

GOD

The Importance of Recognizing and Holding Fast to Christ as the Head of the Body

If we want to realize our full potential as children of God and enjoy future rewards, we must adhere to the truth that Christ is the Head of the Body of which we are a part. Because of Jesus Christ's accomplishments, God made him our head, the one we look to for guidance as he energizes us. Because all the fulness of God dwells in Christ, as we allow Christ to dwell in our hearts, we are filled with all the fulness of God and can accomplish great things.

We find the truths regarding Christ as the head of the Body in Paul's epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians, which are respectively doctrine regarding the believers collectively as one Body and correction to those who failed to keep that doctrine.

The first mention of Christ as the head of the Body is in Ephesians chapter 1, verses 22 and 23. These verses are part of a parenthesis expanding on the greatness of the power of God that is available to us, and are best understood in this context. This section of scripture in turn is part of a prayer that begins in verse 15:

Ephesians

- 1:15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,
1:16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of your in my prayers,
1:17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge (epignōsis) of him:
1:18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know (oida) what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,
1:19 And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

The latter part of verse 19, beginning with "according to", all the way to the end of verse 23, is a parenthesis that expounds on the power that is available to us as we believe, and it is in this parenthesis that we find the first direct mention of Christ as the head of the Body:

- 1:19b according to the working of his mighty power,
1:20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*,
1:21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:
1:22 And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all *things* to the church,
1:23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

In verses 19 and 20, God states that the power that is available to us is "according to the working (*energizing*) of his mighty power which he wrought (*energized*) in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly *places* (*beyond the heavenlies*)". Here we see that the power God made available to us is of the same magnitude as

the great power He energized when He not only raised Christ from the dead but also figuratively “set him at his own right hand beyond the heavenlies”. Jesus Christ is now “seated”, at rest, next to God. Being seated at “the right hand of God” denotes the highest place and authority that Christ was given when God exalted him.

Verse 21 describes Christ’s lordship in his exalted position at the right hand of God:

1:21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world (aiōn - *age*), but also in that which is to come:

In order to emphasize Christ’s exalted position, God used three figures of speech in this verse. Polysyndeton (“many ands”) stresses each of the things mentioned that Christ is “far above”: principality (*archē* - the chief rule), power (*exousia* - authority, the liberty and right to put forth power), might (*dunamis*), dominion (lordship), and name (represents the power of a realm). With the figure of speech metonymy (of the adjunct), attributes are put for the beings which possess them: “Far above all princes and powerful beings, and mighty ones, and lords, and realms”. Also used is the figure of speech synonymia, the repetition of words that are similar in sense but different in sound. We can understand this verse to say that Christ’s exalted position at the right hand of God is “far above all spiritual beings in the heavenlies”. The figures of speech greatly magnify the impact of this position, a position which Christ maintains not only “in this age”, the Administration of Grace today, but also in the ages to come (future administrations).

The first part of the verse states that when He exalted Christ and set him at His own right hand, God not only put him far above all spiritual beings, but above everything else too:

1:22a And hath put all *things* under his feet...

The words “put under” are from the Greek word *hupotassō*, literally meaning “put in subjection to”. When God set Christ at His own right hand, He put “all things”, everything, in subjection to Christ. “Under his feet” denotes the completeness of this subjection.

We gain a greater understanding of the first part of verse 22 if we consider I Corinthians chapter 15, in the context of the resurrection and Return of Christ:

I Corinthians

15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and *become* the first-fruits of them that slept.

15:24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down (*brought to naught*) all rule (*archē*) and all authority (*exousia*) and power (*dunamis*).

15:25 For he must reign, till he (*God*) hath put all enemies under his (*Christ’s*) feet.

Verse 25 is a partial quote of Psalm 110, verse 1:

Psalms

110:1 The Lord (*Jehovah*) said unto my Lord (*a prophecy of the Messiah*), Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool (*literally, "set thine enemies as a footstool for thy feet"*).

