

# The Corporate Aspect of Sanctification

by John Murray

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*The sermon explores the corporate aspect of sanctification, emphasizing the Church's role in receiving and reflecting the fullness of Christ.*

**Duration:** 53:24

**Topics:** "Sanctification"

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## Description

The sermon transcript discusses the concept of Christ being the head over all things and the church being His body. It emphasizes the idea of complete subjection to Christ and the unity of believers in the knowledge and fullness of Christ. The transcript also mentions the importance of the church as a means for the manifold wisdom of God to be made known to the heavenly powers. It concludes with a prayer for believers to be prepared for the heavenly kingdom and to attain the measure of the fullness of Christ.

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## Transcript

O Lord and God, Thou art great and greatly to be praised. Thy greatness is unsearchable. How marvellous is Thy condescension.

How marvellous is Thy grace. And how inexhaustible is Thy love in Christ Jesus. That Thou hast given Him to be over all things to His body, the Church.

And that Thou wilt one day bring everything into complete subjection to Him. So that unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places will be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God. Do Thou grant unto us that we, each one of us, by the effectual working of Thy Holy Spirit in our hearts and in our lives, may be prepared for that great entrance into the heavenly kingdom, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

For His name's sake, amen. Now revealing the prophetic certifications and in connection with, of course, our corporate. Now Ephesians 1.23, as you may remember, reads as follows.

And He hath put all things under His feet. That is God the Father, of course, is the subject. And He hath put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the Church.

It is His body, the fullness of Him, who tells all in all, all things in all things, who is telling the best thought of the present participant, who is telling things. And, of course, the question here is the antecedent of Tom Cleoma. Now the prevailing view, of course, in the history of interpretation has been that it refers, that it

has its antecedent, the receiving term, ecclesia, to the Church, His body.

Because these two are synonymous. And the most natural construct would be that the fullness of Cleoma, the Church, which is His body. More recently, however, the view has been propounded that the fullness, the fullness, in the middle of verse 23, finds its antecedent in our tongue at the beginning of the verse, which, of course, refers to Christ.

And gave Him as head over all things to the Church, which is His body, and the fullness of His heart back to our tongue, to Christ. If that is the intended construction, exegetical difficulty, because then Christ, in Him, as the full teaching, because in Him dwells all the fullness of Godhood, Colossians 2, 9, 19, however, is exegetically, and that for these reasons, first, it is syntactically harsh, syntactically harsh to find the antecedent in our tongue, referring to Christ, because that is so far removed in the structure of the verse from the term in question, namely the fullness. The most unnatural is to go back so far to find the antecedent, that to which it stands in opposition, especially since you have, which is His body, in immediate antecedence, in immediate antecedence to what? Obviously, an oppositional expression, namely the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

And because of the unnaturalness, this you should be resorted to only if any other interpretation would offer insuperable difficulty, would offer insuperable difficulty. That is the first reason. The second, that this involves an assumption which is without any warrant in the appalling concept as they are set forth in these two companion epistles, Ephesians and Colossians.

If the fullness refers to Christ, then He is distinguished. He is distinguished from some other person distinguished, because He is stated to be the fullness of Him who fills all in all. And of course, the only alternative, the only alternative that would be feasible is that He is represented to be the fullness of the Father, the fullness of the Father as the one who fills all in all, fills all in all.

In this epistle, that is not appalling, that the Father, it is not appalling concept. Theologically, it would be true to refer to the omnipresence, the omnipresence of the Lord. Therefore, exegetically, we have to take into account the concept which Paul entertained in this epistle and also in Colossians.

In these epistles, it is Christ who is filling all things. And that is expressed, it is stated in Ephesians 4.10, Ephesians 4.10, He who descended is the same also who ascended far above all the heavens in order that He might fill all things. He now arose up and up in order that He might fill.

And consequently, when we come to this expression in Ephesians 1.23, who fills all in all, it is surely Christ who is being contemplated in accordance with the express statement to that effect in Ephesians 4.10. It would be a side, or beside, would be beside Paul in thought in this epistle to think of the Father as the person who fills all. Third, third consideration, Paul is never spoken of as the fullness of the Father. Christ is never spoken of as the fullness of the Father, or pleroma.

