

"The Church, Growing Itself"

Ephesians 4:11-15

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Ephesians 4:11-15

"11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: 13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: 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; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 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."
(Eph 4:11-15)

Introduction and Review

As I said before the work of the Holy Spirit can only be done by the power of the Holy Spirit. The unity of the Spirit is the gift of the Spirit and we are called to endeavor to keep the unity; not to make the unity. The word "keep" has the idea of guarding, of watching. "Endeavor" is a very strong word and doesn't mean "try" It means to "exert yourselves to the utmost."

It is only when Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, that we will be

rooted and grounded in love. THEN, we will be able to comprehend with all the saints the breadth, and length, and depth, and height...and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.” Any knowledge that is not related to the love of Christ is useless and foolish, for all things are contained in the love of Christ.

In our text, the Apostle passes to the central thing: how do we come to this faith, how do we grow up in this faith, how do we mature in the faith? There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and the Lord has made ample provisions for us with regard to this faith. This is the subject of what is before us. Let us look at the words:

Let us look at the words before us:

As we saw last week, the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven as the Mediator, receiving from His father the kingdom over all things, including gifts for men, even for those who had been rebellion against Him, these gifts, which are the work of the Holy Spirit, He has imparted to men.. What is before us are not the offices of the church, but the inward graces, gifts of the Holy Spirit, that equip a man to do the work of the offices. Not all the offices are mentioned here.

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teacher. No one has received all these gifts. Only Jesus had the Holy Spirit without measure. The gifts are for the good of the church, not for self-glory or self-esteem, or personal advantage. The gifts are gifts, not the reward of merit.

- A. There were extraordinary gifts that ceased when their purpose was finished: apostles and prophets.
- B. There were gifts extraordinary/common: evangelists
- C. There are ordinary gifts: pastor/teachers

The end, the goal of these gifts is the good of the church in the following considerations:

- A. Perfecting of the saints: bringing them to maturity. So they can function as grownups. The verb form of this word is used in Heb.

11:3, “The worlds were framed by the word of God.” It means to repair something, or make up what is lacking, or fit the saints to do what they are meant to do in the body of Christ, as is set forth in the next phrase:

B. Work of the ministry: The word is deacon, which in a general sense means service to one another. Those in office not only serve the church, but they are called to teach each member to serve.

1. It does not mean that everyone has the office of deacon, for that is an office that is defined in Scripture and our constitutions. But all are to serve one another.

2. In the same way the minister is an overseer and pastor with respect to office, but all members of the body are to minister to one another, seeking to good to each other.

C. Edifying of the Body of Christ.. The meaning is the building up and the increase and growth of the body. This takes place when each person finds his function and service in the body, is not slack concerning the performance of his duty under Christ.

D. These ideas are not something that we give a half-hearted attention to: the apostle is calling us to strong action—to awake, to stir ourselves, to be grownups, not childish. We are not in high school playing high school games, but are to function as adult men and women for the glory of God. These things require our utmost attention, or we will be overwhelmed by the wiles of the devil, for he is much smarter than we are, and hides his snares to catch the unwary.

These three phrase converge two results, if it be of Christ. 1)The unity of the faith. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. 2)And the knowledge of the Son of God.

A. The measure is the stature of the fullness of Christ. Vs. 14. To repeat Paul's prayer beginning in 3:14

B. Christ alone is the breadth, the length, the depth, and height. This love passes knowledge. We have faith and hope and charity, but the greatest of these is charity.

C. That which is to be avoided: to be like children, tossed like dice to and fro. In order to be mature, productive, godly men and women, productive in the Kingdom of God and in the Church of Jesus Christ.

As I said last week: A few days old baby is cute, and four year old baby is a nuisance, a 18 year old baby is obnoxious, a 40 year old baby is a danger to society.

So this brings us to verses 14-16, which presents the church as a living, vital, growing body.

“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; 15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: 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.” (Eph 4:14-16)

I. The goal is adult Christianity. We begin as little children, but we are equipped for maturity and adulthood. Characteristics of infancy: vs. 14

A. Tossed to and fro. Some say this is like the dice in a gambler's game. Others say it is like the sea when it is tossed to and fro by the winds. Both are apt. The emotions of a child are like this, and their emotions control them. They cry; they laugh; they run from

thing to thing. Nothing is settled in their lives. They are children. Many a home is controlled by the children because Mom and Dad do not train them. Such homes are full of turmoil and a whipped around like the storms at sea. Adults act like this, whipped this way and that way because they have no solid center and conviction.

