

## **Ephesians 5:18b: “But Be Filled in the Spirit”**

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The clause ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι in Eph 5:18b has been predominately translated “but be filled with the Spirit” to convey that the Spirit is the content with which the audience is to be filled.<sup>1</sup> “However, normally verbs of filling take a genitive of content. Moreover, nowhere in the NT does πληρόω followed by ἐν plus the dative indicate content.”<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, this interpretation fails to recognize that the implied content of each occurrence of the verb “to fill” in Ephesians is gifts of Christ’s love, both when the direct object of “filling” is “all things” (τὰ πάντα; 1:23; 4:10), and when the subject of “being filled” is “you” (the audience; 3:19).

More recently some have argued for the translation “but be filled by the Spirit,” understanding the Spirit as the agent or instrument of the filling.<sup>3</sup> But this interpretation ignores the fact that in each of the other occurrences of the verb “to fill” in Ephesians the subject and/or agent of the “filling” is best understood to be Christ, whether the verb is in the active (1:23; 4:10) or the passive (3:19) voice. Furthermore, when Paul refers to the Spirit as agent or instrument elsewhere in Ephesians, he employs the preposition διά--“to be strengthened with power through (διά) the Spirit in the inner person” (3:16b). A few try to have it both ways and argue that the clause means to be filled both “by” (agent or instrument) and “with” (content) the Spirit.<sup>4</sup>

In what follows I propose that Eph 5:18b is best translated: “but be filled in the Spirit.” According to this interpretation, the audience is the subject of “being filled,” Christ is the implied agent of the “filling,” the implied content of the filling is gifts of Christ’s love, and the preposition “in” (ἐν) refers to being within the dynamic realm or sphere established and characterized by having been given the Spirit.<sup>5</sup> This translation and interpretation renders a meaning that more aptly fits this clause within its context in the Letter to the Ephesians.

### I. The Verb for “Filling” in Ephesians

The audience of Ephesians hears the verb for “filling” for the first time in 1:22-23: “And all things he (God) subjected under his (Christ’s) feet and gave him as head over all things to the

church, which is indeed his body, the fullness of the one who is filling (πληρουμένου) all things in all ways.” That the church is the “body” of Christ (1:23a) implies that Christ is not only “head” over all things (1:22) but is also in an intimate head-body relationship with the church of all believers. This develops the close union believers have with Christ within the dynamic realm or sphere of their being “in” (ἐν) Christ (1:1, 3, 6, 7, 11, 13, 15).<sup>6</sup> Not only are believers “in” Christ, but as the church they are Christ’s “body,” organically and intimately linked to him as their “head.” As “head” over all things and the church, Christ not only authoritatively rules over all things and the church, but also is the source of divine power and love for all things and the church.<sup>7</sup>

But as “head” Christ has a different relationship to all things than he does to the church as his “body.” Indeed, as the “body” of Christ the church is “the fullness of the one who is filling all things in all ways” (1:23b).<sup>8</sup> That the church is the “fullness” (πλήρωμα) of the Christ who is “filling” (πληρουμένου) all things in all ways means that, together with God’s gift of Christ as head over all things to the church (1:22), the church has received the “fullness,” that is, the full array of Spiritual blessings, grace, and power as gifts of God’s love that Paul has so eloquently made his audience realize that they possess (cf. 1:3-14) in their union with Christ, their “head.”<sup>9</sup> Indeed, God has blessed the audience of believers with every (πάση) Spiritual blessing in their union with Christ in the heavenly places (1:3) where Christ is seated at the right hand of God (1:20) as “head” over all things (1:22) and of his “body,” the church (1:23a).

As “head” over all things, Christ not only rules with divine authority over all things that God has subjected under his feet (1:22), but is filling all things in all ways (1:23b). This develops the audience’s insight into the mystery of God ultimately uniting all things in Christ (1:9-10). Whereas God is the one “who is working in all things” (τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦντος, 1:11), Christ, as the “head” seated at the right hand of God (1:20), is the one “who is filling all things in all ways” (τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου, 1:23b), so that God may ultimately unite under one head all things in the Christ (1:10).

