Luke 19:1-10.
    - 2. We should preach the gospel not merely to win souls but to carry out the stewardship of God for the economy of God by dispensing God into others.
    - 3. We must go out to disciple the nations in order to make them members of the Body of Christ; this stewardship has been given to the entire Body of Christ—Matt. 28:19-20.
  - C. We need to follow the pattern of Paul to be a faithful minister of the church according to the stewardship of God—1 Tim. 1:16; Col. 1:24-25; 1 Cor. 4:1-5:
    - 1. A steward is a household administrator, a dispenser, one who dispenses the household supply to its members; the apostles were appointed by the Lord

to be such stewards, dispensing God's mysteries, which are Christ as the mystery of God and the church as the mystery of Christ, to the believers—Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:4; 1 Cor. 4:1.

2. The fact that Paul mentions the afflictions of Christ in connection with the stewardship of God indicates that the stewardship can be carried out only through suffering—Col. 1:24; 1 Pet. 4:1, 10; 2 Cor. 6:4; cf. Ps. 91:1-2; 31:20.
3. Like Paul, we need to labor and struggle to present every man full-grown in Christ—Col. 1:28-29:
  - a. In order to present every man full-grown in Christ, we must minister Christ to them as the portion of the saints and as the all-inclusive One who is the centrality and universality of God's economy—vv. 12, 15, 18-19, 27; 2:3, 9, 16-17; 3:4, 11.
  - b. In order to present every man full-grown in Christ, we must minister the unsearchable riches of Christ for the building up of the church to fulfill God's eternal purpose—Eph. 3:8-11.
  - c. In order to present every man full-grown in Christ, we must complete the word of God with the full revelation of Christ and the church—Col. 1:25-28.
  - d. In order to present every man full-grown in Christ, we must minister Christ as the mystery of God—2:2, 9.
  - e. In order to present every man full-grown in Christ, we must minister the church as the mystery of Christ—Eph. 3:4; 1:22-23.
  - f. In order to present every man full-grown in Christ, we must minister Christ as life to His members so that they may live by Him and grow with Him unto maturity—Col. 3:4; John 6:57; 14:19; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 4:13, 15.

**II. In order to arrive at a full-grown man for the fulfillment of God's purpose, we need to practice the church life in the consciousness of the one new man—v. 13; Col. 3:10-11; 4:7-17:**

- A. The record in the book of Acts regarding the church reveals that the believers were church-conscious—5:11; 8:1, 3; 9:31; 11:22, 26; 12:1, 5; 13:1; 14:23, 27; 15:3-4, 22, 41; 16:5; 18:22; 20:17, 28.
- B. We need to have the consciousness of the Body, a Body-consciousness—1 Cor. 12:26-27; Rom. 12:15; Eph. 4:16; 2:21-22:
  1. In order to live and move with other members of the Body, we need to have the consciousness of the Body.
  2. For the Lord's move in His recovery both locally and universally, we all need to be Body-conscious in one accord—Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 15:25; Rom. 15:6.
  3. The more we are conscious of the Body, the more we will care for the feeling of the Body and for the peace of the Body—12:4-5, 15; 1 Cor. 12:26; Eph. 2:14-16; 4:3; Col. 3:15.
- C. With Paul there was a consciousness of the universal one new man, and in the Lord's recovery today we also need to have the consciousness of the one new man—Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10-11:
  1. Because Paul, a faithful steward in God's economy (1 Cor. 4:1-2; 9:16-17),

was conscious of the one new man, what was in his heart was not simply a particular local church or a certain saint but the universal one new man—Col. 3:10-11; 4:7-17.

2. Colossians 4:7-17 is a practical illustration of the revelation of the one new man and of the consciousness of the one new man:
  - a. Both the saints in Colossae and Paul, and those with him, were members of the one new man in actuality and had the consciousness of the one new man.
  - b. Paul's word regarding the reading of letters proves that there was no difference between the church in Laodicea and the church in Colossae; his word implies fellowship, oneness, harmony, and intimate contact—v. 16.
  - c. In spite of all the differences among nationalities, races, and classes, there was on earth in a practical way the one new man created in Christ Jesus; there were not merely local churches in various cities—there was the one new man in a real and practical way.
- D. We need to see that all the local churches in the different countries are one new man—Eph. 2:15, 21-22:
  1. All the churches are not merely individual local churches but are the one new man—Col. 3:10-11; 4:15-16.
  2. We cannot say that each local church is a new man; rather, all the local churches on earth are the one new man:
    - a. The one new man is not local—it is universal.
    - b. The one new man is a matter not merely of individual localities and individual churches but of all the churches on earth corporately.
  3. Since all the local churches are one new man, in deciding a matter in our local church, we need to consider the churches throughout the whole earth—Rev. 22:16a; 1 Thes. 2:14; Rom. 16:4; 2 Cor. 11:28.

### **Excerpts from the Ministry:**

#### **THE STEWARDSHIP OF GOD**

Not many ministers or workers in today's Christianity carry out the stewardship of God. This means that not many are actually dispensing the riches of Christ into the members of God's royal family. The stewardship of God is needed for this rich, all-inclusive, preeminent Christ to be dispensed into the members of His Body.

