

# Session 8: An Environment for the Image of Christ in Fullness

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## I. The Call to Fullness of Image

1. God's eternal purpose for the church age is for a vast family of sons for the heavenly Father and a bride for the Son to come into the full stature of the image of Christ.

- a. The purpose of this session is to give a vision for a spiritual environment for believers to be *conformed into the image of Christ in fullness*. As we have stated repeatedly in this class, God's eternal purpose for the church age is to have a family of mature sons for the Father and an equally yoked bride for the Son. For this family of sons/bride to emerge as God desires, believers must be conformed into the image of Christ in fullness.
- b. With this as our objective, let's first explore the idea of the call to be conformed into the image of Christ.

2. Christ is the fullness of the image of the invisible God.

- a. The scriptures record this about Christ, "He [*Christ*] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1:15). The book of Hebrews adds to this idea as it notes about Christ, "And He [*Christ*] is the radiance of His [*the Father's*] glory and the exact representation of His [*the Father's*] nature" (Heb. 1:3). From eternity past, the eternal Son has been one with the Father, just like Him in nature, and when He walked the earth an exact representation of the image of the Godhead.
- b. Christ not only depicts the image of the Godhead, He does so in fullness. Drawing from our discussion of fullness in Session 4, we repeat several ideas on fullness, first of Christ then of believers. The book of Colossians of which the theme is the supremacy and pre-eminence of Christ records these verses about fullness, "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him [*Christ*]" (Col 1:19) and "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Col 2:9). In God's eternal thought it was determined that the fullness of Deity would dwell in Christ; that is, that the full nature of the Godhead would dwell in Him.

3. The scriptures issue a clear invitation to believers to be conformed into the image of Christ in fullness.

- a. Christ is the image of the Godhead in fullness and exactly represents the full nature of the Godhead to mankind. As such, He is the goal to which man should strive—to be conformed into the image of Christ in fullness so that man would be prepared to take on firstborn status so as to be numbered among a company of many mature sons.
- b. As the following scriptures state, in order for man to be prepared to be a mature son for the Father and an equally yoked bride for the Son, he is to be conformed into the image of Christ,

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29).

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But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).

...and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all (Col. 3:10-11).

- c. Therefore, we see from the scriptures that as part of God’s eternal purpose, God has invited man to be transformed into the image of Christ. Next, we see that this invitation includes the call to be conformed to His image *in fullness*. In the book of Ephesians, Paul wrote, “And He [*the Father in His eternal plan and thought*] put all things in subjection under His [*Christ’s*] feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him [*Christ*] who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). Paul’s apostolic prayer recorded in Ephesians 3:19 states this same goal that the Father has for His church when he wrote, “...that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.” Also, as it relates to the fivefold ministry preparing believers, Paul wrote about equipping believers until they come to a mature man that belongs to the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13).
- d. Summarizing, God’s eternal purpose for believers during the church age is for God’s people to be conformed into the image of Christ by being filled up unto the fullness of Christ. This is God’s goal for each of us in this age. This is the agenda of the Godhead in the church age and the task that the Holy Spirit is working on—filling all believers with Christ until we attain the fullness of Christ and are thereby fully conformed into the image of Christ.
- e. With this goal in mind, let’s describe in more detail what the image of Christ in fullness is.

## II. The image of Christ in Fullness Is...

1. The image of Christ in fullness is the fullness of the eternal Man, Christ, manifesting Himself in and through an earthen vessel.
  - a. Paul wrote these simple but profound words, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves” (2 Cor. 4:7). What Paul was saying is that it is the treasure of Christ living in a vessel, not the honor or glory of the vessel itself that leads to the fullness of Christ manifested in and through His people. In this verse and many others, the idea is that Christ must fill our earthen vessel with Himself unto fullness for us to be conformed into His image.
  - b. Based on this idea and other verses that declare similar thought, *the image of Christ in fullness is NOT merely man living for God while His self-life remains dominant in his daily routine, decisions, and life pursuits*. It is not attempting to be great for God or trying to be the man of God in power for the hour. Nor is it based on a person living a life of self-righteousness. Rather, the call to be transformed into His image is a call to allow the eternal Man Christ on the throne to reign fully and completely in and through every facet of a person’s life.

