

## The Grace of Christ's Supremacy in the Church (Ephesians 1:22-23)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on February 20, 2011

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Eph. 1:20 says God's power was "...brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,<sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.<sup>22</sup> And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,<sup>23</sup> which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Being in submission to Christ's supremacy as head of the church is a gift and grace to His people. The late Ray Stedman illustrates this by a man in sin who overcame pride to humbly submit himself to Christ in the local church, seeing his own need to be in the body for accountability, discipline, correction, and counsel. Stedman writes of this man who in agony 'told me of how he had been struggling to overcome a terrible passion, terrible feelings of lust which affected him all the time. These would sometimes grow so strong that he would fall back into habits which he knew were wrong and were horribly destructive of him and his loved ones, but he would give way nevertheless and he just couldn't resist. We sat down and talked about power, about the power of a resurrected Lord, and what he has made available to us. I remember turning to this passage and reading him these words. At the time it didn't seem to affect him much, but I said to him, "You know, God's power is made perfect in weakness ... if you feel weak ... the next time you find yourself threatened with being mastered by these surging lusts, run to Christ in helplessness. Commit yourself to him again. Say 'Lord, I can't handle this myself. I can't control myself. If you don't help me, I'm sunk!' And [in faith truly completely] cast yourself upon him." He said, "All right, I'll try." A couple of weeks later, I saw him again. His face was wreathed with smiles when he came to me. He said, "You know, it works, it really works! I was reading again through that passage which you read to me, and I was struck by two words. It says that Christ is seated at God's right hand [of power] in the heavenly places, far above, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion. And those two words [in v. 21], 'far above', really opened my eyes. Why, of course," he said, "if God is at work in me, and if he has that kind of power, then nobody else's power even approaches his. No demonic force, no lustful urge, can be greater than the power of Jesus Christ. When I saw that fact, I was able simply to [by His power rely on and] rest in the Lord ... God has set me free!"<sup>1</sup>

In v. 18 Paul begins: "*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be opened/enlightened so you will know ...*" [3 things: hope, riches / resources you have in Christ, and then v. 19 culminates] "*and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe*"

Knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection (v. 20) was everything to the Apostles. Acts 1:8 records Christ's words as He ascended to His exalted throne: *you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses ...*" and then the rest of the book of Acts is commentary or illustration on that power at work in believers.

In the next chapter, Peter, who weeks earlier chickened out in fear before a servant girl, now by the Spirit's power preaches boldly the sermon that launches the church. Acts 4:33 "*with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord ...*"

Knowing *the power of His resurrection* made all the difference for Peter and the other formerly fearful disciples. It turned Thomas from doubting privately to declaring publically with great power the gospel of the resurrected Lord. It turned John from a proud “son of thunder” once wanting to call down fire on his enemies, to an apostle with new nickname: “apostle of love.” It turned Peter from denying Christ to being ready to die for Him. The apostle Peter knows this power experientially when he writes 2 Peter 1:3: “***His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness ...***”

God’s power is all-sufficient power for all things of life, godliness. One translation says: “***His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness ...***” That changes everything if you believe that and live like it; a power not only available but actually already giving us everything we truly need for life and godliness!

In Eph. 1:3 Paul says every believer already has been given by God “*every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ ...*” As he talks about God’s all-sufficient Almighty power in 1:19, he says it’s God’s “*power in you who believe.*” Open your eyes to His power *in you who believe*. His power *in you* is sufficient *for you*.

You say, but I don’t feel that power, all I feel is weakness in me. If Paul were here, he would say, I said that once, too, but God told me this: “***My grace is sufficient for you. My power is made perfect in your weakness.***” And so Paul says “*Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong* [in the Lord’s power, 2 Cor. 12:9-10]

When a believer recognizes his weakness, his inability, his lack of power, then God’s power and ability already within, kicks in! Paul, like Peter, had experienced this power, so he prays for others that their eyes would be opened to their insufficiency, their need, and to the sufficiency of God’s grace and power to meet their every need.

