

The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XCIV : UNITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE CONGREGATION OF BELIEVERS (4:1-16)

Ephesians 4:16 —

in whom all the body ys coupled and knet togedder in every ioynt wherwith one ministreth to another (accordinge to the operacion as every parte hath his measure) and increaseth the body vnto the edyfyinge of it silfe in love. (Tyndale's New Testament, 1524)

By whome al the body being coupled and knit together by euery ioynt, for ye furniture therof (according to the effectual power, which is in the measure of euery part) receiueth increase of the body, vnto the edifyinge of itselfe in loue. (Geneva Bible, 1599)

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifyinge of itself in love. (King James Version, 1769)

from whom the whole body, being fitly joined together and united, through the supply of every joint, according to the working in the measure of each single part, the increase of the body doth make for the building up of itself in love. (Young's Literal Translation, 1898)

from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love. (Revised Version, 1885)

from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love. (American Standard Version, 1901)

from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love. (Revised Standard Version, 1952)

from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (New King James Version, 1982)

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. (New American Standard Version, 1995)

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (New International Version, 2011)

from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (English Standard Version, 2011)

ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβαζόμενον διὰ πάσης ἀφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας κατ' ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἑνὸς ἑκάστου μέρους τὴν αὐξησιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ (Stephanus Greek NT, 1550)

ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβαζόμενον διὰ πάσης ἀφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας κατ' ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἑνὸς ἑκάστου μέρους τὴν αὐξησιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ. (NA28 Greek New Testament)

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| <i>from whom</i> | ἐξ οὗ [ex hou] |
| <i>the whole body,</i> | πᾶν τὸ σῶμα [pan to sōma] |
| <i>joined and held together</i> | συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβαζόμενον [sunarmologoumenon kai sumbibazomenon] |
| <i>by every joint with which it is equipped,</i> | διὰ πάσης ἀφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας [dia pasēs haphēs tēs epichorēgias] |
| <i>when each part is working properly,</i> | κατ' ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἑνὸς ἑκάστου μέρους [kat energeian en metrō henos hekastou merous] |
| <i>makes the body grow</i> | τὴν αὐξησιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται [tēn auxēsin tou sōmatos poieitai] |
| <i>so that it builds itself up in love.</i> | εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ [eis oikodomēn heautou en agapē] |

HOW IS THE BODY CAUSING THE GROWTH?

In our last lesson we looked at Paul's main thrust of verse 16: *'the body ... makes the body grow.'* In this lesson we want to see what is causing the body to grow.

'constantly being joined together and constantly being held together'

συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβάζομενον [sunarmologoumenon kai symbibazomenon] — Paul uses two participles to illustrate how the Lord has placed each member in His body, His local churches. Each of these participles begin with the prefix *'sun -'* which has the sense of *'together with.'* For that reason I like how Clinton Arnold has translated these phrases, *'being joined together and being held together.'* [Arnold, 270]

THESE TWO PARTICIPLES HAVE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME MEANING — Many attempts have been made to distinguish the two participles in meaning; such attempts approach dangerously into the area of allegorisation. It is better with most modern commentators to view them in the light of [Paul's] regular practice of using approximate synonyms to enforce his message; they do not therefore have essentially distinctive meanings." [Best, 410f; see also Lincoln, 262]

allegorisation – (1) to express as or in the form of an allegory: a story of barnyard animals that allegorizes the fate of Soviet socialism; (2) to interpret allegorically: allegorize the quest for the Holy Grail as an inner spiritual search.



'HARMONIOUSLY AND SKILLFULLY PUT TOGETHER' — FIRST PARTICIPLE ALSO USED IN 2:21 — ***constantly being joined together*** — συναρμολογούμενον [sunarmologoumenon] — Paul also used a form of this same word in 2:21, *'in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.'* (Eph 2:21 ESV) It is the only two times this word is used in the New Testament. Referring to 2:21 Harold Hoehner writes, "There it was discussed as a word that Paul coined by joining the prepositional prefix συν- [sun] either to the rare noun ἁρμός [harmos], referring to stones torn away from their 'joints' (or the 'crevice' of a door); or to the rare verb ἁρμολογέω [harmologeō], meaning 'to join' or 'pile together,' as stones for a tomb. Hence, it would have the resultant meaning *'to join, fit together,' especially with reference to a construction made of stones. Today with mortar it is easy to fit stones together but in that day, with no mortar, the stones were cut and smoothed by an elaborate process so that they fit exactly with each other. As the*

ancient masons used an elaborate process of fitting stones together, it is certain that God's grace carefully fits together persons with one another in order to bring inner unity that can allow them to grow together. The emphasis is on the skillful fitting of each member to the other, as opposed to being thrown together haphazardly." [Hoehner, 569; see also Bruce, 352f; O'Brien, 313; Thielman, 287]

