

Unto Fulness #4 - Some Practical Applications

by Stephen Kaung

The sermon emphasizes the call to live in the fullness of Christ through a responsive heart, vision, and practical applications in various aspects of life.

Duration: 1:14:46

Scripture: Acts 2:42, 1 Corinthians 10:1-5, Ephesians 1:22-23, Philippians 2:12-13, Colossians 1:18, 1 Timothy 4:16

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the principle of bearing much fruit through dying. He then goes on to talk about four areas where this principle can be applied: personal life, corporate life, ministry, and the recovery of the testimony of Jesus. The speaker emphasizes that the life God has called us to live is one of fullness, and any style of life that falls short of this is not what God has ordained for us. He also highlights the importance of having a vision of Christ and a passion for Him, using the apostle Paul as an example. The speaker concludes by urging the audience to forget their own conditions and focus on the provision God has made for them to live a life of fullness.

Transcript

This is the last meeting of this conference. I often remember what our dear brother Austin Spock says. He said, in the Bible you'll find this word, finally.

And when you see that word, finally, you may think that this is the end. But he said, this word, finally, in the original, it actually means gathering up all that has gone before and raise it up to a higher level. That is finally.

And I do hope that our last meeting will be like this. This is not the end, but this will be the beginning. We mentioned at the very beginning that God is calling us to His fullness.

This is just but another way to put that God is calling us to Himself. Because our God is the God of fullness. And He cannot and He will not call us into something less than what He Himself is.

This is the love of God. God has called us into His fullness. And this calling is according to purpose.

That is to His own purpose. This calling is according to His grace. Because it is only the grace of God that will bring us into that purpose.

And we do praise and thank God that He has called us. And it is extremely important for us as to the way we respond to His calling. God's calling never changes.

Knows no repentance. And He who calls us is faithful. But then we have a responsibility on our part.

And that is we need to respond to His calling. You remember that verse in the scripture it said many are called but few are chosen. How do we respond to God's call unto His fullness? Do we respond as David did? Even though we may not fully understand the scope of His calling.

And I believe that no one really understands. And yet we do know that He is calling us with a tremendous calling. He is calling us to Himself.

Even though we may not fully understand. And yet we need to have the heart of David. We need to go to the Lord and say Lord who are we? But this is the way that you do things.

Perform. Fulfill. According to what you have said.

And I think this should be our heart attitude. We mentioned that because God is infinite. And we are so finite.

Therefore we need vision. Unless God does reveal Himself to us. We will never be able to know Him.

Unless God shows us His fullness. We will be contented with the little that we have. So we need vision.

We need a vision of the fullness of Christ. We need to see that our Christ is not small at all. Our Christ is the fullness of the Godhead.

As we cannot phantom the fullness of the Godhead. So there is no way for us to know the depths of the fullness of Christ. And it is into the fullness that we are to receive.

As we find in Colossians 2, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. And we are complete in Him. We need to have a vision of the fullness of the church.

Because the church is the body. The fullness of Him who fills all and in all. In other words, the church is nothing less than the fullness of Christ.

That is the vision that we need to see. And of course, if God should reveal to us of the fullness that is in Him, it should create in us a hunger and thirst after it. You know, sometimes God first creates such a dissatisfaction in us.

As Brother Spock said, not the wrong kind of dissatisfaction that we know very well. And it does not help us at all. But we need to have a kind of dissatisfaction, a holy dissatisfaction.

We are not satisfied with what we are now, with our present situation. We know that we are not what we should be. And because of this, we are restless, we are dissatisfied, and we are hungry and thirsty after something more that is in Christ.

And as we are seeking for something more of Him, He will show us the way. It may come to us as a surprise, and it often does. We want fullness.

But the more you want fullness, the more you will find you are being emptied. Because the law of fullness is through emptiness. As our Lord Jesus emptied Himself of all the glory and honor and position and power, and humbled Himself as a man, God has highly exalted Him, and has given Him a name that is above every name, and to that name every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.

The way to fullness is through emptiness. The way to real life is through death. Unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die in a bite alone, but if it shall die, it will bear much fruit.