***Review from last time:***

**Explanations of God’s Power (v. 19)**

1. It is Immeasurably Great Power
2. It is Dynamic Power
3. It is Working Power
4. It is Almighty Power

**Examples of God’s Power (v. 20-22)**

1. Christ’s Resurrection (v. 20a)
2. Christ’s Ascension and Exaltation (v. 20b-21)
3. Christ’s Supremacy and Sovereign Position (v. 22a)  
“*And He put all things in subjection under His feet...*”

That’s the language of Christ’s supremacy and sovereign position. The resurrected Lord told His disciples right before He ascended to heaven “***All authority in heaven and on earth is given Me ...***”

Then He gave them what we call the Great Commission, and He ascended to heaven and sat down at the Father's right hand where all things are put under the feet of King Jesus, ruler over all things. This language of God the Father putting all things under the feet of Christ has to do with Christ's resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and enthronement at the right hand seat for King of the universe. Isa. 66: *Thus says the Lord, 'Heaven is my throne; the earth is my footstool.'* It's a small world compared to Him. He's got the whole world under His feet.

Ps 8:6 says to God of the *'son of man...You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet'*

Hebrews 2:8 quotes Ps 8 as being fulfilled by Christ's supremacy: <sup>8</sup>***YOU HAVE PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET.*** ***For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not yet see all things subjected to him.***

All things are in subjection under His feet, even though we don't see it yet, Christ is right now ruling and reigning over all. He is already in the seat of supremacy and sovereignty, the right hand of power, and we need to fix our eyes on this exalted enthroned Jesus.

Hebrews 12:2 ***"fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup>For consider Him ..."***

Col. 3:1 ***"... keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your mind on the things above ..."***  
(KJV *"set your affections on things above"*)

This is what we need to keep seeking, keep considering, keep on fixing eyes on, keep setting our mind on, keep setting affections on, keep seeing the supremacy and sovereignty of Christ, far above all, seated above all, with all subjected under His feet. We need the eyes of our heart opened to the same vision of Christ Isaiah 6 sees: *"I saw the LORD seated on the throne, high, lifted up, exalted ..."*

A.W. Tozer has said: 'In my opinion, the great single need of the moment is that light-hearted superficial religionists be struck down with a vision of God high and lifted up...'<sup>2</sup> (His glory filling all)

Jn 12:41 says it was the glory of Christ Isaiah saw in that chapter. Revelation 12:5 speaks of a male child born, *"who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron ... lifted up to God and to His throne."* Much of the book of Revelation has all falling before this throne. That's the final vision of Jesus recorded in the final book of the Bible, not a tame, domesticated, gentle Jesus meek and mild, but a victorious glorious warrior-King, enthroned, exalted, coming back to finally fully consummate His kingdom with all under His feet.

Ps 110: *"the LORD said to my Lord [the Father to the Son] 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'"*

The enemies in context of Eph 1:21 go beyond human enemies to fallen angel rulers and authorities, the same terms Paul uses in Col. 2:15 to say at the cross Christ “*disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them...*” Col 1:19 “*that He Himself will come to have **first place in everything***”; ESV “*that in everything He might be **preeminent***”; NIV “*so that in everything He [Christ] might have the **supremacy***”

The whole books of Colossians and Hebrews develop this theme: the superiority or supremacy of Christ over all things for all of us.

The Ephesians before salvation believed in powers of false gods (Diana/Artemis), demonic powers. Ephesus was an occult center. Acts 19 says converts to Christianity burned books of black magic. The supremacy of Christ and His power over false gods and fallen angels was what the converts from that background needed to see. Peter speaks very similarly of Christ’s exaltation “*who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him*” (1 Pet 3:22).

Not all your translations of Eph. 1:22 have the word “subjected” or “subjection” but it’s the common Greek NT word for subjection or subordination or submission. It’s used in the NT of demons being subject to the name of Christ, slaves subject to masters, submission to government authorities, to heads of the home, to church elders, and most notably in this context, to Kings in authority (1 Pet. 2:13)

In a military context, like Psalm 110 that Paul’s quoting from, v. 22 means being placed under, lined up subordinately as lower ranks under a leader of superior rank, in v. 21-22, the highest rank and highest name, the Commander in Chief of the whole universe! And the phrase *under His feet* in a context including enemies, like Ps. 110, includes not just command over, but conquering, control. *Subjection under His feet* is a vivid picture of military supremacy; power in totally defeating an enemy who is now under one’s feet.

