

Body Issues in Ephesians Illustrating the Effect of Body Truth on the Christian Life

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“In that day you will know that I am in the Father, and you in Me, and I in you” (John 14:20). This was the first plain revelation of the believer’s position in Christ. The truth of the believer being in Christ is foundational to the Christian way of life. Jesus expressed this in John 15:1-10 in the metaphor of the vine and branches. He stated, “I am the vine, you are the branches. The one being at ease [abiding] in me and I in him, this one bears much fruit, because apart from Me you are not able to do one thing” (John 15:5). The believer is in Christ, and relating to that truth is a, if not the, key step in progressing in the Christian life.

It follows that good teaching on the Christian life will emphasize this relationship of the believer in Christ. Teachers of past generations spoke of this position as “standing” in contrast to state which entails one’s behavior upon earth at a given time, or his walk.¹ The believer’s position in Christ exists because the Father logically counts it to exist, or as Paul wrote the Ephesians, ‘God says good things about us, with all spiritual good speaking’ (Ephesians 1:3). To teach any form of Christian living without significant emphasis on the believer’s position in Christ, would be as absurd as teaching someone to drive without any reference to an automobile in which one drives. David Spurbeck concludes his book *The Christian in Christ* with five summary examples of the practicality of this truth; “Good Conduct in Christ–1 Peter 3:16,” “Living Godly in Christ Jesus–2 Timothy 3:12,” “Walk in Him–Colossians 2:6,” “Mature in Christ–Colossians 1:28,” “Abide in Christ–John 15:4-7...”² The believer’s position in Christ with all the benefits which accrue to her or him have immense applications to the Christian life.

However, the believer sometimes fails to see the corporate relationship in Christ. It is as if he or she appreciates being in Christ but has little regard for other saints being in Christ with him. While this is not emphasized in every statement regarding the believer being in Christ, it is emphasized sufficiently. Therefore, she should consider others sharing the same position God has given to her. “The saint’s heavenly position in Christ is more than an individual circumstance. He shares it with all other grace believers. ... As an individual, a Christian can appropriate it and enjoy it but position was designed to be a group benefit.”³ A key part of the maturing process is coming to appreciate this as a shared relationship.

The believer in Christ and the emphasis on the corporate or shared aspect of this truth is a broad subject. The subtitle of Dave Spurbeck’s book (which is over 370 pages) suggests this, “An **Introduction** to ‘In Christ’ Truth” (emphasis mine). For this reason, this paper will focus on these truths as they are communicated in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. I will attempt to confine our study to that letter, with a few outside references. I will then consider some of the areas of conflict mentioned in Ephesians followed by Paul’s charges for addressing those conflicts. In those passages, he explained how to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. I’ll begin with a short survey of the background of the Ephesian church and how that contributes to our understanding of some of the issues in the letter.

¹ See C.I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*, (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, nd) p. 50.

² David K. Spurbeck, *The Christian “In Christ”*, (Forest Grove, OR: Know to Grow “In Christ” Publications, 1999) pp. 360-367.

³ *ibid*, p. 270.

Background of the Ephesians Church

No church received as much attention in the New Testament as the Ephesian church. Paul spent over two years in Ephesus. Apollos spent time in Ephesus. Paul wrote them a letter. Paul wrote Timothy two letters while Timothy was in Ephesus. Jesus addressed them through John in Revelation two. John wrote one and perhaps all three letters to the neighboring communities while in Ephesus. Yet it was a church like any other; it had problems. When Paul met with the elders of the Ephesian Church, he explained his concern for their future. He knew that some of them would selfishly turn on the church, and unbelievers would lead people away from the Church. He wrote Timothy a letter to address people who wished to be law-teachers in the Ephesian Church. He wrote Timothy again about avoiding arguments with such people. Jesus addressed the Ephesian church in Revelation two, praising them for their high doctrinal standards, but criticizing them for their loss of love. John's letters addressed the problem of not demonstrating love to brothers, which is a chief manifestation of eternal life. These are simplifications of broader issues which express the main problem: a failure to live out one's salvation through Biblical relations to others in the body of Christ.

In Acts 16, Paul was not allowed to go to Ephesus. The Spirit did not permit him to minister in Asia but directed him to Macedonia. Luke did not mention Ephesus, though it would be included being the capital of Asia Minor. God's plans for Ephesus were not yet ready.

The first reference to Ephesus involves Paul's brief stop. He left in Ephesus Priscilla and Aquila, fellow believers, Jews, and tradesmen with Paul. Paul reasoned with the Jews in their synagogue (Acts 18:19). A synagogue indicates a group of Jewish men.⁴ So, the first recorded ministry in Ephesus involved Jews. These Jews asked Paul to stay on but he did not (v. 20). It is not stated if anyone believed the gospel, or believed in Jesus Christ, or turned to Him, the latter two being expressions used by Luke.

The next reference involves Apollos (Acts 18:24). Apollos was also a Jew who spoke in the synagogue. He had power in the Scriptures, taught accurately about Jesus (v. 25), but only knew of John's baptism. He had received oral instruction indicated by the verb **κατηξεν**. He lacked an understanding of New Testament truth. Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and more accurately laid out the way of the God (v. 26). The way explains that Jesus Christ is alive, seated at the Father's right hand and is our only way of coming to God (cf. John 14:6). Because Apollos only knew John's baptism, he was unacquainted with this truth. "Before the encounter with Aquila and Priscilla, it is best to regard Apollos in the same class as OT saints."⁵ Apollos was now a NT saint. He then wished to travel west to Achaia the location of Corinth. Luke tells us that the brothers encouraged him on his way and sent with a letter to the disciples in Corinth (v. 27). "Brothers" could refer to Priscilla and Aquila, but since Luke does not name them, it is more likely that these are brothers in the city of Ephesus, perhaps converts due to Paul's short ministry, but also due to the ministry of the Priscilla and Aquila.

Luke records the next event at Ephesus in Acts 19. Paul returned through the inland country instead of along the coast (19:1). He found twelve disciples of John the Baptist. These men were much like Apollos. However, they may not have known about Jesus based on Paul's statement in 19:4. We do not know whether their knowledge of Jesus was partial as Apollos' was, or that they only knew about the One who was to come after John. Whatever the case, Paul filled in the detail regarding Jesus and the men were re-baptized, demonstrating a

⁴ F.F. Bruce states, "A synagogue service traditionally requires a minimum (*minyān*) of ten men." *The Acts of the Apostles*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979) p. 314.

⁵ Homer A. Kent, Jr., *Jerusalem to Rome*, (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1972) p. 149.

difference between John's baptism and Christian baptism (19:5).⁶ Prior to meeting Paul, I would agree with Homer Kent, "Their spiritual status was that of OT saints who now had to face the decision concerning the Messiah."⁷ These men were now NT saints.

Luke moves the narrative directly to the synagogue (Acts 19:8). Paul spoke for three months in the synagogue. His ministry in the synagogue would have been primarily to Jews, or Gentiles who had connected themselves with Judaism whether as an adherent⁸ or proselyte. Luke's language "was speaking boldly"⁹ and "reasoning"¹⁰ and "persuading"¹¹ indicate that Paul's ministry was predominantly evangelistic. The presence of disciples in 19:9 indicates that some had responded to the good news. Paul removed himself and these disciples after three months due to the opposition of the hardened unbelievers. The unbelievers were maligning the Way, that Jesus is the only Way.¹²

Paul continued reasoning for two years with the disciples, but now in a lecture hall belonging to a man named Tyrannus (Acts 19:10).¹³ In Acts 20:31 Paul stated that his total time with the Ephesians was three years. During his stay "all the ones inhabiting Asia heard the Word concerning the Lord, both Jews and Greeks." The time was marked by miracles of healing and evil spirits coming out of people (vv. 11-12). This gave rise to an incident involving some Jews who called spirits out by oaths (v. 13ff). They were traumatized by a demon *indwelt* man from whom they could not cast out a demon. The event became known resulting in people magnifying the name of the Lord Jesus (v. 17). Those who believed were giving up their practice of magic (vv. 19-20). This group is most likely Gentiles, though some Jews among the Gentiles may have been practicing magic. Later, trouble occurred about the Way (v. 23). It revolved around the loss of business for silver smiths whose business was making silver idols of the false goddess Artemis (vv. 24-27). The account indicates that such numbers of people in the area had turned to the one true God that it was affecting business for the silver smiths. Most of these would have been Gentiles who worshipped the false gods of Greece and Rome. These accounts help us see that individuals from both Gentile and Jewish background comprised the church in Ephesus. It was a mixed assembly.

The next record of Ephesus involved Paul meeting with the elders of the Ephesian church (Acts 20:17). Here we find that Paul had previously spoken to Jews and Greeks while he was in Ephesus (v. 21). Both groups needed to repent or change their minds about God. The Jews needed to change their mind recognizing God to be more than one person, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself being one of those persons. The Gentiles needed to change their minds recognizing that there is only one God, not many, and the Lord Jesus Christ is that one God. If

⁶ R.C.H. Lenski's comments here are interesting. His Lutheran theology forces him to take the statements in an unnatural sense. He believed that John's baptism was a sacrament which conveyed the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, he concluded that these men had not received "John's real baptism at all." This allows Lenski to avoid the difference between John's baptism and Christian baptism. *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, (Columbus, OH.: Lutheran Book Concern, 1934) pp. 778-779.

⁷ Kent, op cit. p. 150.

⁸ Cornelius in Acts 10 is an example of an adherent. He is not called a proselyte and does not appear to have adopted all the practices of the Law.

⁹ Imperfect Middle Indicative

¹⁰ Present Active Participle explaining the activity of Paul's bold speech.

¹¹ Present Active Participle explaining the activity of Paul's bold speech.

¹² He is the only way for initial salvation. He is the only way into God's presence for the believer in daily life. He is the One will come for believers at the Rapture and bring us before the Father, therefore, He is the only way in the future.

¹³ The text D adds a possible tradition, but certainly not the original text, that Paul did this from 11-3 daily. The lecture hall would have been vacant at that time of day, most of the Asia Minor taking their mid-day rest due to the summer heat.

they would change their mind appropriately, both could then believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved. He warned the elders to watch, for he knew that savage wolves (unbelievers) would come and attack the sheep (v. 30). He also knew that some the elders themselves (believers) would rise and speak perverted things to draw disciples after themselves (v. 30); these would want a personal following. The perverted things are most likely the twisting of truth to support one's end.¹⁴ He commended them to the word about God's grace (v. 32). Paul did not covet other's possessions but worked to meet his own needs (vv. 33-35). This may explain some of the motives of both the believing elders and unbelievers who would rise up against the sheep after Paul's departure. Elders must guard against serving for remuneration. They should "help the weak" (v. 35). "Help" is the verb of "helps" in 1 Corinthians 12:28, a teaching gift intended to help weak believers. Paul's statement indicated that in some degree, elders also render this type of service to those who are weak. In contrast to the two types of individuals in verses 29 and 30, the faithful elders will help the weak without charging them for that help. The nature of helping the weak also seems antipodal to the nature of a heavy wolf. Clearly in Paul's short meeting with the Ephesians elders, he was concerned about the future of the assembly and the continued care for the sheep.

Paul started the Church at Ephesus. It was a mixed assembly of Jews and Gentiles in the capital of Asia. They received instruction from Paul for about three years. The elders needed to give special attention to the welfare of those in the church. They also needed to watch themselves, so they did not become interested in their own goals at the expense of the other individuals in the church. Their care for others should take precedence over any concern for money and material substance. The Ephesian letter will be the next record.

Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians¹⁵ while still in prison (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20). It has been suggested that he wrote the Ephesians from Rome between 60 and 62 AD.¹⁶ Paul was imprisoned because he had gone to Jerusalem and comprised several truths before the Jewish Christians in that city. It is not in the scope of this paper to argue for this position¹⁷, but I believe a couple points are necessary to appreciate some of the issues in Ephesians. First, by putting up funds for some **Jewish** brothers (believers) to offer sacrifices to end a **Jewish** vow, Paul was not upholding the message of living by grace (cp. Acts 21:21-26 to Ephesians 3:2). In Acts 15, the Church maintained a distinction between Jewish believers and Gentile believers. In the approximately eight years since that time, Paul had begun to explain a new truth (i.e. mystery) that in Christ there is no Jew or Greek (1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:28). However, in Jerusalem, Paul did not uphold this new truth, but went along with their now (at that time) obsolete distinction between Jews and Gentiles (Acts 21:24-25). It is true that Paul lived like a law-keeper before unsaved Jews in a desire to see them saved (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

¹⁴ Some men enjoy the attention and sense of self-importance. Any pastor-teacher is susceptible to this attitude. In order to single one's self out from other elders, one might twist the Word of God to support their own position. Cf. Diotrophes, a believer, and probably an elder who was forbidding the presence of other brothers in that assembly.

¹⁵ The words "in Ephesus" [εν εφεσω] is omitted in P⁴⁶ [c. 200] \aleph^* [4th] B* [4th] 6 [13th]. 1739. These words are included in \aleph^2 A B D F G and the Majority text. Some favoring the older reading, claim this was originally a general circular letter, to which the "in Ephesus" was later added. However, it seems unlikely that one would specify the location of the letter's recipients if it were originally general. 2 Peter, Hebrews, Jude and John's letters were left generally addressed.

¹⁶ The earlier date is given by C.H. Thiessen in his *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943) p. 265. The latter date is given by D. Edmond Hiebert in his *An Introduction to the New Testament: Vol. 2 The Pauline Epistles* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981) p. 265. In my own attempt at a chronology of Paul and the New Testament letters, the evidence is broad enough that I've given AD 61-62 as a general date. He likely sent the letter to them by the hand of Tychicus who also carried the letter to the Colossian church, Colossae being a little over 100 miles east of Ephesus.

¹⁷ For a concise presentation of this position see, A.C. Gaebelien, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Our Hope, 1912) pp. 364-367.

However, the issue in Acts 21 was Paul's lifestyle before believing Jews, who were continuing to go to the temple, living by law, and offering sacrifices (Acts 21:20, 26).¹⁸ Before these Jews, Paul trampled all he had been teaching among the mixed assemblies in Greece, Macedonia, Asia, and Galatia. Though news traveled slowly, it was only a matter of time before word of Paul's actions was heard in the Ephesian Church.

I believe the Lord Jesus Christ gave Paul one last chance to correct this error during his visit to Jerusalem. In Acts 22:17-21 Paul rehearsed an appearance of the Lord. He did this before a crowd mostly of unsaved Jews and Romans after the uproar about his presence in the temple (Acts 21:27ff). I believe Paul truncated his testimony, jumping from his initial salvation twenty plus years earlier, to his present visit in Jerusalem. Therefore, "having returned to Jerusalem and while I was praying in the temple" referred to his present trip, not one of his three earlier trips to Jerusalem.¹⁹ On this occasion, the Lord told him to quickly leave Jerusalem (Acts 22:18), but Paul argued with the Lord, and attempted to persuade Him that he could succeed. He did not listen to the Lord, and he did not succeed.

It is on this background, that Paul wrote Ephesians. God allowed him to spend two years in the maritime prison of Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast. In other words, God put him on the bench for communicating a different gospel (cp Galatians 1:4-6). Paul came under his own anathema.²⁰ Paul had to learn that God had a purpose for him and it was not primarily with the Jews, as Gentiles would make up the larger part of the body of Christ. Paul's inner struggle, knowing God's plan but so desiring the salvation of the Jews, meant he had to learn to live in keeping with that revealed plan.

So, nearly four years after last seeing the Ephesians, Paul wrote to them affirming what he had taught them about the body of Christ and the standing of Jewish and Gentile believers. It was necessary to uphold the truth, even though word of his actions in Jerusalem may have undermined that truth. Word of his actions may have instigated or at the very least favored one side of the tension between the Jews and Gentiles in the Ephesian church.

The Purpose of Ephesians

Bible students struggle to find a main purpose of theme to the Ephesian letter. A. Skevington Wood saw Paul not addressing a conflict but having a purpose, "more detached and therefore more exalted."²¹ Yet among four themes which Clinton Arnold sees, one in particular stands out, "*The powerful cultural pressure of the animosity of Gentiles toward Jews can and must be over come in the church on the basis of Jesus' work of uniting both into one new community.*"²² I believe this is Paul's main purpose. Hoehner adds that it this is unity when people love each other.²³ The letter does not bear the polemic tone common in Paul's letters. In an irenic fashion he presses truths the Ephesians should know well to encourage them in a proper attitude toward all members of the body of Christ, not merely those most like themselves.

¹⁸ For the specific offering/sacrifices which were to be offered in connection with this vow, see Numbers 6:13-18.

¹⁹ He first visited Jerusalem as a believer c. AD 36 (Acts 9:26ff). He made his second visit to take a relief gift for the saints in Judea c. 46 (11:30, 12:25). His third visit included the first Church council in Acts 15 about AD 50.

²⁰ Anathema did not mean "cursed" in the sense of going to Hell. It meant to set up or set aside. Paul was shelved or set aside.

²¹ Ephesians in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) p. 17.

²² *Ephesians Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* vol. 10, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010) p. 44.

²³ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians an Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002). p. 104. His discussion of love as the dominant theme continues through page 106.

The Body Truths in Ephesians

Paul communicates body truth²⁴ in Ephesians by different means.²⁵ Paul used specific terminology, for example: body, new man, new creation, church. He employed a number of nouns and verbs to which he prefixed the preposition **σὺν** [with], each emphasizing a joint relationship. He writes an extended section in chapter four on the dynamic of service to one another, especially by means of one's spiritual gift. Paul's famous sections on the filling by the Spirit and the armor of God deal specifically with body truths. In these various ways, God teaches us about the nature and relationship of believers in the body of Christ.

Body terminology in Ephesians

The Body

Paul used the word "body" [**σῶμα**] ten times in Ephesians. Nine of those refer to the body of Christ (1:23; 2:16; 3:6; 4:4, 12, 16 (2x); 5:23, 30).²⁶ With respect to the size of Paul's letters, this use of the noun "body" only occurs more frequently in Colossians. First Corinthians is a close second, though half the uses of "body" in that letter refer to a physical body. The idea of the body though not expressly stated is drawn out in Ephesians 2:14-16 and 4:12-16. The metaphor of the body aptly describes the composite unity of believers. Many people, each uniquely equipped by God, are divinely joined to one another for the purpose of God's glory (cf. Ephesians 3:9-11). It is not a body separate from God, but the body of Christ (4:12).

Paul identifies the body of Christ with the fullness in 1:23. Fullness describes the body from God's perspective. God sees the body as already full; it is complete with every member in his or her place. Since we do not know God's timing, it is possible that members of the body have not yet been born on this earth, so they are definitely not yet in the body from a human perspective. Yet, the body exists because God counts or imputes it to exist in Christ, and God sees it as complete.

The one body is how God has united disparate parts. In our brief survey of the Ephesian church, we saw both Jews and Gentiles comprised the assembly. Both this letter and Paul's later letters to Timothy indicate a tension between these two groups within one assembly. God solved the problem by reconciling both Jews and Gentiles in one body (Ephesians 2:16). **ἀποκαταλλάσσω** originally meant a thorough change,²⁷ and by New Testament times meant the actual reconciliation. By uniting believers from these two racial-religious backgrounds, having strong animosity towards each other, God made them something new and removed the basis of the difference. As Paul wrote in 4:4, there is one body, not a Jewish body and a Gentile body, but a single body of Christ. Christ had to render idle the Law, for the Law had been given to draw a distinction between Jew and Gentile (cp. Leviticus 20:23-26).²⁸ The Law is pictured as a wall, which fragmented people into different groups. Christ destroyed

²⁴ I am using "body truth" to refer to those statements which explain or apply our position in Christ to the whole body of Christ. Not all the texts are plainly "body" related but I have chosen this designation for simplicity.

²⁵ Hoehner lists seven elements compiled by Arthur Patzia regarding the matter of unity: the word "unity", the term "one", the phrase "in Christ", the preposition **σὺν**, church, metaphors for the church (e.g. body), the body. op cit. pp. 102-103.

²⁶ **σῶμα** occurs in Ephesians 5:28 of a man's own body.

²⁷ "Thus the basic significance of **ἀλλάσσω** would be either to change (make other) or to exchange (provide an other)..." Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955) p. 187.

²⁸ The hiphil verb **לָדַב** occurs four times in Leviticus 20:24-26. The verb means "separate selves to, to be separated (Niphal), make a difference, divide, separate, sever" Thomas McComiskey in *TWOT*.

that wall, and in the body God established a new relationship.

Prior to Christ's cross work and resurrection, Gentiles were Christless, without a covenant promise, hopeless and Godless (Ephesians 2:12). God changed that by placing all New Testament believers into the body of Christ. Gentiles are joint-members of the body (Ephesians 3:6). Gentiles are joint-partakers [συσσωμα] of the promise (Ephesians 3:6). Gentiles are not sub-members of the body, or loosely associated members, but equal members. In that new relationship, believers share equally in the promise.

The fifth reference to the body occurs in Paul's instructions on spiritual gifts and service (Ephesians 4:12). Four specific gifts are designed to equip believers for their own areas of service²⁹ and to build up the body of Christ. The word "build up" or "edify" literally meant to build a building or edifice. It metaphorically indicates activity which "builds" the body, or contributes to its growth, by both the spiritual growth within its members and the addition of new members to the body through evangelization.

Paul explained the relationship of parts of the body in Ephesians 4:15-16. Verse 15 ends with a reference to "the Head-Christ." The very next phrase in verses 16 "out from Whom" refers to the Head. Christ is the source of growth³⁰ and supply³¹ in the body. However, He does not provide either of these directly to the individual believer, but corporately to the body. He does this "through every joint pertaining³² to the supply" (v. 16). Each believer is seen joined to the other believers and through those other believers Christ the Head supplies what is necessary. When this works correctly, the body builds itself up in love. Therefore, you need other believers and they need you, because that is the manner in which God has designed the body of Christ to function.

Twice, Paul referred to the body in his section on husbands and wives (Ephesians 5:23, 30). The wife is to submit to her husband (v. 22). She does this because the husband is head over the wife as Christ is the head of the Church (v. 23). As the head, Christ directs the activity of the body, as we saw in Ephesians 4, supplying through the various members what is needed for the body to grow. Implied in this context, a wife submits because it is God's design for her husband to contribute to the growth and supply for her. This charge to the wives is followed by the charge for husbands to love their wives (4:25). He should attend to her needs as Christ attends to the Church. Christ does not neglect His church but exercises headship when it suits Him. He gave Himself for the Church. That love is expressed by His nourishing (to feed) and cherishing (to deal warmly toward) His church, for we are the members of the body (5:29-30). He provides what is necessary for the whole body. Since the body is comprised of members, He attending to the needs of the members constitutes His attention to the body.

Saints

In the Christ, God counts believers to be Saints, those who are set apart to Him (1 Corinthians 1:2). Believers are set apart in Christ, because Christ set Himself apart out of the world (John 17:17-19). Paul referred to the believers in Christ as saints eleven times in

²⁹ δῆλον is anarthrous, emphasizing not a specific "ministry" or service but a quality of service. It is general because the ministry of each member depends upon his or her unique spiritual gift.

³⁰ ἀνακατασκευάζω an Aorist Active Subjunctive verb in verse 15.

³¹ ἐπιχορηγία is a feminine noun in verse 16.

³² I understand the genitive to be descriptive of the band [ἀφῆ]. The article before ἐπιχορηγία ties it to the noun it modifies. See, Ray Summers, *Essential of New Testament Greek* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1950) p. 27. The noun "band" is not definite being modified by πᾶς.