Making enemies one's "footstool" is a symbolic representation of complete subjection. Joshua 10:24 mentions that when Joshua captured Adonizedec king of Jerusalem and four other kings, before he slew them, he had his captains "put their feet upon the necks of them".

I Corinthians 15:27 continues regarding subjection to Christ:

I Corinthians

15:27a For he (*God*) hath put all things under his (Christ's) feet.

This first part of verse 27 is a quote of Psalm 8:6. We'll begin in verse 4 for context:

Psalms

8:4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?

8:5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels (*Elohim – God the creator*), and hast crowned him with glory and honor.

8:6 Thou madest him to have dominion of the works of thy hands: thou hast put all *things* under his feet:

Originally, Adam had been given the dominion, but he lost it. We see this dominion restored to Christ, who was resurrected and set at the right hand of God, in a position just below God but far above all spiritual beings, including the angels (Hebrews 2:9).

I Corinthians

15:27 For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under *him*, it is manifest that he (*God*) is excepted (*it is with the exception of him*) which (*who*) did put all things under him (*Christ*).

15:28 And when all things shall be subdued (*subjected*) unto him, then shall the son also himself be subject under him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

In verse 28, the first word "all" in the phrase "that God may be all in all" is the Greek word *panta*, the same word translated "all things" in this verse and verse 27. Taken together, then, "all things" is used six times in these two verses: five times it refers to the subjection of all things under Christ; the final time to the subjection of all things, including Christ, to God. The end of verse 28, "that God may be all in all", should then read "that God may be over all things in all". With the figure of speech ellipsis, this may be understood as "over all things in all places:" or "over all things in all parts of the universe": in other words, "everywhere supreme".

So far, we've seen the exalted position of Christ at the right hand of God, far above not only all spiritual beings in the heavenlies but with all things – all created things, including spiritual beings and everything else – put in subjection to Christ ("under his feet"). Returning to Ephesians 1:22, we find in this context the first mention of Christ as the head of the Body:

Ephesians

1:22 And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all *things* to the church,

In the Aramaic Peshitta text, this verse can be translated: “And he subjected everything under his feet, and to him who is higher than all, he gave him to be the head of the church.” Here we see the phrase “who is higher than all” (“over all things” in the Stephens text), more clearly emphasizing Christ’s exalted position with all things under his feet. We can also understand the latter part of this verse in the Aramaic to say that God gave to Christ in his elevated position the “headship” of the Church.

As He placed Christ in his exalted position, God not only gave Christ “headship” over the Church but over all things. We see this expressed in Ephesians chapter 1, verse 10:

Ephesians

1:10 That in the dispensation (*administration*) of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, *even* in him.

The words “gather together” in this verse are from the Greek word *anakephalaiōsasthai*, literally “to head up”. This can be understood as “to make up under one head” or “to reduce to one head”. God is the one who “heads up” all things in Christ.

Verse 10 continues: “that he might head up all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth, *even* in him.” The word “both” is not in the text; nor is the word “even”: so, this may be read: “that he (*God*) might head up all things in Christ which are in heaven and which are on earth in him.” We know that “the administration of the fulness of times” is still future, and it is then that everything will be “headed up in Christ”, but from God’s perspective with His foreknowledge this is already an accomplished reality.

Back to Ephesians chapter 1, verse 23:

1:23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

This verse tells us that “the Church” that Christ is the head of is his Body. We know from chapter 3, verses 5 and 6 that we, the born-again believers, are the members that comprise this Body of which Christ is the head. The Greek word *kephalē*, translated “head” in verse 22, can also be understood as “the chief part of any thing”.

Understanding that Christ is the head of the Body gives us greater insight into verse 21 of I Corinthians chapter 12:

I Corinthians

12:21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

In verse 21, the eye is part of the head, and “the head” is Christ. As the head of the Body of which we are members, he cannot tell any of us that we are not needed: each one of us is an important part of the Body of Christ, with a specific function, set in that Body as it pleased God. If the Head, Christ, can’t dismiss other members of the Body, neither can we.

