

Week 5: FILLED TO ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD

Ephesians 4: 1 – 16:

Paul's prayer, **1: 15-23** with the climax in **v22 & 23**. As His Body, the church is the full expression of Jesus Christ; *the fullness of him who fills all in all*. Christ is not only Head of the church but Supreme Head over all things. The authority of Jesus was because he was under the Father's authority and always carried out His will. Therefore the function of His body, the church, is intended to be the full expression of Jesus Christ. Linking verses 19-23, Christ is Lord of all as shown by His resurrection and ascension; head of all things for the church and as His body, the church is meant to exhibit the full expression of Him, filled by Him, for He fills everything. Our declaration by the Word.

3:19; The immediate context is Paul's prayer from verse 14 in which he prays, not for gifts or abilities, but that we be filled to the fullness of God Himself; *filled with all the fullness of God* is entwined with *the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge*. This means beyond any academic pursuit, ahead even of spiritual knowledge. 'It must find expression in experience, in sorrows and joys, trials and sufferings, in ways too deep for the mind of man to fathom, or for human language to express'.¹ Paul refers to the quality not the entirety of fullness and linked with **v20** reveals a very bold request.

4: 10 & 13; He descended and ascended, *that He might fill all things*, verse 10 reveals His supremacy over any and all powers. Everything is subject to Him resulting in a Christ-filled world; therefore anything – anyone - separate from Him is unfilled, empty, without purpose, idolatrous, ever searching and never finding fulfilment. Does this lead to identity crisis? By contrast the saints have been equipped for ministry, for building up the body of Christ, for the saints to attain unity of faith, knowledge of the Son of God, mature manhood, *to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*. Why? Verses 14 – 16; *tossed to and fro, raging*; **Luke 8: 24 & James 1: 6**.

The purpose of fullness is not static, with the danger of stagnation, for His Body ministers as an overflowing expression, thereby filling everything without restraint; gripped by the Word of Truth – true truth. Thus going out, speaking

¹ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians*, Tyndale, 1963, 105

out, and living out in and with the Word in the world. Themes of unity in the body of Christ and diversity in unity **V10 & 13**. --- Creeds are a guide.

The Chalcedon Creed or Formula was accepted in 451 AD at Chalcedon (Kadikoy), a city opposite Constantinople. The Formula does not add additional doctrine to either the Apostles' or Nicean Creeds. Its emphasis concerns the doctrine of two unconfounded and undivided natures in the person of Christ; ie. the two natures, divine and human, are perfectly united in one person. Jesus Christ is truly human and truly God and his two natures are perfectly united with no mixture, confusion, separation or division. The two natures are united yet distinct.² 'The Chalcedonian Creed restricts us so that no matter how we conceive of the two natures, we must not think of them as an amalgamated blending or a stark separation from one another'.³ Against numerous 'doctrinal deviations the Chalcedon Formula defends the scriptural doctrine of Christ's two natures coexisting in the one divine person without confusion or division. The mystery of the Incarnation cannot be solved by finite man; it is either believed or rejected'.⁴

The Creed, Formula or Definition of Chalcedon

“We all, with one voice, confess our Lord Jesus Christ, one and the same Son, at once complete in deity and complete in humanity, truly God and truly man, consisting of a rational soul and body; of the same essence as the Father in His deity, of the same essence as us in His humanity, like us in all things apart from sin; begotten of the Father before all ages as regards His deity, the same born of the Virgin Mary, the birth-giver of God, as regards His humanity, in the last days, for us and our salvation; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of the natures being in no way abolished because of the union, but rather the characteristic property of each nature being preserved, and coming together to form one person and one hypostasis.* He is not split or divided into two persons, but He is one and the same Son and only-begotten, God the Logos, the Lord Jesus Christ, as formerly the prophets and later Jesus CHRIST HAVE TAUGHT US ABOUT HIM, AND AS IT HAS BEEN HANDED DOWN TO US BY THE CREED OF THE FATHERS”.

² Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth*, Third edition, 2009, IVP, 195-204.

³ R.C. Sproul, *Everyone's a Theologian*, Reformation Trust, 2014, 137

⁴ J.T. Mueller, "Christianity Today", 7/12/1959, 9 &10

The seriousness of our Christian belief was emphasised in the life of the Puritan John Owen (1616-1683). 'He entered Queen's College, Oxford, at the age of twelve, and studied the classics, mathematics, philosophy, theology, Hebrew and rabbinical writings'. BA, MA, and throughout his teen years he studied eighteen to twenty hours a day.⁵ Dr J. I. Packer penned an Introduction to a modern publication of Owen's *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*. Packer wrote, we have 'lost our grip on the biblical gospel. Without realising it, we have during the past century bartered that gospel for a substitute product which, though it looks similar enough in points of detail, is as a whole a decidedly different thing. Hence our troubles, for the substitute product does not answer the ends for which the authentic gospel has in past days proved itself so mighty. The new gospel conspicuously fails to produce deep reverence, deep repentance, deep humility, a spirit of worship, a concern for the church. Why? ... It fails to make men God-centred in their thoughts and God-fearing in their hearts because this is not primarily what it is trying to do ... in the new gospel the centre of reference is man'.⁶

The outworking of Christ's "fullness" is that the primary focus of our theology, our (Christian) life, is our love relationship with God our Father as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. We worship Him; not our family, home, job, retirement, beliefs, hobbies, ambition, theology, church for they are all idols. Having been *filled in Him who is the head*, there is room for no other.

⁵ Joel R. Beeke & Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans*, Reformation Heritage Books, Michigan, 2006, 456

⁶ J. I. Packer, 'Introductory Essay,' to John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, Banner of Truth Trust, 1967, 1 & 2 (Volume 10, Works of John Owen, 1852)