Ephesians (1:1). God chose that believers in Christ be holy and without blame (Ephesians 1:4). We are saints by God's choice, not our choice. Christ's present ministry toward His body is that He will present her to Himself as an assembly that will be holy (5:27). Ephesians 1:4 states that He chose **us**. Much ink has been spent on this verse attempting to determine whether Paul was writing about individual election or corporate election. Yet most fail to strip the verse down to its basic statement: He chose us. To this an infinitival phrase clarifies the intent: that we be holy ones³³ and blameless ones.³⁴ Therefore, God's election, in this verse, is not so much an election to salvation, but to something He intends for us to be. Ephesians 5:27 demonstrate that God will accomplish His determination. Christ will present the Church to Himself. When He does this, two of her qualities are "holy and without blame" the same two ideas stated in 1:4. The act of presenting the Church to Himself is in a marriage context. The Church, albeit made up of individuals, is a corporate entity. Christ presents His entire Church to Himself, not just some of those parts. The body, Christ's future³⁵ bride is Christ's inheritance, an inheritance among the saints (1:18).³⁶ Both statements reminded the Ephesians that whatever problems they may have had with their fellow believers, they are holy and without blame in Christ, and they all will be that way together in the future. It serves as an encouragement to think that way towards one another in the present time.

Four times, Paul used the expression "all the saints." He was encouraged by the Ephesians' love to all the saints (1:15). Paul considered himself the least from all saints (3:8). He wanted the Ephesians to be made strong enough to apprehend will all the saints the full dimensions of the temple made up of the believers. He charged the Ephesians to be watching by means of all readiness and supplication about³⁷ all the saints (6:18). Each statement emphasizes not some of the saints but all. If any division or conflict exists, this phrase encourages them to look beyond their present conflict and see the large truth of all the saints. Even though we shall see that some of the Ephesians had a problem most likely along racial-religious, they were doing something correct, because they had love to all the saints. Though some may not have consistently acted as though certain other saints were in the body, by God's strength they could see with all the saints the full size of the body of Christ. Though some may not have given proper attention or status to certain other believers, their readiness and communication could surround all the body of Christ.

The Fullness

Paul identified the Church which is His (Christ's) body as "the fullness" (1:22-23). He used the verb **πληρωω** and noun **πληρωμα** seven times of this relationship in Ephesians. The verb meant, "to fill, make full, fill to the full."³⁸ It is filling which results in something being full, not part full. The **-μα** ending of the noun emphasizes a result of filling, i.e. fullness. Part of Paul's request to God in Ephesians 3 was that they might be filled unto all the fullness from the God (3:19). The fullness describes the full stature of the Christ, which is Christ the head along

³³ **αγιος** as a masculine plural noun

³⁴ **αμωμος** as a masculine plural noun. It meant to be physically "without spot or blemish" but as a metaphor it referred "Ethically, without blemish, faultless, unblamable." Joseph Henry Thayer, *The New Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Lafayette, IN: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1979) p. 33.

³⁵ The Hebrew culture in which Paul was raised used "bride" for both one married as well as one engaged to be married. In this sense the Church is Christ's bride, though the marriage is yet future.

³⁶ In Ephesians 1:11 we the believers are made an inheritance. The verb **κληρωω** is an aorist passive verb.

³⁷ **περι**

³⁸ G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1948) p. 365. With the **-ωω** ending, the verb involves a note of causation.

with His fully formed body with all its members (4:13). Lastly, Paul charged the Ephesians to be filled by the Spirit (5:18). As he had requested that they would be filled in 3:19, in 5:18 he strongly charges them to be filled, changing from an Aorist Passive **Subjunctive** in the former and a Present Passive **Imperative** in the latter.³⁹

The Church

“The Church” is the most common contemporary designation for the body of Christ. Paul used this noun nine times in Ephesians. The Greek word **ἐκκλησία**, translated “church,”⁴⁰ meant an assembly of individuals. In modern parlance, most people understand a church to refer to some religious entity or building tied to Christianity. The original Greek word did not have this technical sense but was any kind of assembly⁴¹ of people normally assembled for a specific purpose. Christ is the head over all things (spirit beings) for the sake of the Church which is His body, the fullness (1:22-23). This is an assembly associated with Him as His body and the object of His filling ministry. He is also head of the Church (5:23). For that reason, the Church submits to Christ to enjoy the benefits which Christ provides by His actions on her behalf (5:24-25). His goal is that she is a church wrapped in glory⁴² which He will present to Himself (5:27). She will be a whole assembly with all parts wrapped in glory which He presents to Himself. At that time she will have not stain or spot, nothing about which anyone can accuse her, which means no stain can be found and not accusation can brought against any part of that assembly. Christ’s headship and present activity for the Church is compared to a man nourishing and cherishing his own body (5:29). In the future, the Church which is Christ’s body will officially become His bride by being joined with Christ by being with Him in heaven.⁴³ The Church living by the grace of God is an agent⁴⁴ through which God makes known His multi-faceted wisdom (3:10). In the future, the Church will be a means of manifesting God’s glory (3:21). As the Church is granted to sit with Christ on His throne and to form the temple in which the Father and Son dwell, aspects of God’s glory (reputation) will be made plainly visible. Each of these statements applies to the whole assembly.

The Christ

The Christ sometimes refers to the Jesus Christ, the man who is the anointed one. Sometimes this designation refers to Jesus Christ along with His body (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12). Paul used the title “Christ” with the definite article twenty-three times in Ephesians. Of these I am convinced that that six refer to the corporate entity, fourteen refer to Jesus Christ, and three could refer to either.

Jesus Christ	Jesus Christ & His Body	Uncertain
1:12, 20; 2:13; 3:11; 4:7, 12; 5:2, 5, 14, 23, 24, 25, 29; 6:5	1:10; 3:4, 8, 19; 4:13, 20	2:5; 3:1, 17

³⁹ I dealt with this topic in a paper The Nature and Content of the Filling in Ephesians 5:18 presented at the Theological Forum on Contemporary Issues in 2000. It is available at graceteaching.com.

⁴⁰ The English word “Church” derives not from *ekklesia* but from the German *Kirche* which was based on the Greek *kuriakon* that which is characterized by the Lord or master.

⁴¹ This word is used of a disorganized and unlawful assembly three times in Acts 19:32, 39, 40.

⁴² **ἐνδοξος** “wrapped in glory” is my understanding of this hapax.

⁴³ God married Israel by placing Israel in her land. A key aspect of the marriage of Christ and the Church is that she will be in her promised home—heaven. The Church is made up of citizens of heavens.

⁴⁴ **διὰ** with the genitive of agency

Ephesians 1:10 marks the first reference to the Christ as a corporate entity in this letter. I understand the dispensation of the fullness of times to refer to the final dispensation in which all time is filled full and after which not time will exist for only eternity will exist. That dispensation will be in effect during the first one thousand years of Christ's kingdom (i.e. the Millennium). Paul wrote that the mystery regarding God's desirous will was that the Christ will head-up the all things by⁴⁵ the Christ during that dispensation (Ephesians 1:9-10). "Mystery" means this was a new truth, previously unrevealed (cf. 3:5; Colossians 1:26). Since the Old Testament prophesied of Jesus Christ's reign over all things (cf. Psalm 2:6-9; Isaiah 9:6-7; Zechariah 14:9), this is not the content of the mystery.⁴⁶ Rather the mystery is that Jesus Christ along with His body will head-up all things. This agrees with other passages which state that the believers who make up the body of Christ will reign and judge with Christ (Revelation 2:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:2-3). However, Paul did not write "rule" but "head-up." The racial tension between the two groups of believers in Ephesus should be lessened when confronted with the truth that the Church in close connection with her head Jesus Christ will be over all things, which includes not only Gentiles but also Israel.

Ephesians 3:4 and 8 involve the mystery regarding the Christ, namely the absolutely equality of Jewish and Gentile believers in this new entity. We'll consider this in more detail under the preposition $\sigma\upsilon\nu$. This was a mystery because God had not yet revealed such a standing for Gentile believers. Old Testament Scriptures anticipated a place for Gentiles in God's purposes, but did not see this present situation. This is a new truth.

The tensions in the Ephesians church may have led to a struggle in the sphere of love. They did have love for all the saints (1:15). We are not certain if they reserved some aspects of love for those believers most like them, but Paul's communication for them to experientially know the love that surpasses knowledge appears to hint at this problem (3:19). The participle $\upsilon\pi\epsilon\rho\beta\alpha\lambda\lambda\omega$ modifying "knowledge" is a feminine accusative and tied to "the love." Expanded, we might translate the phrase, "the surpassing love with reference to experiential knowledge." Clinton Arnold attempts to give the sense, "I want you to know that which cannot be known, that the love of Christ surpasses knowledge."⁴⁷ What commentators miss in this passage is that this is not Christ's love for people. This is about our love for "the Christ" not some believers, but the whole entity without partiality. Such love is beyond experiential knowledge, nearly impossible to quantify.

Ephesians 4:13 falls in the section addressing the use of spiritual gifts for the maturing and growth of the body. These serving of gifts among the members will continue until the body is full-grown. Paul described that full-grown state by the words, "to a measure of height characterized by the fullness of the Christ." From God's perspective the body is full or complete. From another perspective, all the members may not yet be in place. Yet the day God began the body of Christ, the Father determined its exact full-grown height. This full-grown status is both physical; all the members in their place, but also spiritual; all the members know how to relate to one another and are therefore mature. That time is when Christ will come for His own upon the earth, resurrect those who have died and all will be caught up to be with

⁴⁵ I take $\tau\omega\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omega$ to be an instrumental of means.

⁴⁶ This is contrary to the several commentaries I consulted which interpret this to be all things in the universe being reunited or coming under the headship of Christ in the future. They appear to miss the point that this has already been revealed, hence not a mystery. Clinton Arnold summarizes his view, "Christ has begun to exercise his headship over the powers, but there will come a time when all of creation will have to submit to his authority as sovereign Lord." Arnold, op cit. p. 89

⁴⁷ Arnold, op cit. p. 218.

Him, and having seen Him as He is, all will be like Him (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; 1 John 3:2).

Probably no section in this letter so typifies the tension between saints, as does 4:14-5:15. This is more than just a charge for Gentile converts to continue “the process of ceasing their immoral practices and appropriating a lifestyle consistent with the holiness of the God to whom they now belonged.”⁴⁸ Rather due to a possible sense of inferiority, Gentile believers are tempted to resort to their former way of life in response to the Jewish believers. He especially reminds them not to live like the other Gentiles (4:17-19). He appeals to them, “But you have not learned the Christ like this” (4:20). The lifestyle rehearsed in verses 17-19 is not characteristic of the Christ. It is not how they were taught (v. 21). Christ taught them by directing the ministry within His body. Therefore, they were taught through the various members who make up the Christ. In fact, Jesus Himself, the head of the body lived out truth (v. 21). During His earthly ministry, He dealt with people according to truth, not according to nationality. He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and that was the foremost aspect of His ministry. However, on several occasions He dealt with non-Jews. This attitude of truth should be present among the Ephesians saints (cf. 4:15– where the participle “truthing” indicates more than just verbal speaking of truth; 4:25).

Three passages remain which I could see as referring to either Jesus Christ Himself or to Jesus Christ in union with His body. In 2:5, we are “made alive together with/in the Christ.” We’ll address this more under the preposition $\sigma\upsilon\nu$. Simply, both ideas make sense, however the very intent of the preposition $\sigma\upsilon\nu$ probably means this is Jesus Christ. In 3:1 Paul is a prisoner with reference to the Christ. Again, it could be for Jesus Christ Himself, or due to the final phrase “for you the Gentiles” it might mean this new entity, the Christ. Then in 3:17, the intent of Paul’s communication was “that the Christ might settle down at home in your hearts through the faith.” If this is Jesus Christ, it may be akin to the idea of the Vine and branches metaphor in John 15:4, in which Christ told His disciples, “abide in Me, and I *abide* in you.” However, as we have seen, their need to know the love for the whole of the Christ is akin to the Christ being at home in their hearts. The reference to “the faith” most likely points back to the promise of access in 3:12 and may mean this is just a reference to Jesus Christ.