This is the divine principle that governs the eternal purpose of God. Now, this morning we would like to share together on some practical application of fullness. We would like to consider four areas.

Number one, personal life. Number two, corporate life. Number three, ministry.

And number four, the recovery of the testimony of Jesus. What is Christian life? What is the life that God has called us to live? What is the life that God has ordained for us, even before the foundation of the world? If we read the word of God, we will find that so far as the life that God has ordained for us to live, there is only one style, one kind of life to live. It is true, we do find in the word of God, descriptions of a kind of life that is abnormal.

For instance, in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, we find it. We find that it refers to the children of Israel. They all came out of Egypt.

They were all baptized unto Moses. They all drank the spiritual drink that came out of the smitten rock. They all ate the spiritual food, the manna that came down from heaven.

And yet the Bible said God was not pleased with them. Why? Because even though they came out of Egypt, and they knew the provisions of God in their lives, and yet they were lusters, they were murmurers, they were fornicators, they were idolaters, they did not live the life that God had called them to live. They did not live the life that God had provided for them.

Instead you find they live within themselves. They live according to their flesh. And because of this, they all fell in the wilderness.

And the apostle Paul used this to admonish, to warn the Corinthian believers. Why? Because this is the very way, the very style, that the Corinthian believers are living. They are carnal.

They obeyed in Christ. They never grew up. And they are self-centered, living according to the flesh.

Now these words are given not as a permission that we can live like that. These words are given as a warning, as an admonition, telling us that this is not the kind of life that we should live. If we live this kind of life, we displease God.

If we live this kind of life, we do not know what God has offered to us. We do not know God's provision for us. In a sense, God has made provision, and yet we do not make use of the provision.

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, so far as our personal life, individual life, is concerned, let us remember that we are called to live only one kind of life. And that is the life of fullness. Any style of life that is less than fullness is not what God has called us to live, or has ordained us to live.

Now think for just a moment, the life that God has given to us. You know, when we believe in the Lord Jesus, we receive a new life. And this new life is called eternal life.

Now what is eternal life? I hope that everyone here knows that you have eternal life because you have believed in the Lord Jesus. He that has the Son has life. We who have the Lord Jesus, we have the eternal life in us.

This is the life that God has given to us. But dear brothers and sisters, what is eternal life? Probably we think of eternal life more in terms of time. That it is timeless.

That we will continue to live after we die, and live on and on. But dear brothers and sisters, eternal life is more than a matter of time. It is true, eternal life is timeless.

It begins now, and it never ends. But eternal life is more of a matter of quality. In other words, eternal life is a life of the first quality.

It is a life of fullness. This life has been demonstrated to us in the life of our Lord Jesus when He was on earth. We find in Him a life.

A life of fullness. A victorious life. An obedient life.

A life in harmony, in perfect harmony with God. A life that is glorious. And nothing less than this very life is now residing in each one of us who believe.

Brothers and sisters, do you know that a life that now resides in us, that eternal life, is nothing but that life which our Lord Jesus has lived for thirty-three years on this earth, and has demonstrated to us what kind of a life that is? It is nothing less than that. It is the very life that Christ has lived on earth for thirty-three years. Now that very life is in you and in me.

And this life is meant to live. I believe we have all discovered that we cannot live a Christian life by ourselves. We have tried.

After we believe in the Lord Jesus, I believe we have all tried. We try to live a life like Christ, but we find that it is impossible. It is beyond us.

We need vision. We need revelation. We need to see that for us to live is Christ.

In other words, we have been crucified with Christ. When Christ died on the cross, God has not only put Him on the cross, but God has put all of us with Him and in Him to the cross. Because God said we are no good.

God said He cannot improve upon us. God said He is finished with us. Therefore, in Christ we died.

When Christ died, we died. Therefore, today, we who live, we live by Him who lives in us. Dear brothers and sisters, remember, it is Christ who now lives in us.

He is our life. And because He is our life, can you imagine that He will live a very different life, a much lower life, a poor life, a weak life, than what He lived two thousand years ago? It is impossible. We need to see that it is Christ who lives in us.