That Christ, as the “head” over all things (1:22), is “filling all things in all ways” (1:23b) means that he is providing everything necessary for all things in the cosmos to be ultimately united under one head in the Christ (1:10). This assures the audience that, in addition to their having already been filled with the “fullness” of God’s Spiritual blessings, grace, and power as members of the church that is the “body” of Christ (1:23a), they will continue to be filled with everything that they, as part of all things, need from the Christ whom God has given them as head over all things (1:22) to play their role in the mystery of God ultimately uniting all things under one head in Christ (1:10). Paul has assured his audience, then, that they have been filled and will continue to be filled with God’s gracious gifts of love that he gave them in Christ as head over all things.

The audience hears the verb for “filling” for the second time in Paul’s prayer in 3:19b: “that you might be filled to all the fullness of God.” Here Paul is praying that his audience might be filled with the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge but that they may know (3:19a) when God gives them the interior strength to comprehend together with all the holy ones the cosmic fullness and unity toward which they are growing (3:18). That “you might be filled” (πληρωθήτε) with the love of Christ means being filled by the Christ who “is filling” (πληρουμένου) all things in all ways (1:23). The audience is part of the church which is the body and the “fullness” (πλήρωμα) of the Christ who is filling all things in all ways (1:23). The final goal of the audience’s being filled with the love of Christ is thus to attain to (εἰς) all the “fullness” (πλήρωμα) of God, that is, to the complete cosmic fullness and unity to which God has destined the church and which the audience may comprehend interiorly as the absolute “breadth and length and height and depth” (3:18).<sup>10</sup>

The audience hears the verb for “filling” for the third time in 4:10: “He (Christ) who descended is himself also he who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.” That Christ “might fill” (πληρώσῃ) “all things” (τὰ πάντα) recalls Paul’s previous prayer that his audience “might be filled” (πληρωθήτε) to all the fullness of God by the love of the Christ (3:19) who “is filling” (πληρουμένου) “all things” (τὰ πάντα) in all ways (1:23). The

audience is thus to realize that the gifts of love that the ascended Christ gave to people (4:8), to each one of us to whom “grace was given according to the measure of the gift of the Christ” (4:7), are part of the love of the Christ who is filling “all things” (τὰ πάντα) in all ways as part of God’s plan to unite “all things” (τὰ πάντα) under one head in the Christ (1:10).

The audience hears the verb for “filling” for the fourth and final time in 5:18b: “but be filled in the Spirit.” That “you” are to be continually “filled” (πληροῦσθε, present passive imperative) thus reminds the audience that Christ ascended that he might “fill” (πληρώσει) all things (4:10) with his gifts of love (4:8, 11-16), so that “you” might be “filled” (πληρωθῆτε), as a gift of the love of Christ, to all the “fullness” (πλήρωμα) of God (3:19) by the Christ who is “filling” (πληρουμένου) all things in all ways (1:23) with his gifts of love. By being filled with gifts of love by Christ, we believers may attain to the “fullness” (πληρώματος) of the Christ (4:13) within the church as the body which is the “fullness” (πλήρωμα) of Christ (1:23).<sup>11</sup> Thus, in all of the occurrences of the verb for “filling” in Ephesians Christ, and not the Spirit, is the agent of the filling. Furthermore, the implied content of the filling is gifts of Christ’s love, which include but are not limited to the Spirit.

## II. Being “in the Spirit” in Ephesians

In 1:13 Paul reminds his audience that they were given the Spirit as a divine gift when they became believers and entered into the realm or sphere of being “in Christ”: “in whom (Christ) also you, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise.” Noteworthy here is that the content with which the audience is sealed is expressed by means of the simple dative--“with the Holy Spirit” (τῷ πνεύματι)--without the preposition ἐν (as in 5:18b). For his audience, who have already been sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise (1:13), Paul prays for a further manifestation or realization of the gift of the Spirit in 1:17b--that God “may give you the Spirit (πνεῦμα) of wisdom and revelation in knowledge of him.”<sup>12</sup> As I will show, having been sealed with the divine gift of the Holy Spirit means that believers are now in the dynamic realm or sphere of being “in the Spirit” similar to being “in Christ” (1:1, 3; 2:6, 7, 10, 13; 3:6, 21; 4:32).