The New Creation

The Christ, which we have just considered, also bears the designation the New Creation (2:15; 4:24). Paul calls it “a quality of new creation” only in 2 Corinthians 5:17⁴⁹ and Galatians 6:15. David Spurbeck provides a literal rendering of 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore since anyone in Christ, a new creating.”⁵⁰ In Ephesians Paul refers to the act of creating, using the verb (2:15) once and the participial form twice (2:10; 4:24). In 2:10 believers have been created in Christ Jesus for the purpose of⁵¹ good works. 2:15 reveals that Christ created the Jew and

⁴⁸ Arnold, op cit. p. 44.

⁴⁹ Because 2 Corinthians 5:17 is so often misunderstood, I include a couple comments from Robert Gromacki. “*Second*, he was a ‘new creature.’ This is true both of the believer’s position (Gal. 6:15) and practice (Eph. 2:10). He is a member of the ‘new man,’ the body of Christ composed of saved Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:15). This position is gained through the baptism in the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:13).” In the next paragraph he continues, “The ‘*old things*’ do not refer to past sinful habits; rather, they point to the reasons why a sinner stands condemned before a holy God.” And again in the following paragraph, “The phrase ‘*all things*’ refers to the believer’s unalterable standing before God, to to his behavior of life.” *Stand Firm in the Faith*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books House, 1978) p. 90.

⁵⁰ Spurbeck, op cit. p. 136.

⁵¹ C.F.D. Moule on $\epsilon\pi\lambda$ with the Dative wrote, “This primarily designates movement ending in a definite spot—as it were a line terminated by a given point.” He illustrates this from Galatians 5:13 “*you were called to (or with a view to) freedom*,” where the calling is to the definite point of freedom. *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 50.

Gentile believers into one new man. It is in this new creation that believers as members of the body of Christ have good works planned for them. As members they have been gifted to serve one another in the body. In 4:24 the Ephesians are told to put on the new man. The new man has been created according to a divine standard.⁵² To understand this new man we must consider the designation “the new man.”

The One New Man

The identity of the one new man can be confusing. It is plain in Ephesians 2:15 that it is **one** new man, not new **men**. However, in 4:24 the line of thought developed in chapter two doesn't appear to be same in the minds of translators and Bible students. The ESV, NASB, and NIV translate the phrase “the new self.” Granted that not every word or phrase in Scripture can be translated literally, and that translators must understand what a passage means in order to accurately represent that meaning in another language, I don't believe the translators of these versions understand Paul's intended meaning. 2:15 is the key. The one new man is the new creation. It is a singular entity comprised of all believers seen as one united to Jesus Christ as the head. It is the Christ, the new creation, the one new man.

It is a new man in the sense that it is something entirely new, indicated by the adjective **καινος** rather than **νεος** which would only indicate freshness, but potentially the same. This created man is **καινος**—new because Christ as taken believers of distinctly Jewish and Gentile extractions and united them into something altogether new. This is not Gentiles added to the Jews as Reformed and Covenant theology do with their error of “the true Israel.”⁵³ This is an entity in which Jews are no more Jews and Gentiles are no more Gentiles but all who believe have been made into new man—the Christ (cf. Galatians 3:28). In Christ they comprise the one singular seed who is Christ (not Israel).⁵⁴ It is a new man.

In the tense situation between Jewish and Gentile believers who make up this one new man, the idea that they make up **one** new man highlights the supposed unity. The **one** man is how Christ has reconciled the two in **one body**. It is one man.

So, in 4:22 and 24, Paul is not talking about new individual believers, that is “new selves” as some translations represent this. In a context dealing with interaction of believers with one another, it is necessary not to act by the standard of the former conduct associated with the old man. In this case “the old man” is who they were in their separate identities: Jews, Gentiles, males, females, slaves, free. It is who they were prior to salvation associated with the fallen and divided human race. Now, believers are not only in Christ individually but corporately. They have been created into this new man. Therefore, putting on “the new man” (same language as in 2:15) involves putting on their identity with all believers who make up the body of Christ. Rather than an identity corrupted, it is a corporate identity according to God's standard. It was created in righteousness (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21). It was created in an appropriate⁵⁵ state related to the Truth. Once again, this new man is not who the believer is

⁵² **κατα θεον** where the preposition with the accusative case means “according to” or “by a standard of.”

⁵³ James Moffatt, *The Expositor's Greek Testament, Volume 5* ed. Sir William Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) p. 292. Thomas R. Schriener, *New Testament Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008) p. 743.

⁵⁴ According to Galatians 3:16, God made a covenant promise to Abraham that is fulfilled not in the nation Israel but in the person of Christ. It is a singular seed, not many. In the other covenant promises to Abraham the seed is plural with plural pronouns, but in Genesis 22:17, it is a singular pronoun “his.” Paul interprets this seed to be Christ. It is many and yet one for all believers in Christ form one seed which are heirs (Galatians 3:29).

⁵⁵ The noun **οσιος** means that which is appropriate for service to or relation to God. See R.C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, nd) p. 307.

individually, but who he is corporately with all others saints of this present dispensation.

The new man will one day be a mature man (Ephesians 4:13). While God sees the body as full in Christ, upon the earth, it is possible that some members of the body are not yet in the body. As we have seen, when all the members are in place, the new man will be mature. It will be the full-grown new man—the Christ.

The Household of God

Most of the metaphors have been of a corporate nature: body, creation, new man. In Ephesians 2:19 the believers are pictured as united in one household. God sees the human race divided into three divisions: Jews, Gentiles, Church of God (1 Corinthians 10:32). The implication is that if one is part of the Church of God, one is no longer a Jew or Gentile. The Jew and Gentile division of humanity had been in place since God separated Abraham, which He did about two thousand years prior to the founding of the Church. Believers might erroneously continue to see themselves as being divided into the two families of Jews or Gentiles. However, the former alienation between these two families is ended in the household of God.

The Temple

Ephesians 2:20-22 identifies believers by yet another metaphor—“a holy temple in the Lord.” Through the ministry of the apostles and prophets God laid the temple’s foundation, which is Christ (2:20; 1 Corinthians 3:10-11). Upon that foundation believers have been built. Peter pictured the believers as living stones, which fits the picture of a building comprised of believers (1 Peter 2:5). As the believers are fit together by the Spirit, the structure grows into a temple (Ephesians 2:21). **Ναός** is the inner portion of the temple, akin to the holy of holies (cf. Matthew 27:51). In the Lord this temple is build together for a location in which God settles down at home (Ephesians 2:22).

Paul referred to the temple again in Ephesians 3:18. He did not use the word “temple” but spoke in terms of dimensions: breadth, length, height, depth.⁵⁶ Though numerous interpretations have been suggested for this four-fold description,⁵⁷ that of the body of Christ as temple fits the context best. To focus on the distinct racial background of the believers who makeup the body is much like calling one or two walls a building. The Ephesians needed to see themselves as part of a whole structure. “This ability to measure the church needs the assistance of the Divine Spirit—of Him who forms this ‘habitation of God’—so that we may understand its nature, feel its self-expansion, and believe the ‘glorious things spoken’ of it.”⁵⁸ They needed to mentally apprehend the full dimensions of the temple so they might experientially know the love for the Christ (3:19).

Oneness

Paul employed the word “one” fifteen times in Ephesians. He used is seven times in 4:4-6. Paul used “one” three times in 2:14-16. While he stated that Christ created the two into one new man, it is the Spirit who enacted this by baptizing believers into one body. Therefore, the oneness is from the Spirit (4:3). He is the one who enacts the “one baptism” (4:5). He did not enact distinct baptisms for people of different ethnic backgrounds. All believers form one body and are placed into that one body by one baptism (2:14-16). Believers can also look forward to the time at which we all arrive at the oneness of the faith (4:13). All believers of the

⁵⁶ On this interpretation, I am indebted to John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977) pp. 254-255.

⁵⁷ Eadie lists ten suggested interpretations. op cit. pp. 251-254.

⁵⁸ Eadie. p. 255.

body will appreciate the shared promise of God.

Family

When Paul wrote about his communication to the Father for the Ephesians, he spoke of “every family” (Ephesians 3:15). The key word of this expression *πατρια* derives from *πατηρ* translated “Father.” It refers to that which derives from a father, i.e. a family. I do not believe that it is such a general statement as that related by S.D.F. Salmond, “The sense, therefore, is ‘the Father, from whom all the related orders of intelligent beings, human and angelic, each by itself, get the significant name *family, community*’. The various classes of men on earth, Jewish, Gentile, and others, and the various orders of angels in heaven, are all related to God, the common Father, and only in virtue of that relation has any of them the name of *family*.”⁵⁹ Salmond argued that the adjective *πας* [“all”] must mean “every” and therefore cannot have any exclusive sense in this context. I partly agree. However, I see Paul’s statement distinguishing two families primarily: in heavens (the home and citizenship of Church believers), upon earth (the home and citizenship of Israel). These two are both initiated and maintained by God, and to both He acts as Father. For any who may have emphasized a difference between saints in the body, they need consider they are part of a family in heavens.

συν Prefixed Nouns and Verbs

Paul indicates the unity of the body of Christ by the use of the preposition *συν* [sūn]. Brooks and Winbery⁶⁰ classify this preposition as occurring with the Instrumental case. We translate the preposition “with” emphasizing a more intimate closeness than is normal for the preposition *μετα* [meta].⁶¹ It occurs twice by itself in Ephesians and only once with reference to the body. In 3:18 Paul was expressing his communication to God that the Ephesians would be strong enough to apprehend **with all the saints** the full dimensions of the temple, which is the body of Christ (cf. 2:20-22).

More frequently, Paul used this preposition as a prefix to verbs and nouns. While in the last case “with the saints” is meant, there is some question as to whether the preposition in the following contexts is emphasizing ‘with Christ’ or ‘with the saints.’ In 2:19, 21, 22; 3:6; 4:3, 16 the emphasis of the preposition is the shared position of all believers who make up the body of Christ. However, in 2:5 and 6 where the first three occurrences of the prefixed preposition occur most Bible students do not relate the emphasis to the body. A survey of commentaries on Ephesians 2:5-6 demonstrate either an ignoring of the unified idea or clear statements against such a position. Handley Moule pointed out, “–the Gr. grammar allows this to refer to either (1) union with *the Church*, or (2) union with *the Lord*; (1) ‘as a united company,’ or (2) ‘as united to Him.’ And the words just below ‘in Him,’ not ‘with Him,’ may seem to favour the former. But the previous verse, and Col. ii. 12, iii. 1; are strongly for the reference to Christ.”⁶² Francis Foulkes suggested, “The preposition here may also carry the hint of the fact that from whatever racial or national background men have come, they are brought into this new life in

⁵⁹ *Ephesians* in *The Expositor's Greek Testament, Volume 3*, op cit. p. 312.

⁶⁰ James A. Brooks and Carlton L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1979) p. 62. They specifically classify it as occurring with the Instrumental of Means and the Instrumental of Association. H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey classify it as occurring with the Instrumental case. *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Toronto, ON: The MacMillan Company, 1955) p. 111. Wesley J. Perschbacher, who follows a five case system in his syntax, classifies the preposition “with the dative of association and accompaniment.” *New Testament Greek Syntax*, (Chicago: Moody, 1995) p. 225.

⁶¹ Joseph Henry Thayer noted some grammarians who saw in *συν* “a fellowship far closer and more intimate than that expressed by *μετα*’, although in the N.T. this distinction is much oftener neglected than observed.” op cit. p. 598.

⁶² Handley Carr Glyn Moule, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: with Introduction and Notes* (Cambridge: University Press, 1893) p. 72.