And if we allow Him to live, if we believe Him that He lives in us, and if we let Him live in us, that life is a life of fullness. Colossians 2, verse 9, it says, All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. You know, this we find twice in the letter to the Colossians.

In chapter 1, verse 19, it said, All the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Him. And then in chapter 2, verse 9, it said, The fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. Now, I do not know if we can make this distinction.

Probably this is one way to look at it. And that is, in the first chapter, it pleased God that the fullness should dwell in Christ. Probably that refers to eternity.

In other words, from eternity to eternity, the fullness of the Godhead dwells in the Son. He is the fullness of the Godhead. There is no gap.

Eternally this is true. In eternity past, the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him. In eternity to come, the fullness of the Godhead still dwells in Him.

The fullness of the Godhead make His permanent home in Him. And there is no gap. But then when you come to chapter 2, verse 9, it says, All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily.

Now, I wonder whether that refers to the days that our Lord Jesus was on earth. Now, if this is the case, then you'll find, even when He was on earth, taking the form of a man, emptying Himself of all the glory and honor and all these things, and yet you find, all the fullness of the Godhead still dwells in Him in a bodily form. In other words, when the Lord Jesus was on earth, He is the very embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead.

And this fullness of the Godhead is now being manifested in a bodily form that we can see and hear and touch. And not only that, but this fullness of the Godhead is now made available to us. Because our Lord Jesus has come, He has died, He was buried, and He is risen from the dead.

So today, the fullness of the Godhead is not only in Him, but the fullness of Godhead is now made available to us. The fullness of the Godhead resides in Him. But now the fullness of Godhead is open to us.

And that's the reason why it says, ye are complete in Him. The word complete is the same word made full in Him. Not only He is full, but now His fullness is available to us that we are made full.

This is a revelation that we have to receive. Brothers and sisters, forget your condition for a while. You know oftentimes we are so shut up with our own condition.

It is as if, in the Chinese we have a proverb, you sit at the bottom of a well, and you look up to heaven, and you find heaven is just that small. Because that's all you can see. And brothers and sisters, how true it is, you know we are always conscious of our own condition.

And because of this, our horizon is so narrowed, we can only see that very small area. And we cannot see the vast horizon. Brothers and sisters, the only way to catch a vision is, forget yourself for a while.

Do nothing about your condition now. But look up, and see what God has done for us. All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ.

And it is bodily. We have seen Him, we have heard Him, we have contemplated, we have touched Him. This is the fullness of the Godhead.

But thank God, it is not only there is one man in whom all the fullness of Godhead dwells and is demonstrated. But you find that He has made it available to us through that eternal redemption that He has accomplished. Through His death and resurrection.

This fullness is now our portion. It is made available for us. And if you read Colossians 2, it says, ye are complete in Him.

All the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily. There is no question. And then it follows, ye are complete in Him.

It does not say ye shall be complete in Him. Ye will be complete in Him. You probably will be completed in Him.

No. It says ye are complete in Him. In other words, the provision has already been made.

God has already given us this provision to live a life of fullness. It is ours. Ye are made full in Him.

So far as God is concerned, it is already done. But of course, so far as we are concerned, there is that subjective side. In other words, objectively speaking, through the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, this fullness is given to us.

Therefore, we are made full in Him. God has done it. Now subjectively, the Holy Spirit, who dwells in each one of us, it is His work to bring us into that fullness, or to bring that fullness into us, so that that fullness will become our experience.

And, dear brothers and sisters, this takes time. What God has done in Christ concerning this offer of fullness, it is done once and for all. It has been perfected.

There is nothing that can be added on. It is yours. It is given.

But, dear brothers and sisters, so far as the subjective side of experience is concerned, it is true. We need to exploit. We need to possess it.

We need to put our feet down. And, every spot where our foot puts, it is ours. The Holy Spirit cannot do anything other than what Christ has already accomplished.

All He does is to apply that which Christ has already accomplished, and apply it to us. He communicates what God has already given in Christ. He communicates it to us, so that we may enter into it and experience that fullness.