The audience of Ephesians encounters the prepositional phrase “in the Spirit” for the first time in 2:18: “so that through him (Christ) we both have the access in one Spirit before the Father.” It is through Christ (δι’ αὐτοῦ) that we both--believing Jews and Gentiles whom Christ has reconciled in one body to God through the cross (2:16)--have access before God the Father as a gift of Christ’s love within the realm or sphere of our being “in one Spirit” (ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι). Noteworthy is that the agent or means of the access here is Christ (“through him”), so that ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι should not be translated as “by the one Spirit,” as if the one Spirit were the agent or means of the access. Rather, the prepositional phrase “in one Spirit” here expresses the realm or sphere--not the means or content--in which we believers have access to the Father through Christ.<sup>13</sup>

By way of a parallel development of 2:21, “in whom the whole building being fitted together is growing into a temple holy in the Lord,” Paul emphatically reassures his audience of their role in the unity of Jewish and Gentile believers in 2:22: “in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”<sup>14</sup> “In whom the whole building is being fitted together” (2:21a) by God (divine passive) progresses to “in whom you also are being built together” (2:22a), that is, together with all other believers in the whole building, by God (divine passive). That the whole building of believers grows into a holy temple within the realm of their being “in the Lord” (ἐν κυρίῳ), that is, in union with the Lord Jesus Christ, progresses to the “you” believers being built together with all believers into a dwelling place of God as a gift of God’s love within the realm of their being “in the Spirit” (ἐν πνεύματι).<sup>15</sup> God, rather than Christ or the Spirit, is the agent of the building. This second occurrence of “in the Spirit” (2:22) thus expresses not the content or means but the realm in which believers are being built together into a dwelling place of God.<sup>16</sup>

The third occurrence of “in the Spirit” is in 3:5 in reference to the mystery of Christ, “which in other generations was not made known to human beings as now it has been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι).” Although the Spirit here is often understood as the agent or means of the revelation (“by the Spirit”), a close reading indicates

otherwise, so that ἐν πνεύματι once again, in consistency with its previous occurrences, expresses the realm of being “in the Spirit.” The verb “has been revealed” (ἀπεκαλύφθη) is best understood as another divine passive, so that God rather than the Spirit is the agent of the revelation.<sup>17</sup> “Has been revealed” is synonymous with “was made known” (ἐγνωρίσθη) earlier in 3:5, as confirmed in 3:3 where Paul says “according to revelation (ἀποκάλυψιν) was made known (ἐγνωρίσθη) to me the mystery.” The agent of what “was made known according to revelation” is God (divine passive), as confirmed by 1:9 where God “made known (γνωρίσας) to us the mystery.”

Understanding ἐν πνεύματι in 3:5 as “in the Spirit” is thus completely consistent with its previous occurrences in Ephesians. That the mystery of the unity of believing Jews and Gentiles has now been revealed to God’s holy apostles and prophets “in the Spirit” (ἐν πνεύματι, 3:5), that is, within the dynamic sphere of being in union with the Spirit, further associates the apostles and prophets with all believers. It recalls for the audience that “you” believing Gentiles have been built together with believing Jews, as a gift of God’s love, upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (2:20a) into a dwelling place of God “in the Spirit” (ἐν πνεύματι, 2:22). Apostles, prophets, and all believers are united together “in the Spirit,” that is, “in the one Spirit” (ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι) in which both believing Jews and Gentiles have, as a gift of God’s love, access to God the Father (2:18).