Christ in fellowship together, a theme that is developed fully in the next section.”⁶³ John Eadie, in contrast, felt that “a union of Jew and Gentile, is as wide of the truth.”⁶⁴ With Eadie stand many commentators: Curtis Vaughan’s *Ephesians: A Study Guide Commentary*, A. Skevington Wood in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary Vol. 11*, Kenneth Wuest *Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament*. Harold W. Hoehner placed Ephesians 2:1-10 under the heading “New Position Individually” in contrast to 2:11-22, “New Position Corporately.”⁶⁵ Catholic exegete Rudolph Schnackenburg comments, “The ‘making alive with’ does not refer to the union of the Christians with one another – be it Gentile- and Jewish-Christians or all Christians in general who have had this experience of salvation – but should be taken with Christ.”⁶⁶

Ephesians 2:5 includes a textual problem; should **εν** be included between **συνζωοποιησεν** [“made alive together”] and **τω χριστω** [“the Christ”]? Strictly based on manuscripts, the evidence appears stacked against its inclusion.⁶⁷ It is supported by three manuscripts to which scholars frequently give preference: P⁴⁶ B 33. P⁴⁶ is dated at AD 200; B is 4th century and 33 9th century. Several church fathers also quote the passage with the **εν** included, all of whom wrote before 400. A couple possible solutions are given by the editorial committee of the United Bible Society text. They felt the **εν** may have been accidentally copied from the ending of the preceding verb **συνζωοποιησεν**, or an intentional addition from **εν χριστω ιησου** in verses six.⁶⁸ It is also possible that the preposition was intentionally omitted, as a copyist may not have understood Paul’s point. If a copyist thought that Paul was speaking strictly or primarily of union with Christ Jesus Himself, then the **εν** along with the preposition prefixed to the verb may have seemed confusing.

Certainly issues regarding the relationship of believers to one another were part of the problem in the Colossian church. In Colossians Paul referred to believers as “raised together with the Christ” where the phrase is **συνηγερθητε τω χριστω** (Colossians 3:1). He used similarly prefixed verbs in 2:12 (‘buried with’ and ‘raised with’) tied to the pronoun “him” with no additional preposition. In each of these three cases Paul appears to mean “with Christ.” Also in 2:20 he used just the verb “died” tied to the noun “Christ” by the preposition standing alone.⁶⁹ However, in 2:13, Paul used the same verb as in Ephesians 2:5 – **συνζωοποιησεν** – followed by **υμας συν αυτω**.⁷⁰ For some reason, he felt compelled to repeat the preposition before the pronoun. This is likely because Paul was concerned with the corporate issues in the Colossian church. However, those issues were secondary to problems regarding Christology. A twisted or errant Christology can affect the practice of unity in a church.

While Paul is writing about our union with Christ, he intended the **συν** preposition prefixed to the three verbs in Ephesians 2:5-6 to communicate a position shared by all the saints who make up the body. This is born out by his emphasis in the remaining occurrences.

⁶³ *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963) p. 72.

⁶⁴ Eadie, op cit. p. 144.

⁶⁵ Hoehner, op cit. p. 305. He does not discuss the possibility that **συν** refers to the body.

⁶⁶ Schnackenburg, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991) pp. 94-95.

⁶⁷ Manuscripts omitting **εν**: **Ν Α Δ Γ Κ Ρ Ψ 81 88 104 181 326 330 436 451 614 et al.** per *The Greek New Testament 3rd ed.* (United Bible Societies, 1983).

⁶⁸ Bruce M Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1971) p. 602.

⁶⁹ **απεθανετε συν χριστω**

⁷⁰ See a similar construction in 2 Corinthians 4:14.

In 2:19 those who were once strangers and aliens (i.e. the Gentiles) are **joint**-citizens⁷¹ with the saints. Believers from both Jewish and Gentile extraction are **jointly**-fit⁷² together in the house⁷³ structure, which is the body of Christ (2:21). Paul used the participle again in 4:16 to picture believers are small parts of the body being **jointly**-fit together. This house structure is growing into a kind of holy temple in *the* Lord. All these believers are being **jointly**-built⁷⁴ into a location where God is settled down (2:22). That temple now exists in Christ by God's reckoning, but will become a reality, with believers being the pillars surrounding the Father and Son (cf. Revelation 3:12). Believers in the body of Christ are not only equal citizens, but part of the structure which is God's temple. Each statement serves as an encouragement to experience the unity which God has established between these believers.

In 3:5, Paul referred to the mystery of the Christ, about which he had previously written them a little information (3:3). The Christ is the body of Christ viewed in unity with Jesus Christ the head of the body. As a whole it is several times called "the Christ."⁷⁵ This mystery revealed that Gentiles have absolutely equal standing in all respects within this new entity. Gentiles are **joint**-heirs⁷⁶. They do not get the crumbs which fall from the table, as the Gentiles did during Jesus' earthly ministry (cf. Matthew 15:27; Luke 16:21). The Jewish believers do not receive the lion's share of the inheritance. The inheritance in the context of Ephesians is a future in which we with Christ will head up all things during the final dispensation (Ephesians 1:10-14). Gentiles are **joint**-body⁷⁷ with the Jews. There is not two bodies –one Jewish, one Gentile– but one body (Ephesians 4:4). The Gentiles are equal in the body. The Jewish believers are not the head and the Gentiles the tail (cf. Deuteronomy 28:12-13, 43-44). Also, Gentiles believers are **joint**-partakers⁷⁸ of the promise in Christ Jesus. It is a singular promise to which Paul refers. That promise is one of access to God (cf. 2:16-18; 3:12). The Jews do not have a direct line to God and the Gentiles must approach through them, nor are the Gentiles excluded from coming to God (cf. Deuteronomy 4:7; Zechariah 8:23; Ephesians 2:12). These three truths comprised a new truth for this present dispensation of grace. This mystery should affect the Ephesians saints by unifying them. They will all inherit them same future. They are a common body, and partake equally of a common promise.

Twice Paul reminded the Ephesians that he was a prisoner (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1). The word prisoner is **δεσμιος** a bound one from **δew** to bind. To Timothy who was serving in the Ephesian church, Paul wrote that the Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul's chain (2 Timothy 1:16). Luke tells us that Paul spent two years in rented quarters [NASB] (Acts 28:30). He was apparently allowed to be under house-arrested, chained to a Roman soldier. He referred to his chain in Ephesians 6:20 and Acts 28:20 also. In Ephesians 4:3 he wrote, "being eager to guard the oneness from the Spirit in the **joint**-chain⁷⁹ of the peace." Paul referred to peace eight times in Ephesians. He customarily greeted and closed his letter with a statement of peace. The

⁷¹ **συμπολιται** masculine plural noun

⁷² **συναρμολογουμενη** present middle participle

⁷³ Jews would easily understand the relationship of temple and house, as the Hebrew **בית** is often used of the temple. See 1 Kings 6:5, 37.

⁷⁴ **συνοικοδομεισθε** present middle indicative

⁷⁵ It should be noted that not every occurrence of "Christ" with the definite article refers to this entity. Only a careful examination of context can determine. Even then, some have been hard for me to determine.

⁷⁶ **συγκληρονομα** neuter plural noun

⁷⁷ **συσσωμα** neuter plural noun

⁷⁸ **συμμετοχα** neuter plural noun

⁷⁹ **συνδεσμος** masculine singular noun

remaining occurrences deal with the issue of unity. Christ is our peace, [lit. “the peace of us”] (2:14). He made peace by creating the two racially distinct groups (Jews and Gentiles) into one new man (2:15). Having accomplished the basis of peace in Himself, He announced peace as good news to both the Jews who had been near and the Gentiles who had been afar (2:17). The verb **ευαγγελιζω**⁸⁰ can be translated “evangelize” but plainly meant to announce a good news or bring good news. Christ did this through others, His apostles leading the way. This is not evangelism of the lost but announcing good news to believers. Through His apostles, Christ announced a peace with God and between the two groups. He announced that peace was accomplished in one body. The preparation pertaining to this good news of peace is the third part of the armor of God in Ephesians 6:23. So, in Ephesians 4:3, the **joint**-chain is the peace to which Paul has referred in this letter. The peace exists in the body of Christ. The Ephesians could guard the oneness by mentally relating to the fact that they are one body not two.

Finally, Paul pictured the current state of the body as growing and its parts being **joined**-harmoniously⁸¹ and **jointly**-knit⁸² (Ephesians 4:16). Both participles could be translated as a middle or passive. The passive fits both this context and other Scriptures which state that God places believers in the body. Believers do not place themselves in the body, nor do they knit themselves together. As many parts make up a human body so is the body of Christ. As the many parts of a human body must be joined so as to function, so as to accomplish the purpose for which each is intended, so believers in the body of Christ are joined to other parts to accomplish the purposes of God in the body.

Paul used the pronoun **σὺν** negatively in two passages in Ephesians. In 5:7 Paul charged the Ephesians to not become **joint**-partakers⁸³ with the sons of disobedience (5:6). He further charged them not to **jointly**-share⁸⁴ [fellowship] in the unfruitful works of darkness (5:11). Though both statements may not at first appear to contribute to our understanding of God’s plan for life in the body of Christ, they do tie to other thoughts in Ephesians. Believers are **joint**-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus (3:6). Paul used the same noun in both passages. Rather than partake closely with those who do not share our promise of access (present and future) to God, partake with those who do. Rather than sharing closely in works which do not manifest God’s life, we are to engage in those works which He prepared for us as part of the new creation (2:10). Even negatively, Paul is encouraging a proper relation to other members of the body of Christ, but warning against relations which will detract from God’s planned oneness in the body.

The Pronouns One Another and Yourselves

The pronouns **ἀλλήλων** and **ἑαυτοῦ** communicate distinct ideas: “one another” or a reciprocal relationship among members of a group, and “yourself” or a reflexive relationship of an individual to himself. When **ἑαυτοῦ** is used in the plural (e.g. **ἑαυτοῖ**) it can be reflexively within a group, however, more commonly it is an individual to himself. 4:19 illustrates this even with the plural form where Gentiles (plural) have given themselves [**ἑαυτούς**] over to lewdness to a work of uncleanness in all covetousness. One individual is not giving another individual over—this would be reciprocal; rather this is reflexive with each

⁸⁰ Here it is **ευαγγελισατο** an aorist middle indicative

⁸¹ **συναρμολογεω** as a present passive participle

⁸² **συμβιβάζω** as a present passive participle

⁸³ **συμμετοχος** as a masculine plural noun

⁸⁴ **συγκοινωνεω** present active imperative

individual giving over himself (cf. also 5:28). The singular reflexive pronoun is used in 4:16 but with a plural thought because the singular refers to the body of Christ building itself up in love. Since the body is a corporate entity, the group of individuals who make up the body contribute to this act of building up the body.

The reciprocal pronoun **ἄλληλων** definitely emphasizes activity among the members of a group. Paul employed this pronoun four times in Ephesians. In 4:2, he charged the Ephesians to be ones who are “putting up with”⁸⁵ one another. In 4:25, he charged them to put off/away lying and to speak truth with fellow believers because they are members of one another. They were to become kind ones toward one another (4:32), and finally one submitting to another (5:21).

The distinction between these two pronouns affects the interpretation of two passages: 4:32; 5:19. We’ll address 5:19 later. Most English translations do not reflect a clear distinction between these two pronouns. The passage should read, “You become kind ones to one another [**ἄλληλους**], compassionate ones, while being⁸⁶ gracious ones to themselves [**ἑαυτοῖς**], even as also God in Christ was gracious to you.” I agree with the common translation of the first “one another,” but I feel that the ASV, NASB, NIV translation of the second “each other” gives a reciprocal sense. The AV, Darby, ESV, NET, NKJV translates both “one another.” The reflexive pronoun could have a group reflexive idea here, but Paul’s use of both in the same context presses the distinction. Believers are to be kind to one another, and the circumstance that contributes to that attitude is being gracious to themselves, that is, if an individual can’t treat himself graciously, he will find it hard to be kind to others. A believer who is hard on himself will tend to be harder on others. Therefore, it is not selfish to deal graciously with one’s self, but contributes to guarding the unity of the body.

The Effect of Understanding Body Issues on “Christian living” texts

Ephesians contains well-known, oft-taught passages which are frequently misunderstood because the passages are not understood in the context of the letter. We have already addressed Paul’s prayer in Ephesians. Often understood as Paul’s desire for the Ephesians to know how much Christ loves them, we noted that it is about experiential knowledge of love for the Christ. We are not the object, but the ones doing the loving. This illustrates the misunderstanding of the passage because it is not considered in the context. The first part of chapter three is clearly about the basis of the body’s unity. In the section immediately following Paul’s prayer, Paul begins to charge the Ephesians to act on behalf of that unity: guard the unity from the Spirit (4:3). Therefore, the last of chapter three illustrates how the context affects our interpretation.