'COMPACTNESS OR SOLIDARITY' — SECOND PARTICIPLE ALSO USED IN COL 2:19 — ***constantly being knit together*** — καὶ συμβιβάζομενον [kai symbibazomenon] — Paul also used this word in Col 2:19, *'and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.'* (Col 2:19 ESV) In the Colossian verse it refers to the body 'knit together' as a unity by the head alone. [O'Brien, 313] It is a term frequently employed in the context of reconciliation. [Lincoln, 262] "The second participle ... literally means *'to bring or put together'* and used metaphorically means *'to bring to terms, reconcile.'* It was used philosophically to make analytical comparisons and to draw conclusions and is used to bring arguments together in order to demonstrate or prove something. It appears ten times in the LXX translating four Hebrew words and always means *'to teach, instruct.'* Teaching is a process of bringing together facts and arguments. In the NT this word occurs seven times with various meanings, including *'to conclude, infer'* (Acts 16:10); *'to prove, demonstrate'* (Acts 9:22); *'to instruct'* (Acts 19:33; 1 Cor 2:16 [quoting Isa 40:14]); and *'to unite, bring or knit together'* (Col 2:2,19). This last sense fits the present context and is parallel with Col 2:19 and is best translated *'held together'* or *'intimately joined together.'* Individual believers are brought together much like a lawyer marshalls evidence together in a logical fashion so as to make a case clear or like a teacher who tightly argues in a logical sequence to demonstrate a theory. However, the union between believers is not only external in that they are redeemed and gifted by the same Lord but also internal in that they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit." [Hoehner, 569f] ***"Although the idea of holding together fits well with the metaphor of joints and ligaments, Paul may have chosen this word because it also is widely used for instruction. In fact, that is the only way the term is used throughout the LXX. Paul reflects his knowledge of this usage of the term when he cites Isa 40:3 in 1 Cor 2:16: 'For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?' Given the emphasis in this passage on confessing a common faith (Eph 4:4-6, 15), growing in a knowledge of the faith (4:13), and the role of gifted leaders (including teachers) to pass on this faith, it would not be surprising if Paul did not intend to convey some notion of instruction in choosing this verb. This then means that part of what holds believers together is their shared faith.*** [Arnold, 270]

THIS IS AN ON-GOING ACTION — Grammarians point out that these participles are in the present tense, meaning ‘*the process is still going on, the framing is not complete but still proceeding.*’ [Abbott, 125; Alford, 120; see also O’Brien, 313; Hoehner, 570] Practically speaking, ‘*the togetherness described here requires continual achievement.*’ [Best, 410] Kenneth Wuest: ‘*from whom all the Body constantly being joined closely together and constantly being knit together....*’.

WHILE WE MUST ACT ON THESE PRINCIPLES, ULTIMATELY THIS IS THE WORK OF THE LORD — The grammarians also point out these words are in the passive voice, signifying that God (through Christ), or Christ himself, is the one effectively at work in the process of joining and knitting together the body. [O’Brien, 313; Hoehner, 570] “*The passive voice suggests that God is the one who is fitting together the various new members to this edifice just as a stone mason fits bricks together in the construction of a building.*” [Arnold, 270]

WE ARE TO REMAIN UNITED IF WE ARE TO GROW — These two participles, “... taken together, underline forcefully that *for the unified growth of the body its members have to be involved in a process of continual mutual adjustment.*” [Lincoln, 262] “*It speaks of the inner unity of believers who were, before their conversion, at enmity with one another.... They grow by being carefully fitted and held together, rather than growing individually apart from one another.*” [Hoehner, 570] “*Taken together the participles indicate the need for the community to remain united if it is to grow....* It is true [Paul] stresses here corporate growth more than the togetherness of members yet the latter is not absent, the following ἁφῆς [haphēs, ‘joint’] relates members to one another. Thus the ‘horizontal’ relationship of members and, as we shall see, the ‘vertical’ relationship with Christ are both present.” [Best, 411]

‘through every joint that brings supply’

διὰ πάσης ἀφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας [dia pasēs haphēs tēs epichorēgias] — “*This prepositional phrase ‘though every joint that brings supply’ modifies the two participles and gives expression to the idea that the corporate community of believers grows and matures through the active participation of every member.*” [Arnold, 270]