In 4:30 Paul exhorts his audience: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom (ἐν ᾧ) you were sealed for the day of redemption.” Because of what the audience heard in 1:13-- “you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise”--it may appear at first sight that the prepositional phrase ἐν ᾧ in 4:30 should be translated, as it commonly is, “with” whom or even “by” whom rather than “in” whom.<sup>18</sup> But, as noted above, being sealed “with” the Holy Spirit in 1:13 employs the simple dative without the preposition ἐν. Since 1:13 the audience has heard three occurrences of the preposition ἐν with the Spirit to express the realm or sphere of being “in the (one) Spirit” (2:18, 22; 3:5; cf. 3:16; 4:3, 4). There is a subtle progression then from being sealed with the Holy Spirit in 1:13 to being sealed within the realm of being in union with the Holy Spirit in 4:30. The Holy Spirit “in whom” (ἐν ᾧ) you were sealed recalls that the audience

who have been sealed with the Holy Spirit are now living within the dynamic realm of being “in the Spirit.”

In other words, the audience have not only been sealed with the Holy Spirit (1:13), but in their union with the Holy Spirit they have been further sealed for the day of redemption (4:30). Paul’s audience are not to grieve, by a harmful word out of their mouth (4:29), the “Holy Spirit” of God,<sup>19</sup> in whom “you were sealed”--as a gift of God’s love (divine passive)--for the day of “redemption” (4:30), because in becoming believers “you were sealed”--as a gift of God’s love (divine passive)--with the “Holy Spirit” of the promise (1:13) for “redemption” (1:14; cf. 1:7). The prepositional phrase ἐν ᾧ in 4:30, then, in complete consistency with what the audience has heard in 2:18, 2:22, and 3:5, reminds the audience that, having been initially sealed “with” the Spirit (1:13), they have additionally been sealed for the day of redemption within the dynamic realm of being “in the Spirit” (4:30).

“In the Spirit” in 5:18b continues the consistent use of this phrase throughout Ephesians to express the dynamic realm of being in union with the Spirit. As the audience recalls, through Christ we believers have, as a gift of God’s love, access to the Father within the realm of our being “in one Spirit” (ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι) (2:18). In Christ the audience are being built together, as a gift of God’s love (divine passive), into a dwelling place of God within the realm of their being “in the Spirit” (ἐν πνεύματι) (2:22). The mystery of Christ has been revealed, as a gift of God’s love (divine passive), to the holy apostles and prophets within the realm of being “in the Spirit” (ἐν πνεύματι) (3:5). It was within the realm of their being “in” (ἐν) the Holy Spirit of God that the audience were sealed, as a gift of God’s love (divine passive), for the day of redemption (4:30). And thus, in 5:18b the audience are to be filled not by the Spirit but by Christ and not with the Spirit, which the audience has already received (1:13), but with further gifts of divine love within the realm of their being “in the Spirit” (ἐν πνεύματι).

### III. The Immediate Context of Ephesians 5:18b

In Eph 5:18 Paul continues to exhort his audience: “And do not get drunk with wine, in which there is dissipation, but be filled in the Spirit” (5:18).<sup>20</sup> With this the audience has heard a

patterned triplet of antithetical exhortations in which a negative command is followed by an emphatically positive one:<sup>21</sup>

5:15: walk not (μή) as unwise

but (ἀλλ') as wise

5:17: do not (μή) become foolish,

but (ἀλλά) understand what the will of the Lord is

5:18: do not (μή) get drunk with wine, in which there is dissipation,

but (ἀλλά) be filled in the Spirit

Further developing his antithetical commands to walk not as unwise but as wise (5:15) and not to become foolish, but to understand what the will of the Lord is (5:17), Paul exhorts his audience not to get drunk with wine, “in” (ἐν) which, that is, within the realm of being drunk or filled with wine, there is dissipation, but to be filled “in” (ἐν), that is, within the realm of being in union with the Spirit (5:18).<sup>22</sup> Noteworthy here is the progression from getting drunk “with wine,” in which the simple dative οἴνω expresses the content or means of getting drunk--“with wine,” to the prepositional phrase with ἐν to express the realm or sphere of being drunk with wine in which there is dissipation.<sup>23</sup> This is analogous to the progression from having been sealed “with the Spirit” (1:13), in which the simple dative πνεύματι expresses the content or means of having been sealed--“with the Spirit,” to the subsequent uses of the prepositional phrase with ἐν to express the realm or sphere of being “in the Spirit” (2:18, 22; 3:5; 4:30).