1 Cor. 15:24 says when Christ comes again as glorious King, He’s “*abolished all rule and all authority and power* [same terms as Eph. 1:21]. <sup>25</sup> *For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.* <sup>26</sup> *The last enemy that will be abolished is death.* <sup>27</sup> *For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET ...*

When the feet of Jesus stood on this earth the first time, people saw His power over all people and all things “***under His feet***”:

- Power to keep pride under His feet and for us to see rightly like John the Baptist saw himself so far beneath the feet of Jesus, not even worthy to come up to loosen Jesus’ sandals
- Power to humble proud Simon Peter who falls **down at His feet** saying “*Go away from me, Lord, for I’m a sinful man!*”
- Power to bring immoral woman to repentance down low as **below His feet**, weeping and washing His feet with tears
- Power to heal a demon-possessed daughter of Gentile mom who **falls at His feet**, seeing herself low, seeking crumbs

- Power to heal any and everyone **under His feet**: Mt 15:30 “*large crowds came to Him, bringing with them ... lame, crippled, blind, mute, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet; and He healed them.*” (power to heal)
- Power to forgive sins for those He healed physically who **fell at His feet** humbly in repentant faith. Jesus says “*your faith has saved you*” to a Samaritan leper **at His feet** in worship and a woman formerly outcast with a blood issue
- Power to walk on water under his feet or turn water to wine
- Power bringing a synagogue ruler to fall forward at His feet or soldiers trying to arrest Him to fall backward at his feet
- Power as His feet walk right through a crowd like they’re not there, who wanted to throw him off a cliff in Galilee
- Power over storms or Satan (“*He has nothing on me*”) and He tells Peter Satan has to ask for permission to tempt him
- Power over demon-possessed who fall **at His feet** (legions fall before Him begging not to be sent into the abyss, the place of demon’s future punishment in Revelation 20)
- Power over the supernatural and natural, wind and waves obey, fisherman obey, fish in the sea obey, the sea obeys!
- That’s just a little preview of power He’ll display when He comes and stands on earth the next time **with those very same feet** ... we ain’t seen nothin’ yet! **His feet** will tread the winepress of the furious wrath of God (Rev. 19) for all who have not fallen **at His feet** in worship / repentant faith
- Power to Mary who had that heart, **sitting in submission at His feet**, humbly, to learn from Jesus, choosing “the best part” ... when this Mary’s brother dies, she falls **at His feet** and He shows His power over death (*Lazarus, come forth!*)
- That same resurrection power, Paul says is at work in you who believe (v. 19-20), like Lazarus spiritually (see 2:4-7).
- Death had no power over Jesus: **His feet** are nailed to the cross, as His enemies are at the foot of the cross **under His feet**, the last enemy subjected to Him is death, and **those feet now stand in heaven** before the throne of God above as Savior of all who fall at His feet in faith, as Creator of all things, as Sustainer of all things, and Consummator of all things when His feet return to stand on the Mount of Olives with **all things in the universe subjected under His feet!**

That day of power is coming when He leaves His throne to return, but Paul wants us to know in v. 19 *that power is already at work in believers*. It’s not just for the age to come (v. 21 says this age, too). The Great Commission says *all power in heaven and earth* (Mt 28:18), and v. 20: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess in a future age. Believers have the Almighty *with us always to the end of this age.*

Paul prays your eyes be opened to see (v. 18) power for believers (v. 19) for *all things* (v. 22).

What do the “all things” include? One writer explains: ‘Dominions, powers, addictions, problems, pornography, profanity, gossip, depression, meanness, temper, sadness, laziness—whatever it is you can’t get over.

“But my problem is so overwhelming,” you say. [One pastor explains] It couldn’t be any more overwhelming than the waves threatening to drown the disciples. Yet even the waves that rolled over their heads were under Jesus’ feet, the very waves He walked upon to go to His disciples (Matthew 14:25). Nothing is over His head. All things are under His feet. Jesus is in absolute control of every situation, be it financial, physical, relational, vocational, or parental. Whatever might seem to be rolling your way, ready to sink your boat and wipe you out is already under His feet—and might be the very path He chooses upon which to walk to you.’<sup>3</sup>

‘**all things under his feet** [is] a strong, figurative expression, denoting high sovereignty. It does not refer merely to defeated and arrested enemies, but to the whole of creation and the fulness thereof. They are as thoroughly under Christ and at his disposal as if they were literally **under his feet**. As a military commander ... has power to everything... for his army... with all property as may be required for military purposes, so Christ has the whole creation at his disposal, animate and inanimate, hostile and friendly.’<sup>4</sup>

Even the greatest enemies on earth or in the spiritual realm are just a footrest to Him, a footstool. “Every sphere of life, Christ is Lord of it. Every other ‘power’ is ... subordinate” to Jesus Christ.