B. Carried about, or “whirled about” by every wind of doctrine. There was no time when the church was not whipped about by strange and uncertain doctrines. Colossians, which was written about the same time, called the church to the core: to Jesus Christ, in whom all the fullness dwells. Maturity means that we know who we are, we know what our work is, and we stay centered on the course. We do not dart from place to place, from doctrine to doctrine, from emotion to emotion: Ephesians is doing the same thing.

C. Not only individuals, but churches also, are called to maturity. Churches grow in understanding and identity. Churches that do not have a core identity in doctrine, worship, ethics, and philosophy tend to splinter and go off in all directions as factions pull them this way and that.

D. By the sleight of men; dicers. They take advantage of every event. Whatever comes up either supports their agenda or proves the falsity of their opponents agenda. They play the event. You remember the story of Absalom, the son of David, who subverted the kingdom. He sat in the gate. Everytime some disgruntled man came by who felt he had been wronged by David, Absalom would say, “O that I were king...” In this way he subverted the kingdom. Whatever the throw of the dice, he turned it to advantage. Beloved, there are those who do so today. We do not see them in this church today, but you will encounter them. Beware that you are not them.

E. Cunning craftiness: this word was used with the questioners of Jesus and with respect to the cunning of the Serpent who tempted

Eve.

F. The agents of the devil lie in wait along the path, tempting you to wander [deceive] out of the way. They want to get you off track. He tries to get you off track.

II. This growth is to be unto Christ. Vs. 15

A. “Speaking the truth in love” is the way we grow up unto Christ our head. He is the adornment of the church as the head is of the body; he is the center of government, and the source of sense and maturity, for the head is the seat of the mind which rules the whole body.

B. Grow up unto Him. Our growth is to be in reference to Him. Not earthly norms or the praise of men, but unto Christ. Each member is to grow up, in the body, with reference to Christ.

1. Each member. Every member is not the same.
2. Every member grows in Christ
3. Every member grows in Christ within the body.

III. The growth is from Christ to all the parts. Vs.16.

A. “from whom” The growth comes from Christ and from Him alone.

B. “the whole body” is alive and growing

C. fitly joined together and compacted: Two words:

1. “fitly joined” from which we get harmony; The figure is the workmanship of a fine carpenter and workman; or the shoulder joint or a war chariot pulled by many horses working together.

2. compacted: knit together: important part of teaching: knit all together.

D. by that which every joint supplieth, “Joint” means touch or contact a “living part” would be the meaning. Every part supplies to the body that which is given in by Christ is the meaning.

E. according to the effectual working in the measure of every part,

1. “And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us—ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,” (Eph 1:19)

2. “Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.” (Eph 3:7)

F. maketh increase of the body The body all grows together because there is life in it. The life is the life of the Spirit who works in those who believe, as we saw in chapter one. The work is faith, hope, charity, if you remember that sermon. You can find them all on the church site. The same life is in every member, but the finger doesn’t grow like the ear, and the ear doesn’t grow like the foot, and the nose doesn’t grow like the elbow, thank God. Every part grows as intended by God, but within the body, communicating in the same life. How blessed is that church that experiences these things.

G. unto the edifying of itself in love.

1. The church builds itself. The church as a whole grows in grace [number is not in view here—the Bible doesn’t speak a great deal about the number—for the elect are fixed from eternity]; it cares a great deal about the love and speaking the truth in love; proper growth will always follow. Growth in number does not always produce love and truth; love and truth will always produce numerical increase.

2. “Edifying” as we saw before is a figure of speech taken from the building of a structure; in this case it is the forming of Christ within each Christian and within the church as a whole. Each joint, or living part, grows and in growing, the body grows.

3. This is because of the “energizing” of God in the whole, not in just a part or two, and certainly not in the pastor alone.

4. “In Love” We must never allow Satan’s counterfeits to turn us away from the reality that is in Christ. In spite of all the phoniness in the world and the fakery and foppery in contemporary Christianity yet the Holy Spirit has commanded us to love one another as Christ has loved us. Paul would call us again in the book of Ephesians:

“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:” (Eph 1:4)

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,” (Eph 3:17)

“With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;” (Eph 4:2)

“And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor.” (Eph 5:2)

The gospel will never smell sweet to the world, for it is an offense and rebuke to them. But the church should smell sweet to God, and not stink in His sight. May it be so with us. Amen and Amen

I have made the application as I have gone along. May God
bless you.

Amen and Amen.

God bless you.