Hence, for the audience to be filled “in the Spirit” in 5:18b, rather than being drunk with wine, “in which there is dissipation” (5:18a), includes not only their being sealed with the Spirit (1:13) and given the Spirit (1:17) as a gift of God’s love, but also their being filled with further gifts of divine love within the dynamic realm of being in union with the Spirit.

With a series of five participles in 5:19-21 Paul describes for his audience the behavior that results from and responds to their being filled with gifts of love by Christ within the realm of being “in the Spirit” in 5:18b.<sup>24</sup> The fourth participle occurs in 5:20: “Giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.” That the audience is giving

thanks always for “all things” (πάντων) makes explicit what was implicit in their being filled by the Lord Christ “in the Spirit” (5:18b). They are giving thanks for “all” of the gifts of love with which they are being filled by the Lord Christ who is filling “all things” (πάντα) in “all ways” (πᾶσιν) (1:23; 4:10), so that the audience may be filled to “all” (πᾶν) the fullness of God (3:19) within the dynamic realm of their being “in the Spirit” (2:18, 22; 3:5; 4:30; 5:18).<sup>25</sup>

#### IV. Conclusion

To sum up, based on the previous occurrences in Ephesians of the verb “to fill” (1:23; 3:19; 4:10) and the preposition ἐν with reference to the Spirit (2:18, 22; 3:5; 4:30), as well as a consideration of the immediate context both before (5:18a) and after (5:20), indicate that Eph 5:18b is best translated “but be filled in the Spirit.” The implied agent of this filling is the ascended Christ, the implied content is gifts of Christ’s divine love, and “in the Spirit” refers to the dynamic realm of being in union with the Spirit with which the audience were “sealed” when they became believers (1:13). To translate and understand ἐν πνεύματι as either the content of the filling (“with the Spirit”) or the agent or means of the filling (“by the Spirit”) impoverishes the rich meaning of the phrase “in the Spirit,” which is very similar if not coterminous with “in Christ” and “in the Lord” as expressions referring to the dynamic realm of being incorporated into or intimately in union with the Lord Jesus Christ. For the audience to be filled “in the Spirit,” then, means for them to be continually filled with gifts of love by the Christ who is filling all things in all ways (1:23; cf. 4:7-10) so that believers may attain to all the fullness of God (3:19).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For recent discussions see C. Anderson, “Rethinking ‘Be Filled with the Spirit’: Ephesians 5:18 and the Purpose of Ephesians,” EvJ 7 (1989) 57–67; Andreas J. Köstenberger, “What Does It Mean to be Filled with the Spirit?: A Biblical Investigation,” JETS 40 (1997) 229–40.

<sup>2</sup> As pointed out by Harold W. Hoehner, Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 703. See also Daniel B. Wallace, Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 375.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy G. Gombis, “Being the Fullness of God in Christ by the Spirit: Ephesians 5:18 in Its Epistolary Setting,” TynBul 53 (2002) 259–71; Peter Thomas O’Brien, The Letter to the Ephesians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 391–92; Hoehner, Ephesians, 704.

<sup>4</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg, Ephesians: A Commentary (Edinburgh: Clark, 1991) 237; Andrew T. Lincoln, Ephesians (WBC 42; Dallas: Word Books, 1990) 344; Gordon D. Fee, God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994) 721 n. 196.

<sup>5</sup> As indicated by its capitalization, “Spirit” here refers to the divine rather than human spirit. Fee (God’s Empowering Presence, 721 n. 196) notes: “In an earlier generation some found this expression so difficult that they were willing to argue that it meant ‘be filled in one’s own spirit’; but there is nothing in Pauline usage, in the immediate context, or in the context of the letter as a whole that allows even the possibility of such a view.”