‘THROUGH EVERY JOINT’ — διὰ πάσης ἀφῆς [dia pasēs haphēs] — *Paul is not here writing a medical journal but providing a metaphor to illustrate believers interacting within our churches. For that reason it is difficult to translate Paul’s intentions here by a single physiological word; while most Bible versions translate this word as ‘joint,’ this one word cannot convey Paul’s full meaning. It embodies the following:*

- *it is in effect plural by the use of the word ‘every’*
- *it is that which holds the body together (ligament is sometimes used since it is that which connects the bones and muscle)*
- *it is that which enables nourishment to pass from one part to another*
- *it is that which conveys information to the other parts*
- *it is that which touches and contacts the other parts (in the LXX it is used of that which lights another fire by contact).*
- *the whole is controlled by the head*

“There has been some dispute over the precise meaning of the term in this context, with some contending that it should be understood as a *ligament or tendon* (CSV; NET; NIV; NRSV) and others arguing that it should be understood as ‘*contact.*’ The latter view is correct in bringing out the basic sense of the word, which is a noun form of the verb ‘*touch*’ (ἅπτω, *haptō*). J. B. Lightfoot convincingly demonstrated many years ago, however, that the word was widely used for the contact points of the parts of the human body (where they touch one another) and thereby functions as a near equivalent to the more common word for joints (τὰ ἄρθρα, *ta arthra*). ‘*Ligaments*’ is also an unlikely interpretation since this seems to be better expressed by a different word (σύνδεσμοι, *sundesmoi*; this was the common term in the medical writers to refer to ligaments), which Paul actually uses in conjunction with ‘*joints*’ in Col 2:19. Lightfoot was also correct in stressing the importance of interpreting ‘*joints*’ (ἀφή, *haphē*) as the relationship between contiguous limbs and not limit it to the contact points themselves. **Therefore, the idea is that the body is comprised of a variety of limbs that are closely connected to one another.** Each of these individual members becomes a source of supply (ἐπιχορηγία, *epichorēgia*) for the well-being of all the other members with which it comes into contact. Although this word and its cognates were not common in the medical writings of the era, it does appear frequently in Koine Greek to describe a husband’s responsibility in providing for his wife.” [Arnold, 271] “ἁφή [aphē] is probably a medical term whose exact significance is unclear; the accompanying πάσης [pasēs] makes it in effect a plural. It represents whatever (i) holds the body together, (ii) enables nourishment to pass from one part to another, (iii) the whole to be controlled by the head. The translation ‘*joints*’ is inadequate since joints exist to make articulation possible. In a sense Abbott’s rendering ‘*contacts*’ is both in keeping with the basic meaning of the root and conveys some of its present connotation, but in the light of the way the word has changed its meaning since Abbott’s time ‘*contact*’ itself would now require explanation. **It is better to think in terms of ligaments, arteries and nerves, though no one of these by itself is correct since ligaments enable the body to act as a unit but do not convey nourishment and energy from one part to another, nerves convey not nourishment but information and arteries have no function in holding the body together. Even if we knew what part of the body [Paul] had in mind, there may be no exact modern equivalent and efforts to determine this are probably wasted.**” [Best, 411; see also Abbott, 125f; Hoehner, 571ff]

WE AS INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS DO NOT DISAPPEAR INTO THE WHOLE — Harold Hoehner quotes Aristotle’s use of this word to bring forth an interesting point. “Aristotle defines two kinds of union: one is *cohesion* (σύμφυσις, sumphusis) and the other is *contact* (ἄφή, aphē, the word used in our verse). *The first is organic unity whereas the latter is mere contact. He illustrates by pointing out that water and air, when separated, are merely in contact with each other, which is different from when they become one in actuality.* He goes on to say that although contact does not necessarily mean continuity, there certainly must be contact before cohesion can ever occur. He expands further by suggesting that two objects become one by touching and that the resulting whole will have the same sort of union as that which holds it together, as with a rivet, glue, contact, or organic union. Again, in another work Aristotle discusses this word and observes that in order for two things to undergo mixture, they must have contact with one another. *Ramifications of Aristotle’s remarks are noteworthy. When applied to the body of believers it is clear that the union and growth of the body can only come when there is contact with other members of the body. Although the body is one, the members are distinct. However, the interaction or contact between members, as the gifts are exercised, promotes both individual and corporate growth. Every believer is necessary to this process, not just a select few.*” [Hoehner, 571ff]

copper (element)

+

tin (element)

=

bronze (alloy)



iron ore (element)

+

carbon (element)

=

steel (alloy)



