

Having the Fullness of Christ (Go To Meeting) Norbert Bohnert

{transcript starts in just over 2.2 minutes}

Have you ever heard—or thought yourself—from others in the Church of God over your time in the Church of God and heard phrases like this:

I am baptized, I'm converted, I observe the Sabbath every week and I will be in the Kingdom of God. I've gotten my foot in the door and I've got it made

- Have you ever heard that? *Unfortunately, it probably occurred way too many times!*
- Is that what it is all about?
- Is that the attitude that we should have?

I think we all know the answer to that, and that goes along the line of Protestant's erroneous belief that 'once saved always saved.' You give your heart to the Lord and you never have to look on the kind of life that you are living.

We know that that's not the way that a true Christian should live, and that's not what we should be doing. There is much more to qualify to enter into the Kingdom of God. We know that the simplification described is not the way it works. Going to church service or observing the Sabbath is not enough.

It is important, but not enough. Certainly with our repentance, faith and baptism a conversion ensues that places us within the Body of Christ, and makes us children of God. Yes, that places us in the Church of Christ!

Even though we deserve to die because of our own sins, Jesus saved us through the sacrifice He gave for each one of us personally, and for mankind in general. Our salvation is contingent upon our repentance of sin and faith in Christ's sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus sanctified Himself on the cross and achieved the victory for us. His gracious gift justifies us before God. Justification is God's acceptance of Christ's righteousness in our stead, because of faith on our part. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, though we do not earn it or deserve it. We are justified and the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imparted to us.

That is not the end of our spiritual journey, there is much, much more to it than that. The purpose of my message today is to demonstrate that on the day that we were baptized we were not fully complete, and that the Scriptures show us that we

must continue throughout our lives to develop in Godliness.

Ephesians 4:13 "Until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the **fullness** of Christ"—*repletion and completion!*

- completion means, *being totally complete*
- repletion means *crammed packed, jam packed*

When you have suitcases so full that you can't get anything else into it, but you have to put one other item in there. You just open it and you have to cram it in there and then close it, usually by sitting on it. That's an analogy of what the word *fullness* represents: crammed-packed, jammed-packed, not just full, but jammed-packed full.

King David expresses this concept of fullness of the spiritual things of the Lord.

Psalm 23:5: "You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; **my cup runs over**. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (vs 5-6).

"...my cup runs over" means the Lord cannot be contained!

Do any of us think for a moment that we measure up to Jesus Christ? *Of course, we know that we are not even close!* We see here that we are not to remain in a state of conversion that we started with at our baptism in our journey in becoming a true child of God.

This verse clearly shows that we are all to come to a unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God "...unto a perfect man, unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the **fullness** of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). *That is a tall order, brethren, for us to meet!*

John 10:30—*Jesus said*: "I and the Father are one."

John 14:9: "Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long a time, and you have not known Me, Philip? **The one who has seen Me has seen the Father**; why then do you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

We know that Christ and God the Father are one. There's another phrase in the Scriptures that we

need to take a look at with the expression of the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:14: “For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power by His Spirit **in the inner man**” (vs 14-16).

It is this “...inner man” that must continue to grow to the fullness of Christ, through the process of sanctification. Simply going through the motions of observing the Sabbath, the Holy Days, the Sabbath every week year after year will not suffice.

Verse 17: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; *and* that being rooted and grounded in love, you may be fully able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which surpasses *human* knowledge **so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God**” (vs 17-19).

Not just full, but jammed-packed full! That thought is used twice in v 19: “And to know the love of Christ, which surpasses *human* knowledge so that you may be **filled** with all the **fullness** of God.”

That is a huge concept! Let us ponder how we can be filled with the fullness of God. How complete is God? Of course, we know that He is perfection and wisdom personified.

Matthew 6:9: “Therefore, you are to pray after this manner: ‘Our Father, Who *is* in heaven, hallowed be Your name.’”

Luke 11:2: “And He said to them, ‘When you pray, say, “Our Father Who *is* in heaven, **hallowed be Your name**; Your kingdom come; Your will be done, as in heaven, *so* also upon the earth”’”

“**..hallowed be Your name..**” is antiquated language that means some clarification. The significance of the word *hallowed* is lost on many people who constantly repeat it. Hallowed is simply an old English term for Holy. Holy means *set apart in a unique category or spiritual class of it’s own!*

As it is used here, it would be best rendered, ‘Father, Your name is the Holiest’ *or* ‘Father, Your name is set apart in a class all of it’s own held in the greatest respect,’ *or* ‘No other name compares to Your Holy name.’

God tells us that His ways and thoughts are completely different from ours, which we all understand.

Isaiah 55:9: “For *as* the heavens are higher

than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

Eph. 3:19—incredibly Paul expresses his desire and shows the possibility that we—you and I—are also to be jammed-packed full as God is.