<sup>6</sup> “With the expression ‘in Christ Jesus’ we encounter one of the most significant and difficult points in Paul’s writings. Paul is not merely saying these people believed in Christ; rather, they were in Christ positionally. This concept of being in Christ is one of--if not the--most important parts of Paul’s theology, for this is the center from which he understood and explained salvation,” according to Klyne R. Snodgrass, Ephesians: The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 38 (his emphases). Winfried Elliger (“ἐν,” EDNT 1.448) states: “Ἐν Χριστῷ thus refers not to mystical life in Christ; it serves rather, like the related

formula ἐν πίστει, ‘in faith,’ as a characterization of one’s realm of existence, which is often set in contrast to the worldly realm (ἐν σαρκί, ‘in the flesh’).” As Lincoln (Ephesians, 6) explains, “the phrase ‘in Christ Jesus’ refers to the relationship of union with Christ which results from having been incorporated into him.” See also Friedrich Büchsel, “‘In Christus’ bei Paulus,” ZNW 42 (1949) 141–58; Fritz Neugebauer, “Das Paulinische ‘In Christo,’” NTS 4 (1957–58) 124–38; John A. Allan, “The ‘In Christ’ Formula in Ephesians,” NTS 5 (1958–59) 54–62; Michel Bouttier, En Christ: Étude d’exégèse et de théologie pauliniennes (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1962); A. J. M. Wedderburn, “Some Observations on Paul’s Use of the Phrases ‘in Christ’ and ‘with Christ,’” JSNT 25 (1985) 83–97; Celia E. T. Kourie, “In Christ and Related Expressions in Paul,” Theologia Evangelica 20 (1987) 33–43; James D. G. Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 396–401; Mehrdad Fatehi, The Spirit’s Relation to the Risen Lord in Paul: An Examination of Its Christological Implications (WUNT 128; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000) 269–74; Hoehner, Ephesians, 143.

<sup>7</sup> “Christ is given in his exalted status to the church. He has defeated the powers on the cross and now possesses full authority over them. The head of the church is a victorious Lord. For this reason Christ can impart all of the empowering resources the church needs,” according to Clinton E. Arnold, “Jesus Christ: ‘Head’ of the Church (Colossians and Ephesians),” in Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology (eds. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 365. See also Hanna Roose, “Die Hierarchisierung der Leib-Metapher im Kolosser- und Epheserbrief als ‘Paulinisierung’: Ein Beitrag zur Rezeption paulinischer Tradition in Pseudo-Paulinischen Briefen,” NovT 47 (2005) 132–41.

<sup>8</sup> For a summary of the problems involved in the interpretation of 1:23, see Roy Yates, “A Re-Examination of Ephesians 1:23,” ExpTim 83 (1972) 146–51. See also George Howard, “The Head/Body Metaphors of Ephesians,” NTS 20 (1974) 350–56; Andrew C. Perriman, “‘His body, which is the church....’ Coming to Terms with Metaphor,” EvQ 62 (1990) 123–42; Gert M. M. Pelser, “Once More the Body of Christ in Paul,” Neot 32 (1998) 525–45.

<sup>9</sup> I understand the noun “fullness” (πλήρωμα) in 1:23 to have a “passive” rather than “active” sense. For an unconvincing attempt to give it an active sense, see D. P. Leyrer, “Ephesians 1:23--the ‘Fullness’ of Ascension Comfort,” Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly 99 (2002) 135–37. For questionable views that it is deliberately ambiguous, see Josef Ernst, Pleroma und Pleroma Christi: Geschichte und Deutung eines Begriffs der paulinischen Antilegomena (Biblische Untersuchungen 5; Regensburg: Pustet, 1970) 114–20; Gregory W. Dawes, The Body in Question: Metaphor and Meaning in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21–33 (BIS 30; Leiden: Brill, 1998) 248. With regard to the middle/passive form of “filling” (πληρουμένου) in 1:23, Roy R. Jeal (“A Strange Style of Expression: Ephesians 1:23,” Filologia Neotestamentaria 10 [1997] 129–38, here 136–37) states: “If the active form πληροῦντος had been used, the rhetorical symmetry of Ephesians 1:23 would have been destroyed. The author has, consequently, chosen the middle/passive form as part of the stylistic interplay of words, so that a rhythmic, rhyming effect could be maintained [between αὐτοῦ and πληρουμένου]. This understanding is very important because it supports the view that the participle τοῦ πληρουμένου should be understood as active in meaning despite being of middle or passive morphology.” See also BDAG, 828; Rainer Schwindt, Das Weltbild des Epheserbriefes: Eine religionsgeschichtlich-exegetische Studie (WUNT 148; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002) 437–38. For different but unconvincing construals of this participle, see Ignace de la Potterie, “Le Christ, Plérôme de l’Église (Ep 1,22–23),” Bib 58 (1977) 500–24; Georg Korting, “Das Partizip in Eph 1,23,” TGl 87 (1997) 260–65. According to Lincoln (Ephesians, 80), “Christ is filling all things in terms of his sovereign rule, but he fills the Church in a special sense with his Spirit, grace, and gifts (cf. 4:7–11), so that only the Church is his fullness” (Lincoln’s emphasis).