IS THIS A REFERENCE TO CHURCH LEADERS ONLY? — As early as Erasmus some have identified these ‘joints’ with the ministers / church leaders (‘it is the church leaders that hold the body together and supplies loving care’). “‘Every joint’ serves as a metaphor for all Christians, not just the gifted leaders of the church [so Hoehner, Best, Eadie, Calvin; others have thought the image should be limited to the gifted leaders; so, for example, O’Brien, Lincoln]. This is consistent with his development of the body image in 1 Cor 12, where Paul emphasizes that every member of the body contributes to its edification. This is also Paul’s emphasis in this section where he says that the role of the gifted leaders is to equip the saints to serve and to build up the body (4:11-12).” [Arnold, 270f; see also Best, 411f; Hoehner, 572]

‘THAT BRINGS SUPPLY, SUPPORT, ASSISTANCE, PROVISION’ — τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας [tēs epichorēgias] — This word is used in several different contexts in ancient papyri: in marriage contracts it connotes the ‘provision for a spouse’, in the Athenian drama festivals the ‘furnishing of the chorus’; and, in medical terminology (as here and Col. 2:19), the ‘ligament which acts as a support.’ [O’Brien, 314] *The underlying sense is that the joints are the points of union where the supply passes to the different members, and by means of which the body derives the supply by which it grows.* [Alford, 120] ἐπιχορηγία [epichorēgia] is found in Phil 1.19 and its cognate verb in 2 Cor 9.10; Gal 3.5; Col 2.19; 2 Pet 1.5, 11; its meaning lies in the area ‘help, supply, nourish, provide’. In our context it means that something is supplied to the body, or that the body is helped or nourished by Christ the head. Whatever it is, the ἀφαί [aphai, ‘joints’] transmit it; the final words of the verse suggest that it is love.” [Best, 412; see also Moule, 113; Hoehner, 568f]

BODILY GROWTH COMES FROM THOSE WITHIN THE BODY — “As we have just seen, Christ, the head, is the ultimate source of the body’s unity, but Paul also says that this unity comes ‘through every assisting connection’.” [Thielman, 287] “While the empowering for growth comes from above, members of the body themselves are fully involved in the process. Paul continues the physiological language, using it metaphorically to speak of the divine energy being channelled by every supporting ligament. The ligaments make contact with other parts of the body and are the channels which extend nourishment from the head.” [O’Brien, 314]

‘in accordance with the powerful working of each individual part’

κατ ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἑνὸς ἑκάστου μέρους [kat energeian en metrō henos hekastou merous] — “The source of supply by which each member of the body serves the others ultimately comes from Christ himself, who powerfully works in and through the various members.” [Arnold, 271]

DIVINE ENABLEMENT ACTING THROUGH EACH BELIEVER — ***in accordance with the powerful working*** — κατ ἐνέργειαν [kat energeian] — “The expression ‘in accordance with the powerful working’ points to divine enablement, not to any inherent power and ability possessed by the individual members. Paul used this word earlier in this letter to refer to the manifestation of God’s power in raising Jesus from the dead (1:19) and God’s powerful call on his life to serve as an apostle (3:7). Here it refers to God’s empowering each member of Christ’s body to serve others within the body.” [Arnold, 271] The word Paul uses here does not mean merely ‘power’ but ‘acting power, activity, working.’ It is the word from which we get our word ‘energy.’ [Abbott, 126; Hoehner, 575]

EACH GIVEN A CERTAIN MEASURE — ***in measure*** — ἐν μέτρῳ [en metrō] — This reflects back to Paul’s statement in v. 7, ‘But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.’ As we learned in that verse, the risen sovereign Christ gave gifts of grace to each according to His sovereign pleasure, not just what gifts but how much of the gifts! Kenneth Wuest: ‘according to the operative energy put forth to the capacity of each part...’. “God empowers each with a certain measure (ἐν μέτρῳ, en metrō) of his grace and strength. This implies that giftings differ among the various members of the body. It also is suggestive of God’s sovereign distribution of grace to his people.” [Arnold, 271] Compare Paul’s statement in Romans:

‘For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.’ (Rom 12:3-8 NKJV)

“The second prepositional phrase discusses the amount of active power produced by each member of the body. Expressed literally, it is according to the activity ‘in measure of each individual part.’ ... These genitives emphasize the individual’s responsibility to do his or her part and not depend on others to do the work of ministry nor to think that he or she is to do all the work of the ministry. The physical body is a good illustration of this principle. If, for example, the liver cells are more active than for what they are designed, they will ultimately do harm to the body. Likewise, if the liver cells stop functioning, the body will suffer dire consequences since other body parts cannot replace their function. Even in the fifth century B.C. Hippocrates remarked on his fascination with the precise functions of the human body. He observed that good health proceeds when the various parts of the body function proportionately to one another. Pain occurs when one of the parts is in defect or excess or when it is isolated from the body. Importantly, 1 Cor 12:14-26 also illustrates that the body of Christ operates precisely on this principle. Briefly then, each member of the body of Christ is to function to the measure Christ has given to him or her (v 7). When members fulfill their responsibilities, then the body of Christ can grow properly as Paul proceeds to develop next.” [Hoehner, 575f]