Ephesians 3:19: “And to know the love of Christ, which surpasses *human* knowledge so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Let’s go back to the concept of ***the fullness of Christ and God the Father!***

Colossians^[transcriber’s correction] 1:22: “In the body of His flesh through death, to present you Holy and unblamable and unimpeachable before Him; which is His body—the fullness of Him Who fills all things in all. if indeed you continue in the faith grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which you have heard, *and* which was proclaimed in all the creation that *is* under heaven; of which I, Paul, became a servant” (vs 22-23).

We clearly see here that we, the Church, are the Body of Christ. Jesus is the fullness of the Father, and our duty is to aspire to be like God is, ***in the fullness of God!***

That is a big, big thought, and it’s quite a challenge for us to achieve, especially with all the obstacles and the human nature that we constantly fight.

Colossians 1:18—*speaking of Jesus*: “And He is the Head of the Body, the Church; Who is *the* Beginning, *the* Firstborn from among the dead so that in all things He Himself might hold the pre-eminence. For it pleased *the Father* that in Him all the fullness should dwell” (vs 18-19).

Jesus is not lacking anything. In Christ lives all the fullness of God. Even when He was a man, nothing was withheld of God. If Jesus did not possess the fullness of God, then we would not be able to be the fullness of God. There is no way that could happen. But we know that we have that opportunity, and that we will be able to achieve that point.

Verse 20: “And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself; by Him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in heaven.”

God the Father is reconciling us to Himself through Jesus Christ.

Verse 21: “For you *were* once alienated and enemies in *your* minds by wicked works; but now He has reconciled *you* in the body of His flesh through death, to present you Holy and unblamable

and unimpeachable before Him; if indeed you continue in the faith grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which you have heard, *and* which was proclaimed in all the creation that *is* under heaven; of which I, Paul, became a servant” (vs 21-23).

Colossians 2:9: “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”

That means the totality of God the Father is in Jesus Christ. Every attribute and characteristic of the Father is in Jesus. That also, we have to understand, applies equally to us.

Verse 10: “And you are complete in Him, Who is the Head of all principality and power.”

Being complete means being supplied with all the things necessary for salvation. We, the Church, are to be absolutely complete in Jesus Christ. That is what we are all striving to be. That is what *repletion and completion* means: crammed-packed and jammed-packed. Not just full, but jammed-packed full!

In the same what that Jesus is the fullness of the Father, we—the Church—are the fullness of Christ through God’s Spirit dwelling in us! The Church brethren are to be complete in Jesus Christ. That is why Paul wrote:

Colossians 1:23: “If indeed you continue in the faith grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which you have heard, *and* which was proclaimed in all the creation that *is* under heaven; of which I, Paul, became a servant. Now, I am rejoicing in my sufferings for you, and I am filling up in my flesh that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the Church; of which I became a servant, according to the administration of God that *was given to me for you in order* to complete the Word of God; *even* the mystery that has been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been revealed to His saints” (vs 23-26).

It has been revealed to us; we are the saints! We are the Holy ones!

Verse 27: “To whom God did will to make known what *are* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

When we first came into the Church and got baptized, and had hands laid on us, some of us considered or called ourselves *saints*. Is that a correct connotation at that time? If you look at the definition of the word *saint*, it is sacred, pure, blameless, a condition that takes time to acquire. Paul speaks of those things that ‘becometh a saint.’

That word *becometh* is a verb meaning:

- to tower up
- become suitable or proper
- a condition that takes action

It takes action on our part and it takes time and growth! That’s basically what conversion is all about. There is a process involved. Of course, that entails the whole process of conversion after our baptism.

This process is sanctification. Sadly, we probably haven’t talked too much about this in the past within the Churches of God for near not enough times.

1-Peter 1:15: “But according as He Who has called you *is* Holy, you yourselves also be Holy in all *your* conduct; for it is written, ‘You be Holy because I am Holy’” (vs 15-16).

God wants us to be partakers of His Divine nature, and live lives that are enriched and empowered by His fullness.

2-Peter 1:3: “According as His Divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who called us by *His own* glory and virtue; through which He has given to us the greatest and *most* precious promises, that through these you may **become partakers of the Divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (vs 3-4).

The Scripture speaks of this process variously described as sanctification. Holiness, going onto perfection, growing in grace and knowledge, and being filled with the fullness of God. That is the sanctification process.

We are to grow in Holiness! There is societal pressure to have nothing to do with the righteousness or Holiness. People say, ‘What are you, some kind of goody-two-shoes? It’s a term commonly used as an insult toward those who precisely obey God and His Law. There is a bias or prejudice against those who walk the straight and narrow way. That’s what we’re instructed to do, ***to walk the straight and narrow way!***

If you do not have one foot in the world, you are considered somewhat of a weirdo at times. Sadly, even amongst some of the Church brethren over the past history in the Churches of God.