J. Owen: ‘**gloriously exalted above angels** [v. 21] ... They are all under his feet - at this command and absolute disposal [v. 22]. He is the right hand of God [v. 20], in the highest exaltation possible ... **glorious in his throne**, which is at the right hand of the Majesty ... **glorious in his commission** ... 'all power in heaven and earth'; **glorious in his name**, a name above every name [v. 21] - 'Lord of lords, and King of kings'; **glorious in his sceptre** - 'a sceptre of righteousness ... '; **glorious in his attendants** - '... thousands of angels,'; **glorious in his subjects** - all creatures in heaven and in earth, nothing is left that is not put in subject to him [v. 22]; **glorious in his way of rule**, and the administration of his kingdom - full of sweetness, efficacy, power, serenity, holiness, righteousness, and grace, in and towards his elect ...; **glorious in the issue of his kingdom**, when every knee shall bow before him, and all shall stand before his judgment-seat. And what a little portion of his glory is it that we have pointed to! This is the beloved of the church-its head...with whom we have communion’<sup>5</sup>

This is the glorious victorious Lord we are to look to and love and live for. Paul prays the eyes of your heart be opened to the power of the risen reigning Lord on the throne of the universe (v. 18-21). Paul is praying in v. 18-22 we lift up our eyes to see Christ where He really is and as He really is, above all, with all things under His feet, as v. 22 says, which means supremacy and sovereign position.

#### 4. Christ’s Authority in His Church (v. 22b) [\*next slide\*]

“... and gave Him as **head over all things** ...”

John Piper explains *head over all things* = ‘authority and conscious active rule—over all history, all human beings, all demonic powers, disease, disability, all nature—weather, hurricanes, lightning bolts, tornadoes, volcanoes, earthquakes, floods, global warming—all businesses and industry, healthcare, sports, March Madness, inventions, media, Internet, iPad mania, military

might, governments, presidents, kings, chiefs, religions, universities, solar systems, stars, galaxies, molecules, atoms, subatomic particles, and ten thousand things no man has ever yet discovered. Jesus is now head over them all. Conscious, active, authoritative Ruler.’<sup>6</sup>

Verse 10 also has the phrase “all things.” The phrase “head over” in v. 22 has the same Greek root word in the verb of v. 10 where it speaks of the universal plan of God “*to sum up / gather together in one all things in Christ*” or as one translation says it “*to head up all things in Christ.*” The NIV has “*to bring all things in heaven and earth under one head.*” Christ is head over the universe, and v. 11 says He is already always working *all things* according to the counsel of His will, for His glory (v. 12), and our good (Rom 8:28) “*to those who love God, who are called,*” i.e., for believers, church.

End of v. 22 “*and gave Him as head over all things to the church*”

This word *head* in the OT was often used for a ruler or leader. In the OT it connects the idea of priority with ruling authority. One Greek NT dictionary says *head* = ‘one of supreme or pre-eminent status, in view of authority to order or command ... one who is the head of, one who is superior to, one who is supreme over.’<sup>7</sup>

The original language grammar puts emphasis on the phrase “*He gave Him.*” The supremacy of Christ is a gift of grace to the church in a similar way to how a head is good for a physical body (v. 23a). Christ is Head of the church His body for its good. If churches or church members do things different than the mind of Christ, they miss this grace and hurt this body. Christ’s authority determining what the body does is a grace. If a body part acts independent of its headship, its brain, it’s a disgrace or a disorder or a disability.

That’s not reading modern medical ideas into this verse. Ancient Greek philosophers like Plato and physicians like Hippocrates (who doctors take Hippocratic Oath after) understood the head through the brain directed the body, rather than the physical heart, as some other ancients had taught. Paul was well educated and his travel companion Luke, as a trained Greek physician ‘may have informed him of the role the head plays in controlling the body ... It is the church that is directed by Christ or, in other words, it is the body that is directed by the head...[v. 22-23, there’s a] relationship ... the human body as an analogy ... of an organic unity that is animated by the head. It is not like a corporation where the employees have no relationship with the head and / or other employees. On the contrary, the body depicts that each member is integrally bound to the head and to each other ... The members of the body of Christ are bound to each other and are related to Christ as our redeemer, sustainer, and head.’<sup>8</sup> [see 5:23 for illustration]

**5:23** *For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.* <sup>24</sup> *But as the church is subject to Christ ...*