BALANCE: WHILE THE GIFTS ARE GIVEN BY THE SOVEREIGN CHRIST, WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO USE AND IMPROVE ON THESE GIFTS — From our recent discussions it may be misunderstood that all we are or all we are capable of is out of our control. This would be fatalism and an erroneous view. While we may not be able to understand all the intricacies, the gifts received from our sovereign Christ are to be balanced with our responsibility to use and improve upon those gifts:

For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. [THE SOVEREIGN DISPERSAL OF GIFTS] Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. [OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO USE AND IMPROVE UPON OUR GIFTS] But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord’s money. After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ He also who had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’ But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. Therefore take the talent from him, and

give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matt 25:14-30 NKJV)

We learned in Ephesians 4:7 that gifts are given by the risen Lord, not just what kind of gifts but the amount of these gifts. I believe this truth is mirrored in the Matthew passage (verse 15, 'And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability'). But the parable goes on to teach that we are responsible to use and improve on that which the Lord has given us each. This principle may be summed up as follows:

'For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.' (Luke 12:48b NKJV)

THIS INVOLVE ALL BELIEVERS WITHIN OUR CHURCHES, NOT JUST THE MINISTERS — *of each single part* — ἐνὸς ἐκάστου μέρους [henos hekastou merous] —

"Each individual part' confirms that it is not just the gifted leaders who are beneficiaries of God's grace for service, but all members of the body of Christ. This expression strongly individualizes the work of God in every member, but God bestows his grace and empowerment so that it is, in turn, used for the benefit of all the other members." [Arnold, 271f] "There seems to be a break in the verse at this point as the emphasis on individual contributions is picked up in a new way with wording recalling v. 7. Each member has a proportional contribution to offer and makes it towards the growth of the body as a whole and not specifically towards the individuals within it. Least of all is it suggested that the office-bearers alone grow, or alone contribute to or create the growth of the body, though of course they have their role in equipping members to work towards growth." [Best, 412f; see also Thielman, 288; Lincoln, 264] "The importance of each member's active contribution to the growth of the whole body is asserted in the words as *each part does its work*, which recall the language of v. 7, especially 'each one' (and 'according to measure'). Every member of the body, to whom grace has been given by the ascended Christ (v. 7), receives the necessary enabling power to perform his or her proper function so that the growth of the whole body is in proportion to and adapted to each. God's supernatural empowering has already been mentioned in Ephesians to describe his raising Christ from the dead, and now it is operative in believers (1:19), as well as in the life of Paul as an example (3:7; cf. Col. 1:29). In the light of God's dynamic enabling through Christ believers should eagerly exercise their ministry for the good of the whole. The presence of gifted persons within the body makes us dependent on one another, and as every Christian fully utilizes his or her gifts for the growth of the body, divine fullness will be experienced." [O'Brien, 315f]

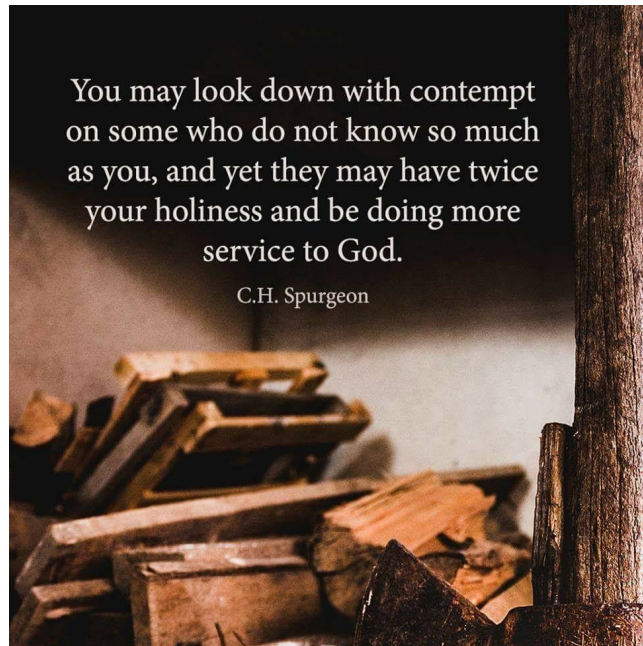
'for the building up of itself in love.'

εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ [eis oikodomēn heautou en agapē] — *"Just as he did in 2:20-22, Paul mixes the imagery of biological growth (αὐξάνω, auxanō) with a construction metaphor (οἰκοδομή, oikodomē). The growth that Paul envisions is multifaceted. He sees the church growing in numbers, but also in knowledge and in Christian virtue."* [Arnold, 272]

'having been built [form of oikodomē] *on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, [oikodomē] being fitted together, grows* [form of auxanō] *into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together* [form of oikodomē] *for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.'* (Eph 2:20-22 NKJV)

'LOVE' FORMS AN 'INCLUSIO' — *"His principal concern is that it grows in love. Love is the most conducive atmosphere in which the growth takes place, but it is also the goal of Christian maturity.... Love ascends to a prominent place in this passage and in the letter as a whole. This passage begins and ends on the note of the importance of loving relationships within the community (see 4:2: 'putting up with one another in love'); this forms a structural inclusio and thereby heightens its prominence. Of course this love is only possible because the Christians in Asia Minor have been rooted and established in Christ's love (3:17), which flows out of the fact that God predestined them long ago in love (1:4-5). The love they exert in the community is modeled on the example of Christ's love, who gave himself for us as an offering (5:1-2)."* [Arnold, 272]

LOVE IS A SOCIAL VIRTUE — *"It is ever so important to recognize that love is a social virtue and cannot be seen or manifested by living in isolation from other believers. God designed the church so that believers will live together as a family in a community. While there has been a strong emphasis in contemporary Christianity on personal, individual spiritual growth, this can be easily overemphasized at the expense of the corporate emphasis of this passage. Many years ago, Calvin astutely commented, 'That man is mistaken who desires his own separate spiritual growth. For what would it profit a leg or an arm if it grew to an enormous size?' Paul not only envisions a body of proportional growth, but a body that cannot grow properly without all the believers receiving gifted input from all other members of the body."* [Arnold, 272] *"Growth is not in knowledge, still less in numbers, but in love. The association of love with charismatic gifts goes back to 1 Cor 12-14. The*



You may look down with contempt on some who do not know so much as you, and yet they may have twice your holiness and be doing more service to God.

C.H. Spurgeon

*final position of ἐν ἀγάπῃ [en agapē] in this long sentence makes it emphatic. In the light of the sentence's content the object of believers' love will not be Christ or God but one another; such a love of course has its source in Christ; 5.2 (cf 5.25) makes the same movement from Christ's love for believers to their love for one another. Love coming from Christ is the cement fitting and holding together the members, and all members without exception have their part to play in this. [Paul] has provided here the picture not of a static church, but of one which is growing and maturing (an organism either grows or dies away). It is moving towards its goal (v. 13) and is enabled to do so through the love and power of its saviour and head, Christ." [Best, 413] "Lastly, he shows that by love the church is edified, — to the edifying of itself in love. This means that no increase is advantageous, which does not bear a just proportion to the whole body. That man is mistaken who desires his own separate growth. If a leg or arm should grow to a prodigious size, or the mouth be more fully distended, would the undue enlargement of those parts be otherwise than injurious to the whole frame? In like manner, if we wish to be considered members of Christ, let no man be anything for himself, but let us all be whatever we are for the benefit of each other. This is accomplished by love; and where it does not reign, there is no 'edification,' but an absolute scattering of the church." [Calvin, 288] *We all need love. We all need forgiveness. None of us are who we should be.**

PAUL'S FOCUS HERE IS ON THE WHOLE, NOT THE INDIVIDUALS — "Through the work of the several parts the building up of the whole is accomplished by means of love. Observe that it is the growth of the whole that is dwelt on, not that of the individual parts." [Abbott, 127]

LOVE IS THE CRITERION FOR AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CHURCH'S TRUE GROWTH — "*The spiritually gifted community is not only distinguished by its full possession of gifts through which divine energy flows, but it is also marked by its divine nature. Love thus becomes the criterion for an assessment of the church's true growth. Even the fullest demonstration of gifts has no spiritual value if love is lacking (cf. 1 Cor 13).*" [O'Brien, 316]

THIS GROWTH IS SPIRITUAL RATHER THAN NUMERICAL — "*In the light of the final and emphatic reference to love, this growth should be understood as one of quality and not quantity. This accords with the stress in the earlier parts of vv. 11-16 on maturity rather than numbers.*" [Best, 413]