So, brothers and sisters, we find the Apostle Paul in Philippians chapter 3. You find this is the heart attitude that we shall have today. Here you find this man, a Pharisee, who was filled with all the credentials of Judaism. And he was proud of these things.

But on the road to Damascus, when the Lord met him in transforming him, you find what he said. He said, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. He caught a glimpse of the Lord Jesus.

And because he caught a glimpse of the Lord, that stirs within him, craves within him, such a longing for the Lord Jesus. He is willing to count everything as loss. Nothing.

Willing to empty himself, let everything go, in order that he may gain Christ. Oh, that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his suffering, being conformed to his death, that I may arrive at the out-resurrection from among the dead. Brothers and sisters, here you find Paul, he had a vision of the fullness of Christ.

And because that vision of the fullness of Christ, he pursued, that creating him one passion. He has only one passion, and that passion is to know Christ. Dear brothers and sisters, do we have this passion within us? There was a man, whose name was Zinzendorf, probably you have read of him in church history.

He came of a noble birth, but when he was a little boy, I think he was four or six, I don't quite remember, when he was a little boy, he came to know the Lord in a very real way. And he loved the Lord. He often sat on the window of his castle.

He wanted to do something for the Lord, but a little child, what could he do? So he used to write, Jesus loves you, and things like that, and throw it out of the window, hopefully somebody may pick it up. That is the way to express his love for God. And after he graduated from university, he travelled in Europe, because that was the way they educate the nobles.

And when people of his same age came to Paris, they were lost in Paris. But to Zinzendorf, it was nothing. It was nothing.

And then he travelled to Dösendorf, and in a gathering he saw a picture, of the Lord Jesus, drawn by an artist, and that's another story. And when he saw that picture, and underneath that picture he said, I do all things for thee, what hast thou done for me? And he just stood there and fixed. Until the guardian, the warden of the museum, had his shoulder and said, it's time to close the museum.

He went to his hotel room. He offered himself to the Lord. And God used him, to raise up a tremendous move, of the Spirit of God.

The morality mission. And Zinzendorf said, I have only one passion, Jesus. Oh brothers and sisters, do we have a vision of Christ? If we really see Him, should it not increase, create within us a passion, a passion for Christ.

And that is the passion you'll find, in the Apostle Paul. To know Him, that's all I want. I'm willing to give up everything, anything, but to gain Him.

And even at the time, when Paul wrote this letter, to the Philippians, he was in prison. He was in the latter years of his life. And yet he said, I do not say I have already attained.

I want to be apprehended. He has apprehended me, and I want to apprehend Him, just as He has apprehended me. Dear brothers and sisters, surely the Lord has apprehended you.

If the Lord has not apprehended you, you will not be here. But have you apprehended Him, as He has apprehended you? Are you contented, thinking that you know it all? You have it all? You stay put? No more progress? No more Christ? Oh, brothers and sisters, Paul said, I forget that which is behind me, and press on towards the goal. The on high calling that God has called me to.

And what is that on high calling? It can be nothing less than the fullness of Christ. And Paul said, anyone that is perfect, anyone that is mature, that is growing, this ought to be his mind. This ought to be his heart attitude.

But of course, we go one step at a time. So brothers and sisters, let us remember that the fullness of Christ is not a theory for us to speculate. The fullness of Christ is a life that He has called us to live.

Oh, we need to press on towards Christ. To His fullness. And it is an endless pursuit.

And I think that is the thrill of it. An endless pursuit towards Him. I suppose many of you have heard of the name Madame Guillon.

Now this lady, she loved the Lord, and her life was beautiful. Now she wrote a book called Spiritual Torrents. It is a book not easy to read.

But Mrs. Penn Lewis, she reduced that book and published a booklet. And the name is Life Out of Death. Now this sister, she knew the subjective side of pressing on towards the fullness of Christ in life.

And I would like to read to you just some excerpt. After having our faith position in Christ, that is conversion. As soon as the soul has turned to God and has been cleansed from its sins, it instinctively desires to be entirely united to Him.