Dr. Street will develop that more in our marriage conference next week, but notice this is a loving headship, an affectionate authority <sup>25</sup> *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church ...* <sup>28</sup> *So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;* <sup>29</sup> *for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,* <sup>30</sup> *because we are members of His body.*

The image of Christ as head of the church as His body is one of not cruel ruler-ship but caring relationship, authority and intimacy, nourishing and cherishing, saving and sustaining, directing and protecting, leading and feeding, providing and guiding, all of grace

That's a powerful picture with powerful implications for Christians

### **Exhortations from God's Power**

#### **1. Submit Yourself to Christ's Church (v. 22c)**

<sup>22</sup> *And He put all things in subjection [or submission] under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church ...*

Who's the head of the church? We know the answer, but do we? This church is not "Pastor Phil's church" or your church. This is not a church "of the people, by the people, for the people" but by the grace of Christ, we want to be of Him, by Him, through Him, to Him. The church is not to be run by a pastor or popular vote or people's traditions or powerful personalities but by the person of Christ. I'm not the head of this church. No pastor is. No pope is the head of a bunch of churches. Christ is *the Head of the true church*. It was on this hill the Reformers were willing to die, that Jesus is Head of the church, they were willing to lose their own heads for it (and some of them did). For them, the glory of Christ was at stake, so they were willing to be burned at the stake rather than give up this doctrine that the church has at its head, not man, but the One who stands in heaven with feet that have nail-prints through them,

The first time the word "church" appears in the NT, it's by Jesus: "*I will build My church ...*" (Matt 16:18). It's His church, not ours. The second time the word "church" is used in the NT is by Jesus 2 chapters later, if one in the church continues in sin unrepentant after private rebuke, follow-up with witnesses, Jesus says "*tell it to the church. And if He will not listen even to the church [church told so they can also try to rescue and restore the brother entangled in sin] treat him as an outsider*" [i.e. put out till he repents]

That's Matthew 18. That's Church 101, the 2 times Jesus used the word "church," to talk about His church that He builds His way. In our day and age a lot of pastors of my generation are re-inventing church or doing their church their new way, building a "church" by boldly going where no man has gone before ... but the church is not ours to do with what we like. The Lord *will build His church*. We don't want to compete with Him, we want to be a part of what He's doing.

In Acts 20:28, Paul talks to the Elders from Ephesus, the church the book of Ephesians is written to, he calls their local church "*the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood...*" Their job is to "*shepherd the flock of God among you ...*" (1 Peter 5:2).

The church is not ruled by the congregation, it's ruled by Christ, the Good Shepherd who leads and feeds through under-shepherds that the Scripture calls Elders or overseers or pastors or shepherds representing Him. The GCBC constitution/bylaws says it this way: "The governing authority and head of this church is Jesus Christ alone (Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:15-18). As head of the church, Jesus Christ in His Word has given Elders to be the spiritual leaders of the local church (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Titus 1:5; Hebrews 13:7-8, 17; I Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 5:17) ... for shepherding and having oversight of the flock (1 Peter 5:1-4)."

Christ has ordained in His church those that 1 Thess. 5:12 passage says “*have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction.*” 1 Timothy 5:17 speaks of Elders who “*rule well*” (an authority that Christ as head of the church has set up, mediating His leadership). Hebrews 13:17 says: ***Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account.***

Why should you submit yourself to a church and its leaders? Why be a member of a church? It’s a simple way to fulfill that command in Heb. 13:17 and it helps the leaders know whose souls they are to give account to God for, who they have charge over, who agrees with their teaching. Joining a church is also a public statement that you’re not just checking out the church for awhile but you’ve settled and consider yourself a part of this family, and you want the accountability that Jesus talked about in Mt 18, a sheep desiring shepherding, a body part connected to other body parts related to the same head. You’re saying to others I’m committing to you, to give, to be a part of this body (teaching / some serving positions are limited to members).

## 2. Commit Yourself to Serve Christ’s Body (v. 23)

<sup>23</sup> [the church] is ***His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.***

This is incredible language, that we as the church are *the body of Christ*, we are *His fullness*? He’s like a bridegroom whose picture isn’t full without the bride, like a vine you can’t think of without branches, ‘as shepherd he is not seen without his sheep; and so also as head he finds his full expression in his body, the church.’<sup>9</sup>

Christ chose to present the full picture of Himself in the church. The church is no small thing to Him, no optional little extra to Him – and for us, church should be no small optional little extra thing. It’s the very heart of His plan, the manifestation and magnification of the supremacy of all His glory; v. 10 uses the same word *fulness* for the universal uniting all things in Christ *in the fullness of time*. The One who fills the universe, also, in some way hard to fully understand, manifests His fullness in the church as His body and as His fullness, v. 22: His complement, consummation, completion or fulfillment of His full plan climaxed with His body, the church!