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2. The fullness of Christ is the full expression of the eternal Son as depicted in the totality of the eternal throne.
  - a. In Session 4, we listed eight traits of the eternal Son which illustrate the fullness of Christ that is to be deposited in believers. I will list them here again so as to know what we are speaking of when we speak of being conformed into the image of Christ in fullness. If you want to refresh your memory about the meaning of these eight traits, go to Session 4 for considerably more detail. The eight traits which describe men and women as they are conformed into the image of Christ are:
    - b. Men and women are to become fully like Christ in character, nature, and humility so that just as Christ was an exact representation of the Father to his creation, we will be that as well.
    - c. Men and women are to serve the Lord as priests who minister individually and collectively unto and on behalf of the Lord. Man is to go regularly into the presence of the Lord to minister to Christ through worship, study of the word, fellowship with Him, and to abide with Him continuously, and from the position of intimacy to be a vessel for Christ to minister to others through them.
    - d. Men and women in the image of Christ are to become a prophetic people who are able to view life from God's perspective and act accordingly. This prophetic people are to have the ability to understand God's prophetic purposes so as to know how to follow God fully in every time and season and as leaders to lead the people entrusted to them according to God's purposes.
    - e. Men and women in the image of Christ are to function in great authority as God's eternal partner under the authority of Christ. This company of people are to become a mighty army of warriors—priestly warriors who can go before the throne of God in worship ministering to the Lord, receiving direction, and then emerge from the place of intimacy to exercise authority through intercession and ministry in partnership with heaven's plans and purposes.
    - f. Men and women in the image of Christ are to surrender to the eternal Christ as Lord and absolute authority over their life. The call to a surrendered lifestyle is to lay down one's life of sin and self and to take up their cross daily and follow Him.
    - g. Men and women in the image of Christ are to allow the infilling of the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of the Man on the throne, so as to be filled with Christ. The corporate man is to be filled with revelation knowledge of the Person of Christ, wisdom, power, and the ability to govern, judge, lead, and correct based on God's eternal thought and plan.
    - h. Men and women are to be prepared and then pray as a company of intercessors focused on God's eternal and kingdom purposes from a heavenly perspective. The corporate man must become a vessel in partnership with the eternal Man on the throne to connect with the burden and voice from the throne so as to allow the eternal Man to pray through them prayers that ascend to the heavenly golden altar.
    - i. Men and women in the image of Christ are to come into agreement with the voice and message from the throne so as to speak the voice from the throne to the church and to the world.

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- j. As Christ progressively fills us with Himself, these traits will progressively mature in believers. Now that we have established *what Christ in fullness is*, let's move on to what Christ in fullness is the result of.

## III. The Image of Christ in Fullness is the Result of...

### 1. The image of Christ in fullness occurs when the church becomes a vessel for Christ to inhabit, fill, and control in completeness.

- a. I shared this verse from the Apostle Paul's writings in an earlier section, but it is so descriptive I will share it again, "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves" (2 cor. 4:7). In this passage, Paul makes it clear that man is to be nothing more than a vessel, or stated another way, the body to carry about the true treasure which is Christ. As Paul wrote in Colossians, it is Christ in us that is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27).
- b. The image of Christ in fullness occurs when Christ permeates our vessel, that is our life, so that He becomes all in all and we are merely the body for Him to continue who He is in the earth. A few verses after stating that we are earthly vessels for Christ, Paul alludes to how fullness happens or, in other words, what the filling of the vessel is the result of. He writes,

...always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you (2 Cor. 4:10-12).

- c. The third chapter of Colossians summarizes this idea very well highlighting two components of being conformed into the image of Christ in fullness. It is a little long, so I will only share a few key verses from the passage. It will be very helpful for you to take a minute and read the entire chapter. Here are a few verses from the chapter,

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed [*in us in fullness*], then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry (Col. 3:1-5).

Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him — a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all (Col. 3:9-11).

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God (Col. 3:16).

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## 2. Fullness occurs when man's soul and body are filled unto fullness with Christ.