Now brothers and sisters, after we are saved, after our sins are forgiven, after we are in faith, then intuitively, it is natural, it is spontaneous, that we will desire to be completely, entirely united to Him. I think this is a spontaneous desire within us. In other words, God's fullness is calling us.

We hear the call. And within us, there is a life that responds to it. And we want to be completely, entirely united to Him.

Their progress may be compared to rivers flowing towards God as their ocean. Now she tried to describe a soul that is seeking after the fullness of God. The first stage.

Some moving towards Him sluggishly and feebly. They deal much with outward life. And are very dependent on outside sources of help.

They are like pumps. They give water only when worked. They have great desire to be always doing.

They are full of plans. How to seek God. And to continue in His presence.

But all this is by their own efforts. Aided by grace. This describes the up and down experience and fitful self-effort of many true children of God.

Now, how true it is. Some children of God, they are God's children. But they move towards God slowly, feebly.

They have all kinds of plans. They trust in outward things. Their experience is ups and downs.

And mainly their self-effort. Then the second stage. Some proceeding decidedly and rapidly.

The way of light. So full of light and ardent love. That they excite the admiration of others.

For God seems to give them gifts upon gifts. Grace, light, visions, revelations, ecstasies. Temptations are repelled with vigor.

Trials are borne with strength. Their hearts are enlarged. And they gladly make great sacrifices for God and soul.

When you enter into the second stage, you find you are moving swiftly towards God. It is the way of light. It seems that you receive great revelations.

And you see you are doing great things for God. And you stir up the admiration of others. But this is just the second stage.

And then the third stage. Some advancing with headlong impetuous sitting. The way of faith.

They rest in nothing until they reach the goal. Christ is revealed within. The soul seems overwhelmed with joy unspeakable.

And full of glory. At this early stage there is much of the emotional life and manifestation of God. Which comes at a high degree.

Then comes the stripping of spiritual riches. Until the soul is on all points. Wrapped upon God.

The stripping is first the garment. Gifts and graces. Then the stripping of the ornament.

Gifts and graces. Then the stripping of the garments. The power for service.

And then the stripping of beauty. The power to practice divine virtue. The loss of everything that self love could cling on.

The soul brought to nothingness. Is united to Christ in God. Then the soul is revived.

Now brothers and sisters. We are complete in Christ. But we need to be completed.

The spirit of God is working in us to lead us or drive us into that fullness that is in God. And we cannot stop at any other point. So in personal life we need to experience the fullness of Christ.

Now the second area we would like to consider is the corporate life. Here in the letter to the Ephesians. In chapter 1 verse 22 and 23.

God has made Christ head over all things. To the body. The church which is his body.

The fullness of him who fills all and in all. Now this is a revelation. Paul he prayed that God will give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of God.

And what is the revelation of the full knowledge of God? One part of the revelation is that the body, the church is the body of Christ. And what is the body? The body is the fullness of him who fills all and in all. Now that is the revelation.

And this revelation is the calling. We are called to be the body of Christ. You know if you read the letter to the Ephesians you find that God's calling is corporate.

Often times we think of calling as a personal thing. But you will see that calling is corporate. God is calling us to be, not to do, but to be the body of Christ.

I cannot think of any calling higher than that calling. Think of that. God has called us to be the body of Christ.

And what is the body of Christ? The body of Christ is none other than the fullness of Christ. That's the reason why you find Apostle Paul sometimes use the term the Christ. The body is one but have many members and the members are many but one body, so also is the Christ.

Why? Because this body is nothing but the fullness of Christ. Who fills all and in all. In other words you do not find anything in that body but Christ.

That body is not an empty body. That body is not filled with you and me, with Adam, with our flesh. You find that body is a healthy body, a pure body.

In that body you find nothing but Christ. He fills all and in all. That is the vision, the revelation of the church.

And because we receive such a revelation, now what shall we do? It is not something just for us to talk about. But you come to Ephesians chapter 4 and it says walk worthily of the calling wherewith you are being called. Brothers and sisters we are called to be the body of Christ.

Now walk worthily of it. In what says? Keeping diligently the unity of the body in the bond of peace. Since we are called to be the body of Christ and there is only one body, should we not walk worthily of our calling? And how do we walk worthily of our calling? Keep diligently the unity of the spirit in the uniting bond of peace.