Being a part of the body of Christ, with other saints, fills us with the fullness of His love that we don’t experience without being a part of the church, which exists to glorify Christ’s fullness together. Paul prays in Ephesians 3:18 that we:

“*comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,*<sup>19</sup> *and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.*<sup>20</sup> *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,*<sup>21</sup> ***to Him be the glory in the church ...***”

**4:10** *He who descended [Jesus] is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)* [how?] <sup>11</sup> *And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, [for what end?]* <sup>12</sup> *for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;* <sup>13</sup> *until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*

... <sup>15</sup> *but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into **Him who is the head, even Christ,** <sup>16</sup> **from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.***

Turn over to Hebrews 10. We'll go into Ephesians 4 in more depth later this year, Lord-willing. Another great body life text on why to submit to or commit to a church body to serve other says: <sup>24</sup> *and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, **but encouraging one another ...***

Why should you commit yourself to a church, whether committing by membership or by faithful attendance or by service? What's the reason to be involved beyond just sitting through the Sunday AM service and then slipping out and doing your own thing all week? Why should we be faithful to something besides showing up 2 or 3x a month to sit a bit and go home? Why should we sacrificially love others, giving up time for them, some of whom are a hassle?

- Here's why we should and can: Christ did (v. 10-12)!
- Here's why we should serve: our Lord came to serve (v. 7)
- Here's why we should be submissive? Christ was (v. 9)
- Here's why we should be faithful: God is faithful (v. 23)!
- Here's why we gather: hope grows together (v. 23 "us")
- Here's why to commit to church: to consider one another (v. 24), to not be consumers focused on what church does/doesn't do for us rather than what we can do for the church
- Here's why: others need to be stimulated to love (v. 24)
- Here's why: others need to be encouraged (v. 25)
- Here's why: hope is fostered together, not in isolation
- Here's why: It's not about us, it's about Christ, His body

John Piper ties this language from here and 1:23 together this way:

'God AIMS to fill the universe with the glory of his Son, Jesus, by making the church the showcase of his perfections [or fullness]. Or to put it another way, and include the idea of body: God means to fill the universe with the glory of his Son by putting the church on display as the embodiment of his Son [*the fullness of Him who fills all in all*]. Christ fills the universe with his glory by showing the universe his body—how he chose her, how he destined her, how he came for her and taught her and suffered for her and died for her and rose for her and reigns for her, how he called her and justified her and cleansed her and kept her and will raise her and glorify her and satisfy her forever and ever with himself ...

God did not exalt Jesus and subject all things to him and then simply say, "Now go ahead and fill the universe with your glory; fill all things with yourself." Instead he raised him and exalted him and subjected all things under him and then made him one with the church, as head to the body, and said, "Now, my Son, you and those with whom you are united as head to body, go forth in the universe and fill it with all that you are in your body. Let everything, from the highest heaven to the lowest hell, be filled with a revelation of your glorious [fullness] in the form of a chosen destined, blood-bought, called, justified, holy, glorified, and infinitely, everlastingly satisfied people, your body, the church'<sup>10</sup>

There's nothing higher than this and there should be no higher privilege for us than to be a part of this lofty eternal plan of God to use people like us to be a part of His church, to serve in His body! And He fills us with His power and grace to fulfill the purpose for which He put us in His church, the fullness of Him who fills all.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pbc.org/files/messages/5238/3007.html>

<sup>2</sup> A.W. Tozer. *Keys to a Deeper Life*, p. 87-88.

<sup>3</sup> Jon Courson, *Jon Courson's Application Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 1233.

<sup>4</sup> *The Pulpit Commentary: Ephesians*. 2004 (H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed.) (8). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

<sup>5</sup> *Works of John Owen*, Vol. 2, (Banner of Truth, 1980), p. 70-71.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/the-immeasurable-greatness-of-his-power-toward-us>

<sup>7</sup> Louw and Nida's Lexicon (87.51)

<sup>8</sup> Hoehner, 292.

<sup>9</sup> William Hendriksen, *NTC*, 104

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/his-body-the-fullness-of-him-who-fills-all-in-all>