- a. Man is composed of body, soul, and spirit. Paul wrote these words which define the totality of man's composition, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23). Based on Paul's description, man is a triune being comprised of body, soul, and spirit. Most people would further define the soul as the mind, will, and emotions.
- b. Defining briefly these three aspects of man, the "will" is the ability given to man to choose and make decisions about life. Likewise, it is the place within man's soul in which he can choose to obey God or to reject Him in totality or in a particular issue that may arise. The mind is the seat of man's thoughts and determines what he thinks about, where doubt occurs, and what his mind dwells and meditates on. The emotions are the seat of man's feelings and where his emotions are centered. The body is the seat of man's actions, cravings, addictions, speech, and the place in which he interacts with his surroundings including what he looks at, hears, touches, and tastes.
- c. Man's spirit is the place where Christ enters when a person is born again. When a person is saved, Christ comes and joins with the spirit of man to be in union with man's spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). When a person is truly born again, his spirit comes alive and in union with God's Spirit such that Christ lives in the person. However, to be fully transformed, Christ must be released into one's soul and body, that is, to be allowed to fully permeate, control, and direct each part of man—his body, soul, and spirit. When a person is born again his spirit is immediately filled with Christ. Being conformed to the image of Christ in fullness results when over time Christ is allowed to be released from man's spirit into the realms of his soul and body so that Christ permeates man in completeness.

## 3. Man's soul and body are filled with Christ unto fullness from four primary sources.

- a. Although most definitely there could be other sources, the four sources I am presenting are: 1) enjoying God, 2) making proper daily choices, 3) responding to God's invitations, and 4) brokenness. Let's briefly identify each.

### Enjoying God

- a. Jesus spoke these words, "The kingdom of God is like a man who casts seed upon the soil; and he goes to bed at night and gets up by day, and the seed sprouts and grows — how, he himself does not know. The soil produces crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, then the mature grain in the head" (Mark 4:26-28). Applying this passage to enjoying God, the seed of Christ which dwells in fullness in one's spirit man will sprout and grow from the spirit into the soul and body so as to transform him without him even trying just through the nurturing of a relationship with Christ.
- b. Paul wrote in the book of Philippians that he considered everything of prestige and honor and, in fact, any aspect of his old life to be rubbish in comparison to knowing Christ (Phil. 3:8). He pressed on throughout his life to progressively know Christ in the fullness of who He is (Phil. 3:10-12). In other

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passages, Paul called on believers to allow the word of Christ to richly dwell in them (Col. 3:16) and for believers to “be filled with the knowledge of His [*Christ’s*] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:9-10).

- c. In the previous session on intimacy, we spoke about specifics on how to draw close to God in intimacy. These same pursuits will also assist us to be filled with Christ. Practices like seeking God regularly, study of the scriptures, waiting on the Lord, dining in His presence, meditating on Christ and His word, fellowshiping with Him and abiding with Him day and night all help us to be filled with the Person of Christ.
- d. As we eat and drink of Christ through our time with Him in the secret place, studying, meditating on the word, worshiping Him in our alone time with Him, praying, abiding in our relationship with Him-- just enjoying our relationship with Him, the seed of Christ is watered and fertilized in our hearts and is released from our spirit man into and throughout our soul and body. We don’t even realize that this work of the Holy Spirit is even taking place, but it is and we will look back over our life comparing our walk with God from what it was a few years earlier and we see that we have been filled to a greater measure of Christ without even thinking about it.
- e. This is a primary way we mature into the image of Christ—by slowing down enough to develop a secret place relationship with the Lord in such a way that we enjoy Him and are lovesick for Him when we can’t be with Him.

## Making proper daily choices

- a. Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross *daily* and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it” (Lk. 9:23-24). The same idea permeates the writings of Paul and the other apostles. Paul who was caught up to heaven and shown God’s eternal purpose, wrote extensively about the idea of denying sin and the self-life in order to put on Christ. He refers to it as dying to self. The book of Romans, especially Chapter 6, goes into great detail about the idea of death to sin and self. Here are two key passages,

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin (Rom. 6:3-7).