It is true that in him, according to Paul, dwells the fullness of Godhood, deity, the fullness of Deity. But I don't know what biblical or what biblical concept by calling Christ the fullness of the Father. He is never spoken of as the fullness of any other person of the Godhead.

The person is very, an entirely different concept from that of having the fullness of Godhood, deity in himself. The fullness of Deity in himself, by John's name, in other words, was God. Now these three considerations, I think, are confusing.

But I mention, of course, this is subsidiary and it's only provisional. It is entirely possible that the pleromano version, pleromano, the end of the version, should be translated personally rather than as a middle word. Possible, you see, that it should be translated personally.

And that has been recently proposed, of course, has been debated with a good deal of vigor, recently proposed, and it means being helpful. And that is not impossible as referring to Christ. Not impossible as referring to Christ, that He would be as being thoroughly filled unto Him passing and have that fortunate all in all His people.

He was being thoroughly filled. He was being thoroughly filled to the brim in accordance, you see, with Colossians 119. That it pleased the Father that in Him should evolve the fullness, take up its permanent abode.

He could be represented as being filled. You could never think it as being filled. When Christ is represented as being filled, Colossians 119, He is represented as being filled.

It is in His economic capacity as the God-man, as the head over all things to His body, the Church. He couldn't refer to the Father because of the economic relations which occupy the entire intellectual life. Now for these reasons, particularly for men who should be, for these reasons, this interpretation has to be decisively rejected.

I cannot understand the exegetical sense of those scholars still living today. ...suppose that solution. Now, therefore, we are compelled to reject the supposition that the fullness is an opposition to Christ.

These exegetical reasons were decisively ruling out that. I don't believe it's worthy of any further entertainment. Consequently, we have to come to the conclusion that the fullness applies as the body of Christ, the Church applies as the body of Christ.

Then can it mean how can the Church be the fullness of the fullness? There is one interpretation that must be ruled out immediately, namely, that the Church cannot be conceived which fills Christ, cannot be conceived as that which fills Christ. Uniformly, the Church draws out of the fullness that is in Christ, draws out of the fullness of this Church, draws out of the fullness that is in the Church, the very figure that Paul uses here, to the Church. However, there is an interpretation that has been proposed, namely, that the Church is the complement of the complement, in the sense that the Church is complementary to Christ, complementary to Christ.

And that, of course, is a thoroughly biblical concept that we can never think of Christ in his Messianic capacity apart from the Church, nor the Church, apart from... And the figure here gives additional force to that. He is head over all things to the Church, and, of course, he is head of the Church also. Many other passages.

He is head of the Church, and a head has no meaning to my body, the complement. Now, that's reasonable. It's a biblical concept.

Very important. It can begin to enumerate the various ways in which that affects. Now, that's reasonable.

It's a biblical concept. Very important. It can begin to enumerate the various ways in which that affects the eukaryology.

Never, never think of Christ in any of his undertakings apart from the Church, with any of the responsibilities. Well, then, you might say, why don't we adopt it? The reason is that this interpretation is not, and because it doesn't accord with Ephesians 3.19 and Ephesians 4.30, these other two, closely. Try to place that sense of wholeness to know the exceeding greatness, the exceeding great love, know, to know the exceeding great love, the knowledge of Christ, in order that he might be held unto all the fullness of God.

It's time to talk clearly about two things. In order that he might be held with all the fullness of God, that is, unto the filial he might be held and fit in there. And then again, Ephesians 4.30, it gives the faith that man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

This idea of the complement doesn't fit well. What it seems to me that the only reasonable is to take here another meaning of the word fullness, which is namely, that the fullness can be that which is full of something. It's fullness.

So it's sceptical, and it's understood in this sense. Such means of the church is that which receives the plenitude. This in Christ receives the plenitude.

As I shall show in a moment, that is the only meaning that is compatible. 4.30, Christ. Christ is the person in whom dwells the plenitude of life, of power, of grace, of truth, of wisdom, of knowledge, of goodness, of righteousness, of patience, of loving kindness.