ALBERT BARNES' PRACTICAL COMMENTS ON THE BODY METAPHOR — "The meaning is, that each part contributes to the production of the whole result, or labours for this. This is in proportion to the 'measure' of each part; that is, in proportion to its power, every part labours to produce the great result, *No one is idle; none is useless. But none are overtaxed or overworked. The support demanded and furnished by every part is in exact proportion to its strength. This is a beautiful account of the anatomy of the human frame.*

"First, nothing is useless. Every part contributes to the general result — the health, and beauty, and rigour of the system. Not a muscle is useless; not a nerve, not an artery, not a vein. All are employed, and all have an important place, and all contribute something to the health and beauty of the whole. So numerous are the blood-vessels, that you cannot perforate the skin anywhere without piercing one; so numerous are the pores of the skin, that a grain of sand will cover thousands of them; so minute the ramifications of the nerves, that wherever the point of a needle penetrates, we feel it; and so numerous the absorbents, that millions of them are employed in taking up the chyme of the food, and conveying it to the veins. And yet all are employed — all are useful — all minister life and strength to the whole.

"Secondly, none are overtaxed. They all work according to the 'measure' of their strength. Nothing is required of the minutest nerve or blood-vessel which it is not fitted to perform, and it will work on for years without exhaustion or decay. So of the church. There is no member so obscure and feeble that he may not contribute something to the welfare of the whole; and no one is required to labour beyond his strength in order to secure the great object. Each one *in his place*, and labouring as he should there, will contribute to the general strength and welfare; *out of his place* — like nerves and arteries out of their place, and crossing and recrossing others — he will only embarrass the whole, and disarrange the harmony of the system....

"In love. In mutual harmony. This refers to the body. The meaning is, that it seems to be made on the principle of love. There is no jar, no collision, no disturbance of one part with another. A great number of parts, composed of different substances, and with different functions — bones, and nerves, and muscles, and blood-vessels — are united in one, and live together without collision; and so it should be in the church. Learn hence,

"First, that no member of the church need be useless, any more than a minute nerve or blood-vessel in the body need be useless. No matter how obscure the individual may be, he may contribute to the harmony and rigour of the whole.

"Secondly, every member of the church should contribute something to the prosperity of the whole. He should no more be idle and unemployed than a nerve or a blood-vessel should be in the human system. What would be the effect if the minutest nerves and arteries of the body should refuse so perform their office? Languor, disease, and death. So it is in the church. The obscurest member may do *something* to destroy the healthful action of the church, and to make its piety languish and die.

"Thirdly, there should be union in the church. It is made up of materials which differ much from each other, as the body is made up of bones, and nerves, and muscles. Yet, in the body these are united; and so it should be in the church. There need be no more jarring in the church than in the body; and a jar in the church produces the same effect as would be produced in the body if the nerves and muscles should resist the action of each other, or as if one should be out of its place, and impede the healthful functions of the other.

“Fourthly, every member in the church should keep his place, just as every bone, and nerve, and muscle in the human frame should. Every member of the body should be in its right position; the heart, the lungs, the eye, the tongue, should occupy their right place; and every nerve in the system should be laid down just where it is designed to be. If so, all is well. If not so, all is deformity, or disorder; just as it often is in the church.” [Barnes’ NT Notes]

JOHN MacARTHUR SUMMATION: ‘THE POWER FOR GOD’S PATTERN’ — “The power for being equipped and matured into lovingly authentic proclaimers is not in believers themselves, in their leaders, or in church structure. The Body receives its authority, direction, and power as it grows ‘*up in all aspects into ... Christ,*’ from whom the whole body [is] fitted and held together. The two present passive participles that these phrases translate are synonymous and are meant to express that the close, tight, compacted correlation of function in the Body as an organism is the result of Christ’s power. That does not negate the efforts of believers, as proved by the phrases by that which every joint supplies and according to the proper working of each individual part. Each of these phrases is extremely significant in conveying truth about the function of the Body. Christ holds the Body together and makes it function by that which every joint supplies. That is to say, the joints are points of contrast, the joining together or union where the spiritual supply, resources, and gifts of the Holy Spirit pass from one member to another, providing the flow of ministry that produces growth.

“The proper working of each individual part recalls the importance of each believer’s gift (v. 7; cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-27). The growth of the church is not a result of clever methods but of every member of the Body fully using his spiritual gift in close contact with other believers. Christ is the source of the life and power and growth of the church, which He facilitates through each believer’s gifts and mutual ministry in joints touching other believers. The power in the church flows from the Lord through individual believers and relationships between believers.

“Where His people have close relationships of genuine spiritual ministry, God works; and where they are not intimate with each other and faithful with their gifts, He cannot work. He does not look for creativity, ingenuity, or cleverness but for willing and loving obedience. The physical body functions properly only as each member in union with every other member responds to the direction of the head to do exactly what it was designed to do.