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive

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from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace (Rom. 6:11-14).

...For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification (Rom. 6:19).

- b. In some of his other writings, Paul identified this process as laying aside the old self and putting on the new self. Paul wrote the following in Ephesians,

...that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth (Eph. 4:22-24).

- c. Summarizing what Paul wrote in these passages, when we are born again and baptized, we are at that point positionally dead to sin and self and established in such a way that sin and self no longer are master over us. Therefore, neither the devil nor our own desires control us to the point that we cannot change. In our new position, we are not to let sin and self rule our life, but we are to appropriate the fact that we have died to sin and self so that we can get victory over them. In addition, we are to not only deny self and sin, we are to consciously put on righteousness or said another way to put on Christ. This same concept can be referred to as laying aside our old self and in its place put on our new self which is in the likeness of Christ.
- d. Every one of us are faced with daily choices. Most of them are not life changing or life threatening decisions; instead, they are situations where we must choose to allow Christ's love, character, and wisdom to be expressed through us either to others or into situations in which we encounter. In a sense, life and death is set before us every day and, in fact, many times a day. We are invited to choose life by making a decision or reacting in a way that honors and glorifies God. The saying that was so popular a few years ago "what would Jesus do" is what we are to do in each of these daily choices. As we regularly choose His will, His way, and to express His nature and character, we are progressively transformed into His image.

## Responding to God's invitations

- a. Like we stated a moment ago, Jesus calls on us to take up our cross daily so as to follow Him. Even though most days the cross life will not involve life altering decisions, periodically God invites us to follow Him in ways we did not anticipate or expect. Some of these are difficult and involve things we do not want to do. Many of these are our "if this cup can pass, let it" moments.
- b. In these moments, the Holy Spirit will come to us with an invitation. The invitation can be to follow Him in a new direction related to a career, ministry, or family issue. The invitation can be related to something He wants from us. It could be a sin issue that He says "enough" I want you to give this up. It could be even an issue that is not at all related to sin but to self. There are a myriad of issues that God could highlight to us. Usually these issues present a challenge to our will, our pleasure, or our

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comfort. It is really important in invitations like these that we say “yes” to God’s invitation. As we do, Christ is able to fill us with a greater measure of Himself.

## Brokenness

- a. David penned these words “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Ps. 51:17, ESV). Every believer is or has been filled with pride, rebellion, self-centeredness. God desires to replace these traits of pride, rebellion and self-dependence with humility, trust, pure motives and a heart that depends on God in every circumstance. We all have issues like these. In many, many cases we have these things but do not know it. We are blind to these issues. This is where brokenness comes into the picture. Periodically God will lead us into situations and circumstances with the intent of breaking our self-will, our pride, our rebellion, and our self-centeredness.
- b. The way olive oil was produced in Jesus’ day illustrates the purpose of brokenness very effectively. First, to get the olives off the tree, people would beat the limbs of the tree so that the olives would fall to the ground. The olives were then placed in a vat made of stone. A beam was then inserted in the vat. The beam pressed the olives and from this process of pressure, olive oil was made. I am sure the process was more complex than this, but you get the point. Pressure transformed olives into olive oil. In the same manner, pressure is needed at times in our lives to produce Christlikeness. James stated this principle in his epistle, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-4). Paul wrote many verses around the same theme, notably, “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2 Cor. 4:17). The brokenness that comes through trials, tribulations, and light afflictions does a very important work in our lives to produce Christlikeness.
- c. The pressures of trials, tests, and tribulations of all sorts have a purpose. Much of the church proclaims a message that any trial or tribulation or test of our faith is from the devil and is to be avoided; however, the scriptures tell us the opposite—that tests and trials of our faith are very often from God and are important to purify us and produce maturity. The proper response in the midst of trials is to trust God that He has a plan and purpose in what you are going through and that He has His hand on you in a way that He will not allow you to fall, and through it all, to accomplish a greater transformation into His image.
- d. Now that we have some understanding of the sources of transformation, the next question we want to answer is how we position ourselves to receive the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. I want to share four general principles that will help us position ourselves for transformation.