<sup>10</sup> Lincoln (Ephesians, 214) remarks: “In 1:23 the Church was said to be the fullness of Christ who fills the cosmos in every respect. Here, however, it is the fullness of God himself which is in view, and the prayer is that believers should attain to the fullness. εἰς does not so much signify that with which one is filled, as it conveys movement toward a goal, a being filled up to the measure of God’s fullness. . . . It is this eschatological perspective that explains how the

Church, which is already the fullness, is still to be filled and to attain to the fullness.”

<sup>11</sup> There is an eschatological tension between the “already” and the “not yet” with regard to the concept of “fullness” in Ephesians. As O’Brien (Ephesians, 393) states: “The church as Christ’s body already shares his fulness (1:23). Yet Paul’s petition for his readers (3:14-19), which is based on God’s mighty salvation effected in the Lord Jesus and described in the first three chapters of Ephesians, is that they might be filled to all the fulness of God (v. 19). Paul’s intercession presupposes that the readers have not yet been filled: God begins to answer this petition in the here and now, and he will consummate his work on the final day when the readers are filled with all his fulness. Similarly, the body of Christ has not yet reached mature manhood; it is moving towards the fulness of Christ (4:13).”

<sup>12</sup> According to Fee (God’s Empowering Presence, 676 n. 55), “The emphasis, therefore, is not in receiving the Spirit as such, but on receiving (or perhaps realizing?) the resident Spirit’s gifts.” For the reasons for interpreting the anarthrous πνεῦμα in 1:17b as the Holy Spirit rather than the human spirit, see Hoehner, Ephesians, 257-58.

<sup>13</sup> On 2:18 Hoehner (Ephesians, 389) notes: “Although some think that the preposition ἐν should indicate the means by which we have access to the Father, that was shown to have been already accomplished through Christ as mentioned earlier in the verse (δι’ αὐτοῦ). It is preferable to see it as sphere in which both parties have common access.”

<sup>14</sup> For an outline of the parallelism between 2:21 and 2:22, see Tet-Lim N. Yee, Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation: Paul’s Jewish Identity and Ephesians (SNTSMS 130; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 208.

<sup>15</sup> As Hoehner (Ephesians, 411) points out, “The prepositional phrase ἐν κυρίῳ, ‘in the Lord,’ has reference not to God but to Christ as it consistently does throughout the epistle (4:1, 17; 5:8; 6:1, 10, 21).”

<sup>16</sup> With reference to the role of the Spirit in 2:22, “πνεῦμα does not indicate the builder but denotes the mode of God’s activity or the way in which his dwelling is made possible” (my emphasis), according to Ernest Best, Ephesians (ICC; London: Clark, 1998) 290.

<sup>17</sup> This is not contradicted by Paul’s previous prayer that God give the audience “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” (1:17). God rather than the Spirit is the ultimate source of both “wisdom” (cf. 1:8; 3:10) and “revelation” (cf. 3:3). The prayer is that God may give the audience, already sealed with the Spirit (1:13) so that they are “in the Spirit,” the divine wisdom and revelation appropriate to their being in the realm of the Spirit so that they may know God.

<sup>18</sup> O’Brien (Ephesians, 348 n. 324) recognizes the possibility of an “in whom” translation here: “The ἐν ᾧ could refer to the sphere in which believers are sealed (‘in whom’).”