Christ is the head of the Body, and we have seen that God has subjected “all things” under his feet (Ephesians 1:22). Because we are members of the Body of Christ, if “all things” are under Christ’s feet, they are under our feet as well. We have seen Christ’s exalted position sitting at the right hand of God (verses 20 through 22), and because we are part of the Body, we too sit in this elevated position:

Ephesians

- 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,
2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us (*made us alive*) together with Christ (by grace ye are saved;)
2:6 And hath raised *us* up together; and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:
2:7 That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through (*in*) Christ Jesus.

As members of the Body of Christ, from God’s perspective we are already seated in the heavenlies at the right hand of God, at rest next to Him. Christ is our head, and all things are under our feet.

The next place we see Christ referred to as the head of the Body is in Chapter 4.

Ephesians

- 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:
4:16 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 edifying of itself in love.

Verse 15 begins with the word “But”, setting this verse in contrast to what came before:

- 4:14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive:

In order to best understand the verses of interest, we need to briefly consider the overall context. Verse 3 exhorts us to endeavor to “keep”, to observe attentively or guard like a treasure, the “unity of the spirit”, or spiritual unity. This spiritual unity is needed for us to have the bond of (which produces) peace – a state of untroubled, undisturbed well-being. To help us to keep this spiritual unity and enjoy peace, God gave gifts, both to the individual (our gift of holy spirit) and to the Body of Christ (people with ministries of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers). Those with ministries have the function of “perfecting”, or mending, the saints, the

born-again believers, helping us to perfect our walk in the renewed mind. This helps us to achieve the goals stated in verse 12: “the work of the ministry” (not work by a particular group of people but ways of serving on a horizontal level) and “the edifying (*building up*) of the body of Christ”. These “ministries” will be available until the Return of Christ: until then, they will continue to serve their intended purpose, helping us realize the goal stated in verse 14.

God desires that, with the aid of the gift ministries in operation, we will no longer be like children, tossed about in our minds by every false doctrine that comes along, no matter how right and organized it may appear, and no matter who teaches it. Succumbing to these false doctrines doesn't help to build up the Body to which we belong, but instead hinders it. In contrast, God's desire for us is that we hold on to the truth of His Word and serve one another by performing our individual roles in love, which will result in the building up of the Body of which Christ is the head. We see this in the next two verses:

4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

4:16 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 edifying of itself in love.

The words “speaking the truth” are all translated from a single Greek word, *alētheuō*. According to the *New Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words*, *alētheuō* means “to be true in doctrine and profession”, “to deal faithfully or truly with anyone”, or “to deal truly”. We are to be true in our walk, dealing truly with one another in everything we do. Also, verse 15 says that we are to do this in love. Only by walking with the love of God can we express the right words or actions at the right time to provide the greatest benefits to others in the Body. Verse 15 then says that as we live truly, dealing truly with others with the love of God, we will “grow up into him in all things, which (*who*) is the head, Christ”. We grow up – we are no longer like children, tossed to and fro. The word “into” is the Greek word *eis*, which means “with a view to” or “with the goal of reaching or obtaining”. The Body is to grow with the goal of being like Christ, the head.

Verse 16 then explains more fully how this growth and edification take place:

4:16 From (“*out from*”, *representing the source of the action*) 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 edifying of itself in love.

We have been perfectly fitted together as members into this one Body, held firmly together by joints that supply, or minister nourishment, from the head, Christ. Christ as the head of the Body energizes its members and causes the growth and building up of the Body in love as we each do our part, working truly and dealing truly with each other in love. We need to keep, to hold fast to, Christ as the head of the Body, recognizing that he is the source of our supply, the guidance and energy that we need to serve in the best way possible.

The Epistle to the Colossians, correction of doctrinal error after failure to adhere to the doctrine presented in Ephesians, contains the only other references to Christ as the head of the Body. Part of their doctrinal error was due to failure to hold fast to the head of the body: the central theme of Colossians is the necessity of holding fast to the head.

The first mention of Christ as the head of the Body appears in chapter 1, verse 18:

Colossians

1:18 And he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence.