Brethren, we cannot have that! We must be careful not to start a new heresy within God’s true Church.

- love people in their sins
- be understanding of their faults

- commiserate with them because it is too hard to overcome their sin

Unfortunately, over an overt and obvious sin is allowed to continue in some congregations, rather than put out the sin and teach the people to be a Holy people as the Bible so plainly shows us. ***That is what we must do!***

1-Corinthians 5:13: “But God judges those who are outside. So then, **put the wicked person out from among yourselves.**” What does Jesus say?

Revelation 3:21: “To the one who overcomes will I give *authority* to sit with Me in My Throne, even as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His Throne.”

We know that it’s all a matter of overcoming! Overcoming the many weaknesses and sins that we have.

Hebrews 6:1: “Therefore, advancing beyond the beginning principles of the doctrines of Christ, we should go on to perfection; not laying again *the* foundation of repentance from dead works, and *of* faith in God.”

That is the process of sanctification. In a lifetime process we are established in the first basic doctrines.

Verse 2: “Of *the* doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of *the* resurrection of *the* dead, and of eternal judgment.”

We understand that on the day that we were baptized, we were placed in to the Body of Christ, but we must go onto perfection, this process of sanctification, being set apart or made Holy. That’s basically was sanctification is.

To what extent do we strive to attain that perfection, or Holiness of Christ? That’s a question we must ask ourselves. The definition of sanctification is to set apart for a sacred purpose. That, of course, is God’s purpose. We are to be Holy, clean, pure, living a life of constant overcoming!

John 17:17: “Sanctify them in Your Truth; Your Word is the Truth.”

Luke 4:4: “But Jesus answered him... {Satan} ...saying, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God.”’”

That’s what we have to live by. God’s Word shows us how to be Holy and set apart from the world. Sanctification—setting apart—must be sought after and worked toward all our natural lives. That is what we must work on.

After baptism we are to become a new creation in Jesus Christ.

2-Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, **if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation**... [that all begins at our baptism] ...the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

We are to become like Jesus and like God the Father. Loyalty to God and His Truth must be the central theme for all of us in the Churches of God today.

It now falls to all of us, brethren, to take up the mantel of true Christianity. Unfortunately, too many prominent leaders have not done so in the past. There possibly exists a ***morbid extent or state of self-satisfaction of ‘having it made’*** within some of the groups. This gives us the opportunity to be Christ like and build fellowship among God’s children and each other. It is a salvational requirement.

Hebrews 12:14: “Pursue peace with everyone... [wouldn’t that be nice?] ...and Holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.”

Without peace and Holiness, no one will see the Lord! That’s basically very clear instruction to us. None of us is anywhere near being like God is. We all have our work cutout for us. Of course, with the help and guidance of God’s Holy Spirit.

Are we personally—each one can ask this of ourselves—pursuing this course of sanctification with all our might? A very valid question we must ask ourselves.

1-Corinthians 15:49: “And **as we have borne the image of the one made of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly One.**”

What does this verse imply. It does not mean that we wait until after death for this to take place. We must begin at our baptism and then continue to grow and overcome into the fullness of Christ. Christ’s sacrifice begins the process of Godly character growth, a perfection that proceeds to the point of sanctification, which is Holiness.

We are sanctified when we grow in to the fullness of Jesus Christ.

1-Corinthians 1:2: “To the Church of God that is in Corinth, *the* called saints who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, together with all those in every place who are calling on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.”

1-Corinthians 6:11: “And such were some of you; but **you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus,** and by the Spirit of our God.”

We are made Holy, sanctified by the living Word of God. We are sanctified over time by God's Spirit working within us. What a blessing that is!

1-Peter 1:2: "*Who have been chosen according to the predetermined knowledge of God the Father, **by sanctification through the Spirit**, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you.*"

The sanctification of the Spirit shows the working of God's Spirit in us! That not only separates us from the world, but brings us to the fulfillment of the salvational process. Daily true Christians are absorbed in the process of sanctification *moving us toward that awesome thing of the fullness of Christ!*

Let us not be sidetracked by any substitute religious practices being foisted on people.

- Some people believe that theirs is the true church, because they are preaching the Gospel to the world better than anyone else!
- Some believe that theirs is the *true church* because they follow the leadership who heads up the governmental structure of that particular church.

That is not the way it should be!

God gives us the Holy Spirit—each one of us—working individually within each one of us so that we, individually—each one of us—grows in the fullness of Christ.

No one will get us there other than us by ourselves, of course, with the guidance and direction as we are led by the Holy Spirit. No leader will get us there, no other person will get us there. It's all up to us individually.

On the day we were baptized, we were placed into the Body of Christ. But we know that we must go onto perfection, that process of sanctification; the process of being set apart for the fullness of God. Sanctification follows forgiveness, baptism and justification. Sanctification is our spiritual makeover, brought about by Jesus Christ after our initial repentance and justification.