And you can continue the catalogue, continue this catalogue to embrace every virtue, every virtue, which resides in Christ and His economic capacity, and every virtue which must be communicated to the church. And when the churches have to be the fullness of Christ, the fullness of Christ, it means that the church is being filled with the plenitude because of union with Christ. In that organism of which Christ is the head, there is being communicated to believers as members of His body the fullness that is in Christ Himself.

And, therefore, this gigantic coming to that of John 1, 16. John 1, 16. Out of His fullness have we all received grace.

You see the answer. Glory is of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and glory. It is full of grace and glory.

Amen. Out of His fullness we all have received. Then when we turn to Ephesians 3, 19, we can see how all the fullness of God, the verb, you see, is used in order that we might all the fullness of God and I don't know of any passage that confronts us with a more staggering within this locus, within the locus of the benefit that we might be filled, that we might be filled unto all the fullness of God.

How on earth can the fullness of God come to dwell in believers? How? They are torn down. The richness of the concept, the fullness of God, is a question. But we are dealing with a clarifying.

The church is being filled with the fullness that is in Christ. Filled with the fullness that is in Christ. Out of His fullness they are receiving grace for grace.

A never-ending process filling to the brim. But the fullness or the plenitude is a divine fullness. A divine fullness.

And it is therefore the fullness of God that is filled unto all the churches being filled with that fullness of righteousness, of truth, of wisdom, of knowledge, of power, of goodness, of patience, of love, of loving-kindness, of permanence. The head of the church. And that is the head over all things.

We in Ephesians 4.13 understand Ephesians 4.13, which again is staggering because of the richness of grace that is involved. Until we all come into the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of the Statue, of the fullness of Christ. By the fullness of Christ.

The fullness that dwells in its plenitude. Now, the statue of Christ's fullness unto which believers are to attain not as discrete individuals, but in the unity and fellowship of the church and the fellowship of Christ. And fellowship meaning also to the participation of all that Christ is in His economic capacity.

Is the statue. The statue of being filled with the grace and virtue, truth and righteousness and holiness, which are thereof all in Christ. As the first begotten from the dead.

As the one in whom it pleased the Father that all the fullness should dwell. Bear in mind that we are dealing with the fullness that resides in Christ. His economic capacity.

His redemptive capacity. His capacity as the Savior. And remember that in that particular relationship, the fullness that dwells in Christ has meaning only.

I say it is the fullness that has meaning only in reference to His people. In reference to the church. It's not the fullness that He has on His own account.

Just as it was not on His own account that He humbled Himself, but on our account. And therefore that plenitude that we saw has meaning only as it is a plenitude that is communicated. Now to bring that to focus in relation to our subject.

The process which progressive sanctification involves is nothing less than that directed to conformity to the image of God's Son. Nothing less than that conformity to the image of God's own Son, Romans 8.29. That was the ultimate predestined purpose of God and that is the end that will be achieved. But that conformity is not attained through some external imitative assimilation.

I say not through external imitative assimilation, but through an impartation of the fullness, an impartation which flows mystically and spiritually and in ways that are utterly beyond our understanding. It is beyond our comprehension. Through a life organism exists an immensely higher plane than any form of organic or animate life which we are acquainted in the realm of our phenomenal experience, our phenomenal earthly existence.

That, I think, is a great truth which Ephesians 1.23, 3.19, 4.13 point, is just within the complex of thought, that within that complex are we of meaning. Now that is the process. Communication, therefore participation in highest sense, fellowship.

Now let us think of this as it applies to our responsibility, responsibility and privilege. It means that in progressive sanctification the most central and basic consideration is that we are to realize increasingly the implications of union and communion with Christ. To realize increasingly the implications of union and communion with Christ, of communication from Him.

And if I may use the word complementation here, which is a concept, it is to realize more and more the complementation of Christ and the Church. Complementation, so that there is no need, no exigency, arising from the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, nor demand flowing from membership in His body, nor office which we are called upon to discharge, which is not supplied, not supplied out of the fullness, but resides in Christ as the end.

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