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## IV. Positioning for the Image of Christ in Fullness

1. First, being conformed into the image of Christ in fullness must be accomplished in the context of a person making as the highest priority of their life the pursuit of Christ and His eternal purposes.
  - a. We must be aware that none of what we have talked about in this session will make a significant difference in our life if we do not want Christ to be all in all in us. Desire for fullness is crucial. In the last session, I spoke about desire in the context of developing an intimate relationship with the Lord. Whereas that is most definitely true, the same thing can be said about being conformed into the image of Christ in fullness. Just like Jesus when He walked the earth was totally devoted to the Father and His purposes, we too must be totally devoted to Christ and His purposes. This includes a wholehearted desire and devotion to be conformed into the image of Christ.
  - b. We observe this trait not only in Jesus but also in the apostles. Paul specifically counted everything in his life as loss for the surpassing value of knowing Christ, and as he wrote this, he included being conformed to Christ's death (Phil. 3:8-12). Even toward the end of his life, he pressed on to lay hold for that which Christ had laid hold of him (Phil. 3:12). Paul goes on to write that believers should follow the same example that he followed (Phil. 3:17).
  - c. In my experience in ministry, one thing I have observed on many occasions is that many people want to be like Christ, but they do not want to pay the price to see it happen. They may make the initial decision to surrender to the Lordship of Christ; however, when it comes to laying down a besetting sin or habit or changing their schedule, they are not determined to pay the price for change to occur. Using Paul's words, they don't count the issue they are dealing with as rubbish in view of knowing and growing in Christ. This lack of determination to pursue Christ hinders them and keeps them in immaturity.
  - d. Thus, if we want to be conformed into the image of Christ we must have a steadfast determination to pursue fullness at any cost, and to never believe we have arrived. Paul wrote the verses we just mentioned in the last few years of his life. We must desire full stature in such a way that we do likewise.
2. Second, if we are to be conformed into the image of Christ in fullness, we must also make as the highest priority of our life to develop a deep, meaningful personal relationship with Christ.
  - a. The last session was completely devoted to developing an intimate relationship with the Lord so I won't attempt to repeat all that was written there. The point I want to make here is that an intimate relationship with Christ and more specifically time in the Lord's presence through the things we discussed in the last session—things like seeking Him (Ps. 27:4), studying the scriptures (2 Tim. 2:15), waiting on the Lord to speak (Ps. 130:5), dining with Him with no agenda (Rev. 3:20), meditating on

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scripture (Josh. 1:8), fellowshiping with Him (1 Cor. 1:9), and abiding as a vine does with a branch (Jn. 15:4-5)—are critical to being conformed to the image of Christ in fullness.

- b. This is really an important principle to understand for those who truly want to be conformed to the image of Christ. The reason is that without the intimate relationship with the Lord, we will not hear all God wants to say to us. For me personally, it has been through the scriptures and by listening to His voice that I have discovered His will and the things He wants me to deal with in my life in a particular season. In fact, some of the most important things God has called me to do or to give up or to be obedient in have come from my time alone in His presence.
- c. Without this dimension of relationship with the Lord, we will most likely miss some or even most of what God is initiating in our life to transform us into His image. Revelation is crucial to being conformed into the image of Christ, but revelation will not come in any significant way without time in God's presence.

### 3. Third, the Image of Christ in fullness is accomplished by grace empowered obedience.

- a. We are conformed into the image of Christ by God's grace through faith, not by our works or self-effort. An extremely important truth to know is that we grow spiritually and are transformed into the image of Christ by God's grace as in faith we appropriate God's divine power, not by our own strength or self-effort. Most of us who have attempted to change ourselves in our own strength have come to the sad conclusion that it is hopeless unless God gets involved. It is by God's grace that positive change comes into our lives. The word *grace* is used in the scriptures in different ways but the way we use it here is with the meaning of the words Jesus spoke to Paul in 2 Corinthians. Jesus told Paul when he was struggling, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9).
- b. Michael Brown writes this in his book, *Hyper Grace*,