“In Colossians 2:19 Paul gives a priceless insight when he warns against ‘not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God:’ The key idea in that verse is for every member of the Body to remain close and intimate, holding tightly to fellowship with Christ, the Head, and thus not be led astray by that which is false and destructive.

“The sum of all that these truths affirm is that every individual believer is to stay close to Jesus Christ, faithfully using his spiritual gift in close contact with every believer he touches, and that through such commitment and ministry the Lord’s power will flow for the building up of the Body in love.

“The noun ‘growth’ is present middle in form, indicating that the body produces its own growth through resident dynamics. As with all living organisms, spiritual growth in the church does not come from forces outside but from the vital power within that causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself. All of this is in love, which is always to be the spirit of the fellowship of believers.” [MacArthur, 161f]

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED? — Here is a synopsis of what we have seen so far in chapter 4:

¹ *Considering what we have learned in the previous chapters, I, the prisoner of Christ, urgently beseech you in a friendly manner yet with the authority given me by Jesus Christ, to live worthy of the divine call to salvation with which you were called,*

² *with all humility (or, lowliness) and gentleness (or, meekness),*

with patience (or, long-suffering, being ‘long-tempered’, being slow to avenge wrongs),

bearing with (or, forbearing, showing tolerance, enduring) one another, not grudgingly or out of duty but in love,

³ *working zealously (or, endeavoring, making every effort, giving diligence, being eager) to preserve (or, maintain with watchful care, keep that which is already in existence) the unity created and given by the Spirit*

by means of the peace that binds (or, by the bond of peace, in the bond of peace; the ‘glue’ is peace).

⁴ *That which we believe, we believe with others:*

One body (we are part of one assembly of believers) and

one Holy Spirit (the One who gives us the new birth; the same Spirit lives within each true believer),

just as you were given hope (that settled conviction which originated when we were called by the Holy Spirit to salvation),

⁵ *one Lord (Jesus Christ),*

one faith (either that one body of beliefs we each acknowledge, or the common faith between believers, the one and same way of access to and union with the one Lord),

one water baptism (of which we each partook, and which portrays our faith and acknowledges our common beliefs),

⁶ *one God and Father of all*

who is over all (or, above all) and through all and in all.

⁷ *But while there is unity within our assembly of believers, we are also each different ('unity does not mean uniformity'), at least in part because of the graces given to each to serve, according to the measure by which Christ has apportioned these gifts of grace; ⁸ as Psalms 68:18 says:*

Ascending on high he led captives captive (or, when he ascended on high he led captivity captive, he led a host of prisoners captive); he gave gifts to men.

⁹ *(And what significance has 'He ascended' unless he also first descended into the lower regions, that is, the earth, at His incarnation? ¹⁰ He who descended from heaven is himself also the same one who ascended above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.)*

¹¹ *And He Himself, He and no other, gave gifts of gifted people: some to be apostles ('those sent with a commission'), some to be NT prophets ('those who were both forth-telling and fore-telling in the time of transition before the completion of the New Testament; now limited to those who forth-tell that which was written in the Scriptures'), some to be evangelists ('those who preached the gospel, both to believers and unbelievers'), some to be shepherds and teachers ('those who care for and teach the congregation of believers; while all shepherds are to be teachers, not all teachers are shepherds'),*

¹² *for the equipping of the saints (or, for perfecting the saints, for bringing the saints to completion)*

so that all we believers may do the work of the ministry,

and be building up of the local assembly, the body of Christ,

¹³ *until all we believers, each together within the church body, arrive at the goal of a journey yet to be attained:*

into the unity that comes from our common faith and knowledge of the son of God,

into a mature male,

into the measure, that standard being the stature of fullness of Christ,

¹⁴ *in order that (hina) we may cease being very young children, infants, babes,*

tossed back and forth by the waves,

and blown here and there by every wind of teaching, both within and without of our churches,

in the craftiness and human cunning of men, in trickery towards the scheming of error,

¹⁵ *rather speaking and living the truth in love,*

we are to grow in all areas of spiritual life, into Him who is both the source and the goal of our journey, Jesus Christ, who is the head,

¹⁶ *out from whom the whole body makes the body grow,*

constantly being joined together and constantly being held together skillfully by our sovereign God who places those within His churches as it pleases Him,

through every joint that gives supply ('that which holds the body together, that by which nourishment and information is passed from one part to another, that which touches and makes contact with the other parts, and which is controlled by the Head')

in accordance with the powerful working of each individual part, divine energy being given to each in exactly the right amounts as designed by Christ,

for the building itself up in love.