That is to say, God has put us all in that one body. And because we all are members one of another, therefore we cannot be divided. Is Christ divided? If Christ is not divided, then the church is not divided.

We need to diligently keep the unity of the spirit. The Holy Spirit has already given us this unity. We share one spirit, one Lord, one Father, our God.

And we need to stand firm on that ground. And upon this ground we fellowship with one another. Now it is true that we have many differences.

Not only we are different in temperament. Now thank God He, He creates our temperaments. I often say temperament is the shape of our soul.

You know, when God created us physically, everyone is different. And that's the beauty of creation. Everyone is different.

Don't try to be another person. And not only physically it is true, but so far as our soul is concerned, God has created our soul all in different shapes. And that is our temperament.

We are all of different temperament. Now temperament seems to be a big problem today in the church. But it shouldn't be.

We have different interpretations of the scriptures. We have different experiences of Christ. We have different ideas.

We are different in background, in green up, in culture, in race, in color, or whatever it may be. You find that we are full of differences, but in spite of all these differences, we need to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. And it is on that ground that we fellowship with one another.

We do not exclude one another. We are open to one another. We do not try to force one another into our mold.

But we are open to one another. We love one another. We share with one another.

We try to encourage one another, to build up one another. And if we do that, the Bible says, But until we all arrive at the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we be no longer babes. Brothers and sisters, we need to walk worthily of our calling as the body of Christ.

And it is only when we maintain that unity and learn to share whatever Christ has deposited in one of us, then we enrich one another, we build up one another, and eventually we will arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. Arrive at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Why? Because God's aim for the church is fullness of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, each one of us is just a member of that one body. Each one of us has a limited capacity. Christ is so full, it takes all of us to contain Him and to manifest Him.

That's why we need one another. We cannot be independent. We have to be related to one another.

It is true that in the body, because we are so close, we are so close together, it's bound to have many problems. But thank God as long as there is love. Love is the cement that cements us together.

So that we may arrive at the measure of the fullness of the stature of the fullness of Christ. You know, when you come to Ephesians chapter 5, you find this is exactly what the Lord is doing. He loved the church.

He gave Himself for it. He brings the church into birth. But is it that He brings the church into birth and then leave the church alone and let the church find its own way, fight its own battle, see if it can survive? Not at all.

You find that He who has brought the church into birth, He sanctifies it, purifying it by the washing of the water with the Word, that He may present that church to Himself, a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle of any of such sort. That it may be holy and without blameless. Brothers and sisters, the Lord Jesus is working.

As our brother said, He is building His church. He is working. He is sanctifying it, purifying it by the water with the Word, using the living Word.

And also the water represents His life. His life, together with His Word, purifies the church of all spots and wrinkles and any of such sort, that the church may be a glorious church to be offered to Him. Brothers and sisters, the church is not to be a church in poverty, but it is to be a glorious church.

This is what the Lord is after. He is looking for fullness in His own church. We do not have time to go over, you know, the first seven letters to the churches written by Paul, shows us the kind of church that God ordains it to be.

And then in the seven letters in Revelation 2 and 3, you find Christ. He is walking among these churches, looking for something. What is He looking for? You find that in these seven churches, they have a lot of things to offer to Him.

But that is not what He is looking for. He is looking for Himself. He is looking for His fullness.

Because this is what the church He has brought into being for. He will never be satisfied until He sees His fullness manifested in the church, should we be less satisfied. In the third area, I have to go quickly.

In the third area, ministry. Now brothers and sisters, what is ministry? What is the aim, the goal, the purpose of ministry? In other words, why do we minister? What do you want to accomplish in ministry? And if you read the letter to the Colossians, you find that Paul makes it very clear that the purpose of ministry is unto fullness. Why you find, for instance, in chapter 1 verse 24, He said, The word complete means to make full the word of God.