This stewardship is the ministry in the New Testament. The New Testament ministry is the dispensing of the unsearchable riches of the all-inclusive Christ into the members of God's family. The apostle Paul dispensed the riches of Christ into the saints. This is what we are doing in the ministry today.

The stewardship of God is according to the economy of God. With God it is a matter of economy; with us it is a matter of stewardship. All the saints, no matter how insignificant they may seem to be, have a ministry according to God's economy. This means that every saint can dispense the riches of Christ into others.

The desire of God's heart is to dispense Himself into man. This is the central point of the whole Bible. God's economy is to carry out the dispensing of Himself

into man. We share in this economy through our stewardship, our ministry of dispensing the riches of Christ. After the riches of Christ have been dispensed into us, we need to take up the burden to dispense them into others. With God these riches are His economy; with us they are the stewardship; and when they are dispensed by us into others, they become God's dispensation. When God's economy reaches us, it becomes our stewardship. When we carry out our stewardship by dispensing Christ into others, it becomes the dispensation of God into them. Hence, we have the economy, the stewardship, and the dispensation.

Those who bear responsibility in the local churches need to share in the stewardship of God. This means that the elders should be those who take the lead to dispense the riches of Christ into others. Although Christ is all-inclusive and pre-eminent, there is still the need for Him to be dispensed into the members of God's family. This dispensation takes place through the stewardship. Hence, between the unsearchably rich Christ and the members of His Body, there is the need of the stewardship. All those who take the lead in the Lord's recovery and have responsibility for the care of the churches need to realize that they have a part in such a divine stewardship. We are not here to carry on an ordinary Christian work. For instance, we are not concerned merely with teaching the Bible in an outward way. Rather, we desire to serve the riches of Christ to all the members of God's family. In our conversation with one another, we need to minister the riches of Christ. Even when we are invited to the homes of the saints for dinner, we need to dispense the riches of Christ. This is the stewardship of God.

Every member of the Body of Christ has a part in this stewardship. In Ephesians 3:8 Paul refers to himself as "less than the least of all saints." This indicates that Paul was even smaller than we are. If Paul could be a steward, then we also can be stewards and dispense the riches of Christ into others. In preaching the gospel, for example, we should not be concerned merely with winning souls. Rather, we should preach the gospel to carry out the stewardship of dispensing the riches of Christ into others. Day by day we need to fulfill our stewardship by dispensing the Triune God into man. Praise the Lord that we all have a share in this stewardship! We all have the privilege of dispensing the unsearchable riches of Christ into others. Therefore, we should not merely preach the gospel or teach the Bible; we should also impart the riches of Christ to others.

May the Lord open our eyes to see that we all have part in the stewardship of God. In every aspect of the practical church life, even in such things as ushering and cleaning the meeting hall, we need to dispense Christ into others. Firstly, we need to be filled with Christ and then minister the riches of Christ to others. This is our stewardship. (*Life-study of Colossians*, pp. 90-92)

#### **PRESENTING EVERY MAN FULL-GROWN IN CHRIST**

In Colossians 1:28 Paul says that he announced Christ. Here Paul does not say that he taught Christ or preached Christ, but that he announced Christ. As he announced Him, he was "warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom" in order to "present every man full-grown in Christ." Paul's ministry, whether in

announcing Christ or in warning and teaching every man in all wisdom, was to minister Christ to others so that they could be perfect and complete by maturing with Christ unto full growth.

To become full-grown in Christ is a matter of life. Christ must be added into us. Then we need to grow in Christ and gradually gain more of the stature of Christ. Eventually, as Christ is wrought into us, we shall become full-grown in Christ.

The goal of Paul's ministry was to present every man full-grown in Christ. Whenever I consider this phrase, "present every man full-grown," as used in this verse, I sense how short I am. I am warned by the Spirit within me regarding my ministry. I am concerned about how many I shall be able to present full-grown in Christ. The burden of this responsibility weighs upon me greatly. Inwardly I am charged to announce Christ and to warn others and teach them regarding Christ so that I may present them full-grown in Christ.

Paul's concept in 1:28 is completely different from that held by Christian ministers and pastors today. Paul's concept concerning his ministry was that of dispensing Christ into others so that they may grow in Christ to maturity. He knew that Christ had to be added into the believers until they became full-grown in Christ. We need to have the same concept as Paul. As the elders care for the saints in the churches, they should seek to present all the dear ones full-grown in Christ. (*Life-study of Colossians*, pp. 118-119)

#### THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE NEW MAN

Think of how many names are mentioned in Colossians 4:7-17: Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, Barnabas, Justus, Epaphras, Luke, Demas, Nymphas, and Archippus. Paul also refers to the brothers in Laodicea, the church in the house of Nymphas, and the church of the Laodiceans. (The church in the house of Nymphas was the local church in Laodicea; it met in his house.) All these names indicate that with Paul there was a sense, a consciousness, of the new man.