The sin nature and old man

After a believer learns what God has provided him for his spiritual life, he finds himself confronted by the sin nature. Nowhere in Scripture is this opposition called “the sin nature” but “the sin.” We use the word “nature” for clarification. This sin nature and the flesh refer to the same problem, flesh emphasizing the areas in which God-given desires are twisted into aberrations. Sex between a husband and wife is twisted into adultery, fornication, uncleanness and lewdness. A craving for God is perverted into idolatry and religious superstition.⁸⁷ The “old

⁸⁵ **ἄνεχω** as a present middle participle.

⁸⁶ Present middle participle of **χαρίζω** “to cause to be gracious.” I take this as either a circumstantial participle. See Hoehner, *op cit*, pp. 639-640 for a larger discussion on the translation of this participle.

⁸⁷ This is commonly translated “witchcraft” or “sorcery.”

man” is not the sin nature or flesh, but the believer’s former identity when he was enslaved to that corrupted nature (Ephesians 4:22).

The old man stands in contrast to the new man (Ephesians 4:22; 2:15). We have seen that the new man is the whole new creation of believers in Christ. Likewise, the old man is the old creation, all fallen humanity seen united in Adam. “It should be observed, however, that the *old man* now “put off” is not identical with the *flesh* which, without question, is to abide with each believer to the end of his earthly pilgrimage (Gal. 5:16, 17); but it is rather the first Adamic-relationship which, for the believer, passed out of existence with the death of Christ, being replaced by the New-Creation relationship in Christ, the Last Adam.”⁸⁸ All people in the old man are dominated by the sin nature. Paul described all who are part of the old man in Ephesians 4:17-19. They walk or live their lives in the vanity of their minds. “Vanity”⁸⁹ describes emptiness of conclusion, meaning that when confronted with information regarding God and the things of God,⁹⁰ the unsaved are unable to draw the correct conclusions. They also walk being darkened in their thoughts. One reason why they cannot draw correct conclusions is that they cannot mentally see, for their mental light is off regarding the things of God. Their problem results from their being alienated from God’s life, and this because of [δία] the experiential ignorance existing in them—they don’t know God. Further, they don’t care that they don’t know God, because of the hardness of their hearts. They are always satisfied with something less than God. If anything ever bothered them, and Romans 1 appears to say that it did at one time, they are now past feeling and have given themselves over to work out their flesh (v. 19). This is the state of all in the new man.

Paul reminded the Ephesians that they had not learned the Christ like this (Ephesians 4:20). Recall that “the Christ” in this context refers to Jesus Christ and His body together. The Christ is the new creation and is therefore, not like the vain-minded, alienated standing believers once had when in the old creation. Christ taught them as He taught through human teachers: apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherd-teachers (cf. 4:11). They were taught to put off for themselves⁹¹ the old man and to put on the new man (4:22, 24). I take the aorist infinitives to represent instructions taught in the past, but those instructions remain.⁹²

The believer is no longer in the old man, for the old man was crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6). This is not precisely what Paul meant when he instructed the Romans to logically count themselves to be dead ones to the sin *nature* but living ones to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11). That instruction regarded the believer and his sin nature. In the present text, Paul wrote regarding the spheres in which the believer formerly operated and does operate. Paul did not specifically write about the sin nature and new nature because his purpose was to encourage the Ephesians to a proper attitude toward fellow believers. It is in the new man, not the old, that believers are to relate to one another (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:16-17).

In Ephesians 4&5, Paul specifically mentions works of the flesh: lewdness, greediness,

⁸⁸ L.S. Chafer, *The Ephesian Letter Doctrinally Considered*, (NY: Loizeaux Brothers, 1944) pp. 139-140.

⁸⁹ ματαιοτης empty of result, while εικη is empty of goal or objective, and κενος empty of content or meaning.

⁹⁰ I don’t believe their mental state is limited to the things of God. It affects how they view the consequences of their own actions, interactions, or inaction.

⁹¹ Aorist middle infinitive of αποτιθημι.

⁹² There is disagreement as to the intent of the three infinitives “put off”, “be renewed”, and “put on.” The first and last are aorists and the second a present. Hoehner interprets them to be historical, possibly referring to conversion (ingressive aorists), that is they were taught that the old man was put off and the new man was put on. [p. 603]. Arnold, in contrast, interprets the infinitives with an imperatival sense, and not referring strictly to a past event. [p. 286]. Therefore, he

uncleanness, hot anger [οργη], anger [θυμος], fornication, shameful or obscene talk, and idolatry (4:19, 26, 31; 5:3, 4, 5). The mention of these works of the flesh demonstrate that they were real or potential problems among the believers in the Church. Paul's appeal for properly addressing the flesh again involves a proper attitude toward the new creation, "You did not learn the Christ like this" (4:20). Paul tells the Ephesians they can be angry,⁹³ but are not to sin (4:26). It is hard to entertain one part of the flesh without engaging in more. Allowing one's self to remain angry may open one to the work of fornication, lewdness, idolatry or any of the other works of the flesh, for one is continuing in the sin nature (cf. Romans 6:1). It would appear when Satan observes an angry believer, he makes use of it as a location from which to further attack the saint (4:27). He may tempt him to steal, because his anger at another makes it easy to justify (4:28). Rather they are to labor, not for themselves, but for others. Rather than anger, they are to speak that which is good to build up others (4:29), and to be kind ones to fellow believers (4:32). They are encouraged to walk in love like Christ, in contrast to the flesh's perversions of love (5:2-3). So, Paul's instructions regarding the sin nature are related to the new creation and how the believer should be part of the solution for the new creation experiencing the unity the Spirit formed in Christ.

Filling in Ephesians 5:18ff

Many Christians know of the filling of the Spirit, but few understand it. Some varieties of Christianity have confused filling with the baptism of the Spirit, indwelling, or some second work of grace. This has been common among Pentecostal and Charismatic groups. Wayne Grudem is not a cessationist,⁹⁴ but does not classify himself as a charismatic. He classifies the filling of the Spirit under his discussion on the baptism in the Spirit. He makes no distinction, seeing baptism as the initial event and filling a repeated event of getting more of the Spirit like a balloon expanding with more air.⁹⁵ J. Rodman Williams describes his understanding of Spirit filling, "It points to that dimension of the Spirit's bestowal that relates to interiority, that is to say, the whole community or person is inwardly pervaded by the Holy Spirit."⁹⁶ He relates it to the sound of wind filling the room, and therefore to God's dynamic presence distinct from God's omnipresence." Rene Pache, who allowed for the activity of Pentecostal gifts, explained the Spirit in what we might call 'getting more of us.' He wrote, "The Spirit in us is like an overwhelming force; He immediately occupies every particle of our being that we relinquish to Him, even as the air immediately fills any empty space to which it is given access."⁹⁷ He further indicates this idea later, "We have seen that God wishes to fill us with His Spirit. But only what is empty can be filled. Undoubtedly, if we are converted, the Spirit has occupied a certain amount of room in us, but is every part of our being open to admit Him?"⁹⁸ (emphasis mine). Gordon Fee in his tome on the Spirit in Paul's writings appears to hold a view similar to Pache when he writes, "'be filled by the Spirit,' with the emphasis on being filled to the full by the Spirit's presence."⁹⁹ He compares Ephesians 5:18 to Paul's charge in 2 Timothy 1:6-7, and gives his sense of these texts as an continued appropriation of the Spirit's presence or a keeping the

understands them to be charges given in the past by teaching but still to be fulfilled in time as believers obey that teaching.

⁹³ I understand this to be an imperative of permission, for Paul lumps anger with other traits to be put away in 4:31. For the Grace believer, "righteous anger" is rare if it exists at all. Contrary to this, see Hoehner 619-620.

⁹⁴ One who believes that God ceased the operation of some gifts from the Spirit, once they fulfilled their purpose.

⁹⁵ *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) p. 782. He argues against the Pentecostal view of baptism as a post-conversion experience.

⁹⁶ *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) p. 202.

⁹⁷ *The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954) p. 118.

⁹⁸ *ibid*, p. 121.

⁹⁹ *God's Empowering Presence*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994) pp. 721-722.

gift aflame.”¹⁰⁰ So also, Thomas Oden explains Spirit filling as “being fully yielded to or filled with the Spirit... This refers to the calling to submit completely to the indwelling Spirit in order that God’s won work may be accomplished.”¹⁰¹ All these appear to understand filling as more of the presence of the Spirit, sometimes understood as the Spirit getting more of us or permeating us more fully.

Cessationists often take the view that the Spirit is not the content of filling but is the instrument or means of filling with some other content. Harold Hoehner pointed out, “Moreover, nowhere in the NT does πληρω followed by εν plus the dative indicate content.”¹⁰² David Eckman understands the filling as our use of “resources of the Spirit of God” to address our weaknesses.¹⁰³ So understood, the filling would be more our responsibility in light of something the Spirit has done. John F. Walvoord summarized his view of this filling, “Every reference to the filling of the Holy Spirit indicates a spiritual condition on the part of the person filled which is brought about by the complete control of the Spirit.”¹⁰⁴ Walvoord’s explanation is echoed among other dispensational writers.¹⁰⁵ Graham Cole also refers to this filling as control, though he takes a different approach to the purpose of filling than do Walvoord and Ryrie.¹⁰⁶ Larry Pettegrew observes that “control” connotes “total control over a puppet. It suggests either all or nothing.”¹⁰⁷ He suggests the idea is better expressed “to be under the influence.”¹⁰⁸ Later in Walvoord’s discussion on filling, he used language similar to Pache stating, “The thought is not that individuals by any process have received more of the Spirit, but it is rather that the Spirit has complete possession of the individual. ... Accordingly, it is not a question of securing more of the presence of God but of entering into the reality of His presence and yielding to all the control and ministry for which He has come to indwell.”¹⁰⁹ John Williams interprets this, “we may and, indeed, ought continually to know the reality of the Spirit’s fullness in our lives (Acts 4:8, 31; 13:9).”¹¹⁰ While recognizing some results of this fullness, which he does not explain, he seems to make the believer responsible for these, using such expressions as, “the apostle’s suggestion” and “exhorts his readers to be thankful.”¹¹¹ Therefore, in this view, some idea of “control” or “influence” constitutes the content with which the believer is filled or allows the Spirit to control.

These various perspectives demonstrate no agreement as to the Spirit’s filling, in fact I am impressed by the fact that so often Bible students bring to the interpretation of this passage information that is not directly tied to it, either by context, vocabulary or theme. L.S. Chafer illustrates this as he dealt with the believer’s responsibility regarding the ministry of

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.* p. 866.

¹⁰¹ Thomas C. Oden, *Systematic Theology*, Vol 3. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006) p. 225.

¹⁰² Hoehner, *op cit.* p. 703.

¹⁰³ *Who’s Afraid of the Holy Spirit*, eds. Daniel Wallace and M. James Sawyer (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 2005) p. 213.

¹⁰⁴ *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958) p. 192. He treats the filling in Ephesians to be the same as the filling described in the gospels, distinguishing only that in Ephesians it is to be the normal experience rather than temporary. p. 194.

¹⁰⁵ See C.C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965) p. 94, and Robert Gromacki, *The Holy Spirit*, (Nashville: Word, 1999) p. 186. Theodore Epp mentioned the necessity of the Spirit’s control several times. *The Other Comforter* (Lincoln, NE: Back to the Bible, 1983) p. 96. Rolland McCune, *A Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2, (Detroit: Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009) p. 340.

¹⁰⁶ *He Who Gives Life*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007) p. 219. Cole is not a dispensationalist (p. 138 n.34).

¹⁰⁷ *The New Covenant Ministry of the Holy Spirit*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2001) p. 204.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.* p. 204. He expresses significant agreement with Walvoord, and Ryrie.