Whom God will make known what are the riches of the glory of this ministry among the nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory, which we announce, admonishing every man, teaching every man in all wisdom to the end, that we may present every man perfect in Christ. In other words, you will find the goal of ministry is fullness. That through ministry we may present every man perfect, complete, made full in Christ.

And if you turn to the last chapter of Colossians, you will find Epaphras did the same thing. How he told his laborers in prayer that they may be perfect and complete in Christ. Now that is the goal of ministry.

Any ministry that is less than this goal comes short of what a ministry should be. Now what is ministry? Ministry is the imparting of Christ. Ministry is not imparting yourself, your knowledge, your cleverness.

Ministry is imparting Christ. And because of this, we who minister, oh how we need to know the fullness of Christ. And not only to know the fullness of Christ, but we as earthen vessels that contain that fullness, we had to be broken so that that fullness can flow to the people whom we minister.

As Paul said, I bear in my body the slaying of Jesus that the life of Jesus may be in you. Now that is ministry. I do not have time to go into details.

I have to move on to the last one because this is something I have to do to conclude it. Fullness in the recovery of the testimony of Jesus. I will just read to you that article by our dear brother T. Austin Sparks.

It is the same article attaining to God's full thought. And I will read it very slowly. I hope the Spirit of God will really impress upon our heart that we will bring it to the Lord with all seriousness.

And this is what he said. I read certain letters that were written by Paul at the end of his life. And at a time when Christianity as to its primal beauty and glory and purity was breaking up.

We know what these letters are. I see that the first early conditions as we have them in the opening chapters of Acts have changed. Things seem to be going wrong.

The purity of things, the heaviness is being lost. The church is becoming an earthly thing at the end of its life. With these conditions coming about, Paul writes some letters.

And no one can pretend that these letters are a compromise accommodating to the situation that is developing. They are the most drastic and utter contradiction of it. They are a wonderfully full revelation of the heavenly thought and mind and position.

What is the significance of this? Is it not that in these letters God has sovereignly made his provision for all times of declension? That is his sovereign reaction. In which he says, in effect, whenever declension lets in and things begin to lose their purity. Here is your provision.

I have laid it up for you. Everything is provided to meet the situation. We are not left without guidance.

We are not left without light in a dark day. We can take hold of these letters and say, arise, shine, for the light is come. Darkness comes, covers the earth, grows darkness the people.

But here is our light. God does not accommodate himself to the situation and said, we must make the best of a bad job. We must be contented with a little.

He has taken sovereign precaution against that. By giving us letters like Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Timothy. What about the faithfulness of man? We shall be unfaithful, thoroughly unfaithful.

If we take the attitude, well, everything has gone wrong. There is nothing today which represents the original. We had better accommodate ourselves to the situation as it is.

For a long time, these letters were lost as to their real value in the church. It is only within recent times that the value of Paul's letters has come home to Christians. They have appeared too deep, abstract, heavenly.

The gospels were practically the bible of the church for a long time. And then Luther saw the true meaning of Romans and that made the break. Then another movement of God and the church saw the spiritual implication of Ephesians.

And that made another break. We have to recognize the significance of the epistles of Paul. And see that the position which they set forth is one which is regarded as attainable and maintainable by the grace of God.

And that we are required to hold fast in faithfulness in a day of declension. Unfortunately, brothers and sisters, we do live in a day of declension. Things are not what they should be.

Not what God has ordained them to be. But is it because of this God gives up? Well, God says, let me make the best of that job and see if I can live with it. Or is it for us to give up and say, well, there is nothing better.

So I have to live with it, accommodate it, compromise. God never changes His purpose. God's purpose is to see His fullness expressed in a people on earth.

And He never changes that. We know it because Paul, when he wrote these last letters, he was in that kind of situation. But the revelation from God is drastic, original.

God does not compromise. He is still looking for fullness in His people. And if this is the case, we will be unfaithful if we easily give up and compromise.

Oh, that the Lord will enable us to be so taken up by God's heart, that fullness. He wants so much to be expressed in a people. That by the grace of God, we will be there.

It's difficult, but it is attainable. It is maintainable. It is not a theory.

The testimony of Jesus must be recovered in the last days. And it will be recovered. Shall we pray?

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