This new man who was living on earth in a practical way was constituted of those who according to culture and social status were Greeks, Jews, circumcision, uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slaves, and freemen. However, as we have pointed out, the actual constituent of the new man is Christ and Christ alone. Because Christ is the unique constituent of the new man, there should be no differences among the believers who are part of this new man.

Furthermore, there should be no differences among the churches, for example, no difference between the church in Laodicea and the church in Colossae. This is proved by Paul's word regarding the reading of letters: "And when this letter is read among you, cause that it may be read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you also read the one from Laodicea" (v. 16). What Paul wrote to the Colossians was also for the Laodiceans, and what he wrote to the Laodiceans was for the Colossians. What fellowship, oneness, harmony, and intimate contact this implies!

#### A PORTRAIT OF THE NEW MAN

As we read through these eleven verses, we find that they are a detailed portrait

of the new man living in the Mediterranean area. The existence and living of the new man in a practical way is a matter of tremendous significance. The Roman Empire covered a vast area and embraced many different peoples. In the attempt to unify the people culturally, the Roman Empire used the Greek language. However, the Roman Empire was not successful in uniting the various peoples. The differences among the nations, races, and social classes remained. The Jews were still Jews, and the Greeks were still Greeks. The distinction between slaves and masters was by no means eliminated. But in spite of all the differences among nationalities, races, and classes, there was on earth in a practical way the one new man created in Christ Jesus. There were not merely local churches in various cities—there was one new man in a real and practical way. (*Life-study of Colossians*, pp. 258-260)

#### **THE BODY BEING FOR MOVING AND THE NEW MAN BEING FOR LIVING**

The Body is a matter of life, and the new man is a matter of person. The Body is for moving; it is an instrument for action. Thus, it was in one Body that the Lord Jesus reconciled both the Jewish and Gentile believers to God. This reconciliation is a Body matter. In the past we thought that when you were saved, you were reconciled to God, and when I was saved, I was reconciled to God. In other words, we thought that we were individually saved and individually reconciled to God. This is an erroneous concept. We must see that we who were far off and separated from God were reconciled to God not individually but in a corporate instrument. What is this instrument? This instrument is the Body of Christ. In one Body both the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers have been reconciled to God. This shows us that the Body is an instrument used by Christ.

When the church preaches the gospel, this is an action, and this action is in the Body and is carried out by the Body. Our body is an instrument for moving. Our life needs to increase and grow in order that our body might be healthy and strong enough to meet the need of our moving.

Then what about the new man? The new man is not for moving; the new man is for decision-making and for living. As a human being you may not move at all, but you still must live. The Body is for moving, and the new man is for living. Concerning the new man, Ephesians 4:24 says that it was created according to God in righteousness and holiness. Righteousness and holiness are conditions of our living. Thus, living is entirely a matter of the new man. The new man is for living, and eighty to ninety percent of our living is in making decisions. Therefore, you can see two things: the church as the Body is for moving, and the church as the new man is for living by making decisions. On the one hand, the church is the Body of Christ, and we take Christ as our life to act, to work, and to bear responsibilities. On the other hand, the church is the new man, and we take Christ as our person to make plans and to decide on how we should live. Whether it is the Body or the new man, whether in working and moving or in living and in deciding, everything is corporate; nothing is individual. You must see that your living today is the living of the new man, a corporate living, and your decisions are corporate decisions and not your personal decisions. For example, you may be trying to decide and to conclude whether you should open a factory or become an educator. There is a kind of living here. If you see

that you are a part in the new man, you will not want to decide by yourself as the person. You will want to take Christ as your person together with all the other parts in the new man. At this time, when you are about to make a decision concerning your human life, you will not take yourself as the person; rather, you will take Christ as your person in the new man to make the decision. When you live your life by taking Christ as your person, your living will be the living of the new man.

The living of the new man has two characteristics: one is righteousness and the other is holiness. Righteousness is according to God's ways, and holiness is according to God's nature. When all the things in your living, whether great or small, are exactly the same in their nature as God's nature and exactly the same in their ways as God's ways, then there is holiness and righteousness. However, this kind of living is not the individual living of sanctification referred to in Christianity. Rather, the kind of living meant here is that you live a life in the new man by Christ as the person and that He is the One who makes all the decisions in you. Thus, whatever is lived out is righteousness and holiness. This is not related to our move or work; it is related only to our living. This is the aspect of the new man. The other aspect is the Body. As the Body, we move. Christ is our Head, so we move, and our moving is not based on our own strength or our own life but upon Christ as our life and strength. Furthermore, our move is not as individuals.

These two matters show that we cannot be individualistic. We must see that we are a corporate Body, and we are a corporate new man. Our living is corporate, and our moving is corporate. In our moving we take Christ as our life, and in our living we take Christ as our person. In the Body, Christ is our life, and in the new man, Christ is our person. In the Body we are members one of another, and in the new man we all have one mouth to speak the same thing. This is the church. (*One Body, One Spirit, and One New Man*, pp. 63-66)