This verse is in the context of a reminder of the doctrine that was presented in Ephesians, here provided before Paul confronted those who were practicing doctrinal error. It begins with the truth first presented in Ephesians chapter 2, that Christ is the head of the Body, the Church to which we belong.

Christ is then called “the beginning, the firstborn from the dead”. He is “the beginning” of the Church because his resurrection made him the firstborn from the dead; the Church was born upon the resurrection of Christ. We know from Romans 10:9 that new members are added to the Church, to the Body of Christ, as they confess with their mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in their hearts that God raised him from the dead (believe in the resurrection). When someone is born again, they are raised from the dead spiritually (in essence experiencing a spiritual resurrection). And, when Christ returns, we will all be changed and have new bodies, and the body of Christ will then be complete.

The verse concludes with “that in all *things* he might have the preeminence”, or “become the preeminent one”. The unique state of resurrection for Christ, making him the firstborn from the dead and the beginning of the Church, is what gave Christ “the preeminence”, or “first place in everything”, making him the head of the Church.

1:19 For it pleased *the Father* that in him (*in Christ*) should all fulness dwell;

Because the resurrection gave him the preeminence, all fulness dwells in Christ. The word “dwell” is from the Greek word *katoikeō*, which means much more than “dwell” as translated from *menō* which simply means being present in. Here, “dwell” can be understood as “to settle down in a fixed dwelling”, “to saturate”, or “to make oneself at home”.

The final reference to Christ as the head of the Body is in Colossians chapter 2, where Paul is confronting those members of the Body who were being tricked into subjecting themselves to laws and ordinances. They succumbed to this deceit when they failed to hold fast to Christ as the head, losing track of what Christ accomplished in his resurrection.

We’ll begin examining the context with verse 6:

Colossians

2:6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:

2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Paul is exhorting the Colossians to walk in fellowship as they recognize their position in the Body with Christ as the head. The following verse presents a warning:

2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you (*carry you off as plunder or booty*) through philosophy and vain deceit (*a vain, deceitful philosophy*), after the tradition of men, after the rudiments (*elements*) of the world, and not after Christ.

The believers in Colossae were being influenced by men, including religious authorities, who would steal their allegiance: rather than looking to Christ as the head, they were looking to another head. Verse 9 begins a reminder of Christ's place as the head of the Body:

2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of (*over*) all principality (*archē*) and power (*exousia*).

In Christ, we are made complete, or "full", filled with all the fulness of God as we allow Christ to dwell, make himself at home, in our hearts (Ephesians 3:17 and 19). We see a reiteration of the truth expressed in Ephesians chapter 1 regarding Christ's position over all principality and power. Verses 11 through 15 then expand on what we have through the accomplishments of Christ the head.

2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days:

2:17 Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.

As members of the Body of Christ, we have an exalted position seated at the right hand of God, above all the principalities and powers that have been put off and exposed by Christ as he triumphed over them (verse 15). We are redeemed from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13), so need to be diligent that we do not allow anyone, even the most Godly-appearing groups or their leaders, to judge us and attempt to put us under any kind of bondage. As we see in the next two verses, failure to hold fast to the head, losing our focus on the accomplishments of Jesus Christ, can lead to a return to religion, man-made doctrines, and subjection to the ordinances of the law and traditions of men. This is the main point that Paul is confronting.

2:18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

2:19 And not holding (*not holding fast*) the Head (*Christ*), from which (*from whom*) all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Believers in Colossae were being deceived, enslaved by false authorities who enticed them with vain, deceitful philosophies based on religious traditions and worldly views (verse 8) and who desired to put them into bondage and condemnation as they judged their observance and practice of their traditions (verse 16). Those who gave in to this deception, forgetting what Jesus Christ accomplished for them by God's grace, replaced the true doctrine regarding their exalted position in the Body with Christ as the head with doctrines based on man-made religion, five-senses knowledge, and submission to men. The word "beguile" in verse 18 literally means "to decide against (as an umpire)"; "to rob of the prize in a contest". Instead of earning future rewards for competing in the spiritual contest, by changing allegiance from the head (Christ) to the doctrines of men they forfeited these rewards.