¹⁰⁹ Walvoord, *op cit.* p. 192.

¹¹⁰ *The Holy Spirit Lord and Life-giver*, (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1980) p. 160.

¹¹¹ *ibid.* p. 164.

the Spirit. Under the heading Conditions Prerequisite to Filling, he lists three negative directions given the believer: grieve not the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30); quench not the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19), walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16).¹¹² Chafer then went on to collect Scriptures which he believed illustrate each point. Many of his points have genuine bearing on the believer's spiritual life, but are not directly related to the issue of filling in Ephesians 5:18. This is frequently the case among Bible students.

I previously addressed the interpretation of this passage in a paper presented at the Theological Forum on Contemporary Issues in 2000. I will not repeat all that material here. I do wish to point out the influence of the overall context of the Ephesian letter on the interpretation of this passage.

Ephesians 5:18ff is often interpreted to be an individual experience resulting in Christ-likeness or some full presence of the Spirit. We saw this above among various writers. To be sure, an individual element is involved but it has a broader outlook. Additionally, many writers tie this in some form to sanctification and not to a believer's relationship with others in the body of Christ. Yet the filling is ultimately about the body of Christ.

In Paul's previous uses of filling and fullness in Ephesians, he has laid emphasis on the body of Christ, the Church (except for 1:10 and perhaps 4:10). He communicated to God because he wished the Ephesians to be filled up to all the fullness (3:19). In the context of Ephesians three, the Spirit, who would make them visibly might by His (God's) power, accomplishes the filling (3:16). By context, it makes sense to understand Paul's charge in 5:18 to be filled to refer to the same matter. In chapter three, he told them he was communicating to God for this filling for them, and in chapter five, he lays responsibility on the Ephesians to be filled. The imperative verb "be filled" indicates that the Ephesians had a responsibility. Paul's communication to God was not to be answered by the sovereign move of God apart from any proper response of the Ephesians. Paul wanted them to be filled, and they were to be filled.

In Ephesians 5:19 and following, Paul lists the results of this filling. The main verb "fill" is an imperative, and the words speaking, singing, psalming, thanking, and submitting are a series of four present active participles, "submitting" being present middle participle. If filling results from doing these things, the aorist not the present tense would have been used.¹¹³ Therefore, I understand the participles to describe the result of the Spirit's filling. Though I've tried to confine our study primarily to Ephesians, Paul gives a similar list in Colossians 3:16-17,¹¹⁴ and a brief comparison of the two passages will be helpful.

The following chart compares the two passages. The main verb is an imperative in both passages: "be filled" in Ephesians and "let dwell" in Colossians. The first participle in Ephesians is "speaking" which Paul expands to "teaching and admonishing" in Colossians. Both of these participles are accomplished in "psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs," Paul adding "and" between the nouns in Ephesians (or omitting in Colossians). The next participle is the same in both "singing" with the addition of "psalming" in Ephesians. Both are done "in your heart." in Ephesians "heart" is singular and plural in Colossians. In Ephesians it is "to the Lord" and "to

¹¹² *Systematic Theology*, Vol. VI, (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948) p. 233.

¹¹³ Dana and Mantey, op cit. p. 230, also Hoehner, op cit. p. 706. For an interpretation that these are the means of being filled, see Arnold, op cit. p. 351f.

¹¹⁴ cp. Hoehner, op cit. p. 704. He understands "speaking" in Ephesians to be "same or similar to the 'teaching and admonishing one another'" in Colossians. p. 707.

God in Colossians.” The next participle is the same “thanking.”¹¹⁵ Both are done in the name of the Lord Jesus, with Paul adding Christ in Ephesians 5:20, and it is done to “the God even Father” and “the God Father.” In the next phrase involving submission, Paul used a participle in Ephesians, and switched to an imperative verb in Colossians 3:18. These parallels are not mere coincidence. Paul was writing about the same issue in both texts.

Ephesians 5:18

αλλα πληρουσθε εν πνευματι,

19 λαλουντες
 εαυτοις
 εν ψαλμοις
 και υμνοις
 και ωδαις πνευματικαις,
 αδοντες
 και ψαλλοντες
 τη καρδια υμων τω κυριω,

20 ευχαριστουντες
 παντοτε
 υπερ παντων
 εν ονοματι του κυριου ημων
 Ιησου Χριστου
 τω θεω και πατρι.

21 Υποτασσομενοι
 αλληλοις
 εν φοβω Χριστου,

Colossians 3:16

Ο λογος του Χριστου ενοικειτω

 εν υμιν πλουσιως,
 εν παση σοφια
 διδασκοντες και νουθετουντες
 εαυτους,
 ψαλμοις
 υμνοις
 ωδαις πνευματικαις
 εν τη χαριτι
 αδοντες

17 εν ταις καρδιαις υμων τω θεω
 και παν ο τι εαν ποιητε
 εν λογω
 η εν εργω,
 παντα
 εν ονοματι κυριου Ιησου,
 ευχαριστουντες

 τω θεω πατρι
 δι αυτου.

18 Αι γυναικες, υποτασσεσθε

 τοις ανδρασιν
 ως ανηκεν εν κυριω.

This comparison helps us understand several issues surrounding the filling in Ephesians 5:18. First, how does one let the Spirit fill him? The imperative verb is passive. It is probably for this reason that many interpreters have discussed the issue of yieldedness. However, since the verb in Colossians 3:16 is in the active voice, we know what a believer is to do to let the Spirit fill him: he is to let the word of the Christ dwell in him richly. We have already seen that “the Christ” is an expression which sometimes refers to Jesus Christ and sometimes to Jesus Christ in relation to the His body. The context of Colossians 3:16 also emphasizes the body. “The body pertains to Christ and is distinct from the shadows cast by the directives of the Law (2:17). Those who engage in asceticism and worship of angels [ESV] are not holding firmly to the Head (i.e. of the body–Christ; 2:18-19). Like Ephesians 2:4, the believer has been jointly-raised with Christ (3:1), a text emphasizing the collective unity of believers with Christ. Similar to Ephesians 4: 22 where the Ephesians were to put off the old man, so in Colossians 3:9 the believer is urged to take off the old man with his practices. Further he is to put on the new (fresh–**νεος** not **καινος**) man (3:10). Like the new man in Ephesians, the new man has been created, and in the new man all distinctions of race, religious background,

¹¹⁵ I take the phrase in Colossians 3:17, “and whatever you happen to do in word or in work” to parallel the Ephesians 5:20 phrase “always, on behalf of all things.” Most translations translate this phrase with the addition of a verb “do” as though Paul were writing about how to “do” something, rather than about being thankful in whatever one does.

degree of civilized conduct, and social status have been erased. This new man is none other than the new man of Ephesians 2. It has its full character in Christ: “Christ is all things and in all” (Colossians 3:11). Then Paul lists a series of qualities they ought to bring to bear on their circumstances, all of which are qualities one directs towards other individuals (vv. 12-13). They are to add love, for it is the joint-chain of completeness (v. 14). They are to have the peace pertaining to the Christ act as an umpire in their hearts (v. 15). This is the peace Christ accomplished by creating both the Jew and Gentile believer into one new man (Ephesians 2:15-16). They are to let this peace umpire for they were called in **one body** (Colossians 3:15).

Therefore, much of the context leading up to the charge in 3:16 to let the “word of the Christ dwell in you richly” has been body related. Therefore, Paul was not charging them to let the Bible, or a word about Jesus Christ, or the words of Jesus Christ dwell in them. All are appropriate at certain times. However, in this context, Paul is urging the Colossians to let the word, the truth, the teaching about the union of Jesus Christ with His body and all that it entails to dwell in them. Thinking about, measuring one’s attitude in light of, responding to circumstances in light of what one knows about this relationship results in the qualities associated with the filling by the Spirit. When writing to the Colossians, Paul was not speaking in terms of “fullness” and therefore, he did not use the instruction “be filled” but the instruction to let a set of truths dwell richly within them. Both imperatives have the same point, because Paul was charging believers to allow God to give them the ability to properly relate to fellow believers in the body of Christ.

Some have recognized this as more congregational issue as opposed to an individual issue of sanctification.¹¹⁶ I believe Cole and Fee are correct in part. However, this is individual insofar as only an individual can obey Paul’s charge for himself. He may encourage others to do so, but he cannot make others be filled. He cannot do it for them. He can be certain that he is part of the solution and avoid being part of the problem. Therefore, the charge to be filled is given to the whole church about a church need, but is fulfilled as individuals obey.

The Results of Spirit Filling

We previously considered the distinction between the reflexive pronoun [ἑαυτοῦ] and the reciprocal pronoun [ἀλλήλους]. That distinction is key to understanding the results of the filling. Filling is the provision of qualities and attitudes necessary to guard the unity from the Spirit. The first set of participles “speaking ... singing, and psalming” are done to one’s self, as Paul used a reflexive pronoun. Contrary to Hoehner, I do not believe Paul used the reflexive pronoun with a reciprocal sense. To do so misses the point. The first participles are not directed at others, but at one’s self. That is the issue. In the midst of conflicts, the first person one needs to address is himself. It is common for churches to be troubled because believers first speak to others. Paul addressed this exact problem in 4:29-32. It is apparent that at least some in the Ephesian church were speaking rotten words and thereby grieving the Spirit. They were to guard the unity from the Spirit (4:3), but by their rotten or cutting words, which do not build up the body, they grieved the Spirit by working contrary to His purpose. Their language was characterized by bitterness, anger, hot anger, shouts, and blasphemy (4:31). Remember, the anger of man does not render God’s kind of righteousness (James 1:20). Therefore, the Spirit first fills the believer with words which he needs to address to himself, not others. He needs to mentally check himself.

The Spirit then fills the believer with singing and psalming to God (Ephesians 5:19). The

¹¹⁶ Cf. Cole, op cit. p. 219, and Fee, op cit. pp. 721-722.

believer sings and psalms in his heart. The heart is the center of decision making. Singing and psalming would positively affect the decisions made in one's heart. Nothing in the text requires the singing and psalming to be vocal, for they are done in the heart and to God.

The third result of filling is addressed to God: being thankful (Ephesians 5:20). Too often, problems in an assembly escalate because believers do not focus on the good grace of God in all things and in place of all things. The Spirit fills the believer with thanksgiving for God's good acts of grace to him. Remember, being thankful in everything is such a key aspect of God's will for the believer, that Paul stated that fact specifically (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Finally, we have a result that is other-centered—submission (Ephesians 5:20). It is rare for an individual to willingly submit to another with whom he is at odds. The unbiblical attitudes and language of Ephesians 4:17-5:17 do not encourage one believer to submit to another. However, after the Spirit has filled one with words and song which he addresses to himself, and thanks which he addresses to God, the Spirit then fills him with the attitude of submission. God has gifted every believer. God has planned works for every believer. Every believer will be the object of some of those works God has planned for others. If a believer refuses to submit, he misses out on the work of God through others. A pastor-teacher who will not submit to the exhortation, acts of mercy, directions of organization as well as other gifts, deprives himself being the object of God's work through other saints.¹¹⁷ We will all be on both the serving end and the submitting end as we relate to other saints. Sometimes this is true within minutes when the body is assembled and interacting. This is true of any saint in relation to the service of others.

The Armor of God in Ephesians 6:10ff

The armor of God is a divinely provided defense against the attacks of Satan. The devil is a liar and the Father of the lie (John 8:44). Lying was an issue among the Ephesians (4:25). Bitterness is tied to being ungracious and is characterized as demonic (2 Corinthians 2:5-11; James 3:14-15). Both of these were issues in the Ephesian church (4:29, 31). This also ties to rotten speech in 4:29. Each of these is involved in Paul's reminder, "For our wrestling match is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-powers of this darkness, against spiritual evils in the heavenlies" (6:12). Satan deceives and leads astray the minds of believers. One area of deception is viewing other believers as the conflict or wrestling match, thinking they are the problem. Other believers are not the problem. In this matter it is Satan.