Hebrews 2:10: "Because it was fitting for Him, for Whom all things *were created*, and by Whom all things *exist*, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He Who is sanctifying and those who are sanctified *are* all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (vs 10-11).

Look at the incredible emotions Paul expresses about this shared love that brethren have

for one another because of this fullness God has given us.

Colossians 2:2: "That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, unto the knowledge of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ."

Verse 7: "Being rooted and built up in Him, and being confirmed in the faith, exactly as you were taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving."

As we have been taught, Col. 2:2, 7, not what passes today in God's Churches. We touch on it often, but Jude expresses it so well. Live to the fullness of Christ as it was taught by Jesus and the apostles.

Jude 3 "Beloved, when personally exerting all *my* diligence to write to you concerning the common salvation, I was compelled to write to you, exhorting *you* to fervently fight for the faith, which once for all *time* has been delivered to the saints." ***It is God's will that we all go on to perfection!***

Ephesians 4:13: "Until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

John 1:16: "And of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace." *Clearly, clearly, the fullness of Christ is so important to achieve that!*

James 1:4: "But let endurance have its perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything."

We're all seeking perfection, and we must endure. It's so important ***that we must endure*** so that we may develop and become or get to that perfection that we're seeking.

God presently has given us, the present time, to go onto perfection. From baptism, where it begins, and that constant conversion process will take us on to that goal of perfection. Will we achieve that, brethren? *Most likely not in most of our lifetimes!* Jesus made it clear that many who look forward to the marriage Lamb will not be prepared.

Matthew 25:6: "But in the middle of the night there was a cry: 'Look, the bridegroom is coming! Go out to meet him.' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there not be enough for us and for you. But instead, go to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast, and the door was

shut” (v 6-10).

Brethren, we must be careful; we must have our lamps full! We must work toward keeping that lamp full.

Most of the brethren, as you read in the final Laodicean Church era will go into the Tribulation because of their half-hearted approach to their faith. So, we must be careful. It is a challenge for each one of us. Though we have been the recipients of bountiful meat—fellowship and doctrinal Truth—there are serious lessons that we must learn. We still have to learn, and will continue to learn right to the end.

- put on that way of perfection
- put on that Godly character
- put on that fullness of Christ

Revelation 3:18: “I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire so that you may be rich; and white garments so that you may be clothed, and the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, **so that you may see.**”

We have the understanding of what the fullness of Christ is all about. It is a task that maybe anyone hearing this for the first time may think impossible to achieve. ***But remember, it is process!***

It all begins first with the calling of God the Father, and then Him working with us, getting us to the point of where we concede our lives to God and repent and come to baptism. ***That’s the beginning of the process of renewing out walk with God!***

In conclusion, what is one of the most prevalent sins that we in the Churches of God can commit today? The most characteristic defect in our lives ***is not making the weighty principles and profound tenets of true Christianity our top priority!***

We must do that! We must prioritize and that also involves having faith, endurance, and more so due-diligence in what we have learned and continue to strive to learn more. To develop that perfection and that fullness of Christ.

Just going with the flow is not what God expects of us. We cannot just go by the flow and assume that our baptism is our way to salvation.

1-Peter 5:10: “Now, may the God of all grace, Who has called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, after *you* have suffered a little while, **Himself perfect you, establish, strengthen, and settle you.**”

That applies to us, as well. Let us strive and work with what we have learned, and continue to

stay close to God, build on that relationship, that interpersonal relationship that we have, each one of us, ***so that we can be fulfilled in Christ!***

Scriptural References:

- 1) Ephesians 4:13
- 2) Psalm 23:5-6
- 3) John 10:30
- 4) John 14:9
- 5) Ephesians 3:14-19
- 6) Matthew 6:9
- 7) Luke 11:2
- 8) Isaiah 55:9
- 9) Ephesians 3:19
- 10) Colossians 1:22-23, 18-23
- 11) Colossians 2:9-10
- 12) Colossians 1:23-27
- 13) 1 Peter 1:15-16
- 14) 2 Peter 1:3-4
- 15) 1 Corinthians 5:13
- 16) Revelation 3:21
- 17) Hebrews 6:1-2
- 18) John 17:17
- 19) Luke 4:4
- 20) 2 Corinthians 5:17
- 21) Hebrews 12:14
- 22) 1 Corinthians 15:49
- 23) 1 Corinthians 1:2
- 24) 1 Corinthians 6:11
- 25) 1 Peter 1:2
- 26) Hebrews 2:10-11
- 27) Colossians 2:2, 7
- 28) Jude 3
- 29) Ephesians 4:13
- 30) John 1:16
- 31) James 1:4
- 32) Matthew 25:6-10
- 33) Revelation 3:18
- 34) 1 Peter 5:10

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