<sup>19</sup> On the expression “the Holy Spirit of God” here Fee (God’s Empowering Presence, 714) remarks: “Here the full ascription is not just a form of solemn speech, calling special attention to the role of the Spirit in ethical life, but also an emphatic declaration that the Holy Spirit is none other than the Spirit of God” (his emphases).

<sup>20</sup> For allusions and background to “do not get drunk” in LXX Prov 23:31; T.Jud. 14:1; 16:1; Hist.Rech. 1:4, see Thorsten Moritz, A Profound Mystery: The Use of the Old Testament in Ephesians (NovTSup 85; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 94–95; Craig A. Evans, Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005) 390. As O’Brien (Ephesians, 390 n. 120) notes, “The exhortation in the present tense, μὴ μεθύσκεσθε (‘do not get drunk’), does not signify that the Ephesians had been getting drunk and that Paul was urging them to stop. Rather, it has the sense of prohibiting a course of action, viewed as an ongoing process. See Kenneth L. McKay, “Aspect in Imperative Constructions in New Testament Greek,” NovT 27 (1985) 201–26; idem, A New Syntax of the Verb in New Testament Greek: An Aspectual Approach (Studies in Biblical Greek 5; New York: Lang, 1994) 77–81; Stanley E. Porter, Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood (Studies in Biblical Greek 1; New York: Lang, 1993) 357; Wallace, Greek Grammar, 714-17.

<sup>21</sup> Fee (God’s Empowering Presence, 720) points out: “As always in Paul, the emphasis rests altogether on the ‘but’ clause.”

<sup>22</sup> As Hoehner (Ephesians, 702) points out: “The contrast is not between the wine and the

Spirit but between the two states expressed by the two verbs.”

<sup>23</sup> As Lincoln (Ephesians, 344) remarks, “ἄσωτία [‘dissipation’] is used elsewhere in the NT only in Titus 1:6 and 1 Pet 4:4, where it is in close association with the mention of drunkenness in the preceding verse, while the cognate adverb is used to describe the way of life of the prodigal son in Luke 15:13. The use of the term here reminds one of the writer’s earlier sweeping condemnation of non-Christian Gentile lifestyle in 4:19, where the synonym ἀσέλγεια, ‘debauchery,’ was employed.” Hoehner (Ephesians, 701) comments: “Paul instructs believers not to be drunk with wine which causes unrestrained, dissolute living, leading only to ruin. It is difficult to select one precise word that describes this condition but probably ‘dissipation’ is the closest. It is the opposite of being wise which takes full advantage of every opportunity (vv. 15-16).” For a suggestion that Paul is referring here to the audience’s involvement in the cult of Dionysius, the god of wine, see Cleon L. Rogers, “The Dionysian Background of Ephesians 5:18,” BSac 136 (1979) 249–57. Pointing out that this is unlikely, Hoehner (*ibid.*) adds: “Drunkenness occurred both inside and outside of the religious practices of the day.” See also Peter W. Gosnell, “Ephesians 5:18–20 and Mealtime Propriety,” TynBul 44 (1993) 363–71.

<sup>24</sup> As Hoehner (Ephesians, 706) explains, “The five participles in verses 19-21 are dependent on the imperative πληροῦσθε, ‘be filled,’ and thus are considered by some to take on an imperatival force. . . . It is better to see them as participles of result. . . . Furthermore, participles of result are normally in the present tense and follow the main verb as here. The present tense of the participles most likely indicates repetition or progression of the characteristics described by these five participles.” See also Lincoln, Ephesians, 345; O’Brien, Ephesians, 387-88; Wallace, Greek Grammar, 639, 644-45; *contra* Gombis (“Being the Fullness,” 268-71), who argues that the participles express means rather than result.

<sup>25</sup> As Fee (God’s Empowering Presence, 723) points out, “it is doubtful that the ‘all things’ for which one gives thanks refers to all the circumstances of one’s life, good or ill, but to the richness of God’s blessings that have been lavished on us in Christ.”