Satan played a role in the conflict within the Ephesian church. Divisions among believers associated with Satan would result from the temptation to be independent, and not guard the unity from the Spirit. It could also result from blasphemous speech which tears down believers, and potentially chases them off from the assembly. It can result from pride, as exhibited by Diotrophes who loved the first place and would not welcome others (3 John 9-10).¹¹⁸

Prior to salvation, the Ephesians walked by the standard of the ruler of the authority of the air (Ephesians 2:2). Satan set the standard for the lifestyle of the unsaved. He did this in part by the age which has the character of this world. It was in this environment that they had

¹¹⁷ I illustrate this with the pastor-teacher because I am one, and have often had to be reminded to submit to the exercise of other's gifts on my behalf. Additionally, pastors are sometimes struck with pride and do not submit to the ministry of other's gifts, other than material gifts.

¹¹⁸ Based on extra-biblical information, John was in Ephesus writing to smaller communities around Ephesus.

conducted themselves in the strong desires of their flesh (2:3). So, when Paul reminded them that they had been taught to put off concerning the old man, it involves more than just works of the flesh, but also the former dominion of Satan.

The Armor

Before a believer puts on the armor, he or she needs to be made strong (Ephesians 6:10). That strength is “in the Lord.” Lord [ΚΥΡΙΟΣ] occurs 26 times in Ephesians: 13 times with the article and 13 times without it. Of those with the article, 6 times we find Lord with Jesus Christ, five times we find it undefined, and twice of human masters. Of the thirteen times it is anarthrous, twice it occurs with Jesus Christ, 10 times undefined (though 4:5 appears to be Christ), and one time of a human master. In our present verse (6:10), Lord is anarthrous. Did Paul mean, “be made strong in *the* Lord” or did he mean “be made strong by *the* Lord?” The first would mean one needs to relate to who he is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord would emphasize that He is the master and therefore you need strength in the one who is over the whole body, the Lord. The second would refer to the Spirit as the Lord (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18). He is the one who makes the believer visibly mighty in the inner man (3:16). Both work. It is possible that Paul meant both and for this reason used Lord without the article. A similar situation occurs in 2:21 where the temple is both growing in the Lord, but is also growing by the Lord-Spirit, or 5:8 where believer in the Lord are light, or by the Lord-Spirit are light. It is possible that Paul is using the anarthrous construction to point out a combined work of at least two persons of the Godhead in strengthening the believer; Christ is the location where the strength is apprehended, and the Spirit is the one who does the strengthening.

Paul charged the Ephesians to “put on the whole armor from the God” (6:11). H. LaVern Schafer pointed out concerning the armor, “Keep in mind that all the attacks and lust from Satan are mental. Therefore, all of the armor must be put on mentally.”¹¹⁹ In the next paragraph he further explained, “The important point is not how or what the Roman soldier had, but rather how and what one’s mind is directed to think for defensive action.”¹²⁰ Once one understands the nature of Satanic attack and the constitution of the armor he can describe the armor as a reminder of six specific areas in which he needs to adjust his thinking or attitude.

Five of the following parts of the armor involve participial phrases. Each participle is in the aorist tense, the first three¹²¹ being middle voice and the last being active.¹²² Aorist participles normally are antecedent to the main verb,¹²³ which in Ephesians 6:14 is “stand.” One can only stand having girdled, put on, shoed, and taken up.

Truth

The believer first girds himself with (puts on like a girdle) truth (Ephesians 6:14). Truth is anarthrous. It is not “the Truth” which is instruction on how to honor God by first experiencing freedom from one’s sin nature and then doing works which are worked by God (cf. John 8:32, 34; 3:21). This is an attitude of truth regarding the conflict with Satan. The noun occurs without the article in 4:21, “This truth is in Jesus.” He sees everything as it is, and responds properly. It again occurs in 4:25 where the believer is to speak truth with his fellow believers. In this context “the Lie” is a refusal to recognize God’s creation of a new man. That

¹¹⁹ *Maturing in Christ*, (Xulon press, 2010) p. 185.

¹²⁰ *ibid.* p. 185.

¹²¹ περιζωσαμενοι—ones girdling, ενδυσσαμενοι—ones putting on, υποδησαμενοι—ones shoeing.

¹²² αναλαβοντες—one’s taking up.

¹²³ See Hoehner, *op cit.* p. 838.

refusal can be by word or action. Satan wants us to have a distorted perspective regarding the new creation. So, girdling with truth is a proper perspective: recognizing our improper attitude and recognizing God's truth on this matter. Peter used the metaphor of girdling one's mind; so as to mentally keeping it together, or we might explain it in modern terms, to prevent a mental hernia (1 Peter 1:13). This is not to say that truth is limited to this body issue, but the problems addressed previously in this letter should be considered when interpreting the section before us.

Righteousness

The believer next puts on the breastplate of the righteousness (Ephesians 6:14). This is a specific righteousness—the righteousness in contrast to truth in the last phrase. Paul used “righteousness” three times in Ephesians. The other two occurrences are both anarthrous. The new man (the whole body with Christ) is created in righteousness (4:24). This is true in Christ. In Christ, God has made the believer His kind of righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). What is true of the individual in Christ is also true of the whole body. Satan may attempt to focus the believer on his lack of practical righteousness, or, in this tension between Jewish and Gentile believer, to focus on one's superior practical righteousness. Rather, this focuses on the righteousness all believers share together, and assures us regarding our standing before God.

Peace

The believer shoes his feet with readiness regarding the good news of peace (Ephesians 6:15). The New Testament identifies many messages as good news. This is not the good news preached to the unsaved (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-5). This good news is for believers. The peace is a specific peace (the peace). Christ made peace by creating the Jewish believer and Gentile believer into one new man (2:15). In this way, Christ is the peace of us (2:14). Having created the basis of peace, Christ announced peace to both groups as good news (2:17). “Announced” or “preached” is an aorist middle verb form of “good news.” This peace also binds believers together in the body (4:3). The believer has on his feet not the good news of this peace, but readiness or preparedness regarding it. Satan wants us to focus on the reasons to be at odds, and the differences between believers. When an unsaved person hears the good news about Jesus Christ and what He has done, he is confronted with his need to believe that message. Likewise, when the believer knows the good news about this peace with God and with one another, he is to believe it, and believing often results in activity. Here the believer is prepared to respond, to act regarding this good news. He is adjusting his thinking about the peace among believers which Christ has affected.

The Shield of the faith

The believer is also to stand by “taking up” the shield of the faith (Ephesians 6:16-17). Does “the faith” refer to the body of doctrine which explains the whole of the Christian life, or does the faith refer to a specific act of faith? The former does not fit well, for the armor of God makes up part of “the faith.” In this context, Paul has made several statements regarding faith. Prior to salvation, the Gentile believers had no promise from God, and were without hope (2:12). Biblical hope rises from a promise from God. Now, both Jews and Gentiles are promised access to God through Christ (2:18). Part of the mystery of the Christ reveals that Gentile believers are partakers of **the promise** in Christ Jesus (3:6). They do not partake of promises, but a specific promise. Paul identified the promise as access, and that access is through **faith** (3:12). “Through faith” means God promised this access. Satan wants us to doubt that we have access to God, or to question whether other saints have access to God. Satan doesn't want a believer to run to God and talk to God. He may even deceive us into thinking our access is better in some fashion than that of other saints today. Every believer, regardless of background has equal access to God.

The Helmet of Salvation

The believer then receives for himself the helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:17). “Receive for yourselves” is the only verb (as opposed to a participle) in this section, since Paul wrote, “Therefore, stand” in 6:14. It is an aorist imperative which has the force of “get right on it!” The verb has two objects: the helmet and the sword. Paul references our salvation, by some form of the word “save” five times in Ephesians and one time negatively (5:18). Twice in chapter two, he reminds the Ephesians that they are in the state of having been saved by grace¹²⁴ (2:5, 8). The repeated statement reminds the believer that we brought nothing to the table. Regardless of what we were prior to salvation, we stand today, as one having been saved and that by God’s grace. Satan, perhaps with respect to pride, tempts believers to neglect this state and to look at what we erroneously think we have brought to our salvation: our racial background, religious background, our former training, celebrity, wealth, etc. It is easy to compare ourselves to others, and forget that we all came into salvation equally lost, and were equally saved on the basis of Christ’s work, and by God’s attitude of grace. When addressing the saints about submission, love and marriage, Paul reminds us that Christ is Savior of **the body** (5:23). He is not Savior of some part of the body, but of the whole. To this the believer may mentally enumerate the many benefits of his or her salvation, remembering that it is all of God.

The Sword from the Spirit, the Utterance of God.

The believers are then to receive the sword from the Spirit, the utterance of God (Ephesians 6:17). Paul did not use *logos* for “word” but *rhāma* an “utterance.”¹²⁵ Paul used this noun twice in Ephesians. In 5:26 he explained that Christ cleanses the church by the washing of the water by an utterance. This is Christ’s ongoing work of setting apart His Church. It can involve His ongoing intercession for the Church, but also His direction for to the Spirit for the ministries in the body, to which Paul referred in Ephesians 4. If this is the referent for Paul’s *rhāma* in 6:17, then the believers are apprehending the truth that Christ is speaking now, that we might be what God says we are in Christ, and what we will be when Christ presents us to Himself. It reminds us that we will reach God’s design. Satan may tempt believers to question whether they or perhaps other believers will reach God’s planned state. They will be snatched up, but may not be holy and blameless. Refer to the earlier section on “saints” and notice that the several references to “saints”¹²⁶ demonstrate that some issue existed for the Ephesians.

Though the I believe the above relates to Paul’s *rhāma* in Ephesians 6:17, it is possible that it refers to Paul’s opening remark in 1:4 that God has said every good thing about us in Christ. Those good things comprise specific utterances of God regarding saints in Christ. The believer is holy and without blame in Christ (1:4). The believer is redeemed (1:7). The believer is raised up and seated together with the whole body in Christ (2:5-7). Satan certainly deceives believers regarding God’s statements. Remembering what God says about each member of the new creation as well as all the members corporately properly adjusts the believer’s thinking away from the deceptive thinking from Satan.

Conclusion

The Ephesian letter provides us an interesting study in the breadth of body truth. It reminds us that who we are in Christ is about more than individual identity. Our seated

¹²⁴ Paul’s construction is a perfect periphrastic, intensifying the durative emphasis of the perfect tense. The perfect periphrastic combines the present tense verb εἰμι with a perfect tense participle. See Dana & Mantey, op cit. p. 232.

¹²⁵ G. Abbott-Smith, op cit. has “(a) a word...(b)...a saying, statement, word of prophesy, instruction or command” p. 397.

¹²⁶ Only in Jude does Paul use the word “saint” more in terms of the number of words in the letter. Hits per 1000 words: Jude-7.09; Ephesians-5.18; Philemon-4.96; 1 & 2 Peter-3.81 (both); Colossians-3.08; Romans-2.33.

position in Christ is a shared position with all saints of this present dispensation of grace. It is described both with terms that emphasize the shared status such as those with the *sun* prefix, as well as contextual emphases. This letter reminds us that however dysfunctional we may be on earth, God sees the body as one united new man with Christ and in Christ.

The Ephesian letter also demonstrates how body truths relate to the practice of the Christian life. The Christian life is more than just about how well I am doing with respect to God and my spiritual enemies. The Christian life is about how I am relating to my fellow members in the body of Christ. It is, at least in part, how I am allowing the Spirit to empower me as part of the solution rather than being part of the problem. Conflicts in the body involve matters related to our sin natures, our operation within the age and world system, and Satan. Body truth is tied to God's provision for responding to these spiritual enemies. We are again reminded that while it is an individual victory, it is about more than just us as individuals. Addressing our enemies when they interrupt our proper interaction with the members of the God-head and our fellow believers is less about avoiding bad behavior, and more about allowing God to use us as a contributing member of the body of Christ.

Wherever, we are in our Christian life, and no matter how well or poorly we have responded to God's plan and instructions for the body, we are assured that our Savior will present to Himself, "the Church wrapped in glory, not having spot or wrinkle, or any of this sort of thing, but rather that it should be holy and without blame." Ephesians 5:27.