The words "in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels" in verse 18 need to be explained, as they have nothing to do with worshipping angels. The word "worshipping" is from the Greek word *thrēskeia*, which everywhere else is translated "religion". With the figure of speech hendiadys, the words "humility and religion" are understood as "religious humility". The word "of" ("of angels") means "pertaining to": the religious humility pertaining to, or entertained by, angels in their access to God. Angels, as messenger spirit beings and thus servants, are below Christ in his exalted position, and because we are members of the Body of which Christ is the head, we like Christ are in an exalted position above them also. We have direct access to our heavenly Father and can go to Him with all boldness: Hebrews 4:16 begins: "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace..." Angels, as servants, on the other hand, would figuratively have "veiled faces" and would take the humblest places. Rather than realizing their proper standing as children of God with direct access to Him, those who were being deceived, by succumbing to the demands of the false authorities, were voluntarily lowering themselves to the level of servants and taking on the mind-set of religious humility, which does not lead to rewards.

As those who were being deceived figuratively descended from their elevated positions as children of God to the level of servants, they followed the steps outlined in the remainder of verse 18 and the first part of verse 19 (which continues the thought). We read: "intruding into (investigating) those things which he hath not seen (most texts omit "not"), vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind (the old nature, the mind of the senses), and not holding (not holding fast) the Head (Christ). Rather than focusing on the accomplishments of Christ and what God's grace made available, they were following their old five-senses nature, focusing on religious ritual and observances that they could see, and in the process, they were becoming "vainly puffed up". Rather than holding fast to the head, keeping their focus on the truth of Christ as the head of the Body, they introduced a new "head" in the form of subjection to man-made religious ordinances and practices and the false authorities who promoted them. Even today we must always be diligent that we do not allow ourselves to become subject to any new "head" that might arise, including the leadership in a denomination or ministry or any other group of people.

The remainder of verse 19 is a parenthetical insertion referring to the head. It covers basically the same truths seen in Ephesians 4:16, and serves as a reminder to bring these people back to the doctrine of the head of the Body being Christ:

Colossians

2:19b ...from which (*from whom*) all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of (*from*) God.

After providing the warnings to the Colossians spelled out in verse 8 and verses 16 through 19, Paul then confronted those who failed to hold fast to the Head and were already practicing doctrinal error:

- 2:20 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments (*elements*) of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances,
2:21 (Touch not; taste not; handle not;
2:22 Which are all to perish with the using (*they corrupt the user*);) after the commandments and doctrines of men (*religion*)?
2:23 Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting (*punishing, not sparing*) the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.

Galatians chapter 5, verse 1 exhorts the believers: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” Christ through his accomplishments had freed these Colossians from the Law, giving them liberty, but they chose to turn back to the man-made religious ordinances, thus entangling themselves again with the yoke of bondage. This was a direct outcome of their failure to hold fast to Christ as the head.

Paul then exhorted the Colossians to return their thinking to the higher plane, acknowledging their position in the exalted Body with Christ as the head:

Colossians

- 3:1 If (*Since*) ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
3:2 Set your affection (*thoughts*) on things above, not on things of the earth.

We have considered Biblical references to Christ as the head of the Body of which we, the born-again believers in the Administration of Grace, are members. Because of Christ’s exalted position high above all spiritual beings and all other created things, with all things under his feet, as members of his Body we also enjoy this elevated position, seated in the heavenlies from God’s perspective, at rest next to God. Christ as the head of the Body is our source of supply, energizing the Body and causing it to grow as he fills it with all that he is. We’ve seen that failure to hold fast to Christ as the head, trading allegiance to a different “head”, leads people to submit to the commandments and doctrines of men and results in their deprivation of future rewards. In contrast, as we continue to hold fast to Christ as the head of the Body to which we belong, we can live victorious lives as we compete in the spiritual competition and can anticipate future rewards when Christ returns.

- Dr. Rick Batt