It [grace] is not only the Lord's unmerited favor, although that is a glorious starting point, often expressed as **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. It is also His ongoing empowerment, His continued working on our behalf—what Jesus did for us when He saved us as lost sinners and what He continues to do in, through, and for us now that we are saved.<sup>1</sup>

- c. Based on all of the above, we define grace for our purposes in this session as "God's divine power directed toward our area of need". The following verse in the book of Philippians sums up the role of grace as we defined it to bring transformation, "having been filled with the fruit of righteousness *which comes through Jesus Christ*, to the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:11). Not only is the fruit of righteousness the fruit of Christ, this fruit comes through Christ. In other words, through His grace directed toward transforming us into His image.
- d. Unfortunately, grace is being greatly misunderstood and mis-applied in many, many places today in the body of Christ. We spoke about this in some detail in Session 3, so we will not attempt to repeat what we said other than to say that many leaders in the body of Christ are using the concept of grace as an excuse for allowing sin and compromise. This is leading to serious distortions and errors and in

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some cases into heresy. The hyper-grace movement has become a widespread and growing movement in recent years; however, I have observed the misuse of grace for a number of years. I remember as early as the mid-1990's observing the idea of grace leading many people into passivity thinking that transformation is all God in a way that man has essentially no role. I began to call this type of grace "passive grace". In order to combat the passivity that the false ideas of grace were promoting, I coined a term "aggressive grace".

- e. Transformation comes through grace, but it is not by passive grace where we leave it all up to God. It is by aggressive grace that transformation comes. Transformation comes when we war over an issue until victory comes. In other words, there is a partnership between God and man. It is not all God and not all man. We might fight for the victory as though it all depends on us and when we do this God comes in with His grace to provide the victory. Thus, we are speaking about-grace that is appropriated by our desire and determination mixed with God's power directed toward an area of need.

## 4. Fourth, the Image of Christ in fullness is accomplished through trust in difficult situations.

- a. When Jesus hung on the cross, He uttered these words, "And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, 'Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT'" (Lk. 23:46). As He faced the immediacy of death, that is, the ultimate test, His response was trust.
- b. In the context of being conformed into the image of Christ through death to the self-life, Paul wrote these familiar words, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). However, it is not our faith that we have to work up. It is the faith of Christ that transforms us. In the original Greek "faith in the Son of God" is actually "faith *of* the Son of God" and the King James Version properly translates it as such. We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8) and we are transformed by God's grace that comes through faith, even the faith of Christ.
- c. It is Christ who will produce transformation as we trust Him in the most difficult circumstance and appropriate the faith of Christ through our trust in Him.

## 5. The fivefold ministry is to empower believers to be transformed into the image of Christ in fullness.

- a. Paul's challenge to the fivefold ministry also recorded in Ephesians includes the call to church leaders to empower people to be conformed fully into the image of Christ, "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, *to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ*" (Eph. 4:11-13).
- b. The vast majority of pastors and leaders are focused on virtually everything but filling up believers with Christ. Because of our Lifeschool ministry, I observe quite a number of pastors throughout the

# Session 8: An Environment for the Image of Christ in Fullness

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nations on Facebook. As I look through Facebook posts, I see a lot of ads for upcoming conferences. What I have noticed is that the topics focus on subjects like breakthrough, the believer's destiny in ministry, the ministry of personal prophecy, prophetic training, prosperity, a variety of mystical topics, and things like this. My great burden is that the majority of the teaching, preaching, and training going on in the global church is focused on things other than filling up a people unto the fullness of Christ—a primary objective of the church age. The vast majority of the church is virtually ignoring this call of God, choosing instead to focus on many lesser goals.

- c. Therefore, most leaders if they desire to build an eternal purpose church must shift their focus with a major emphasis of the work of filling up a people with Christ. This is the spiritual environment that is needed in the global church in this hour and one which we must create if we are to build an eternal purpose church. Those called to build an eternal purpose church must set as a major priority to lead a people into maturity so as to be conformed into the image of Christ in fullness. This is a primary and central task that God desires for His fivefold leaders to be working on—filling up God's people to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.
- d. So, t's get to work and be about this important assignment.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael L. Brown, *Hyper-Grace*, ( Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2014), p. xi.