

Jesus or Julia?

by C Benjamin Dill

Ephesians 4:11-12

- 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:

This past week there has been a mild uproar in the news about the new political ad put out by the Obama campaign.

The new ad is a slideshow depicting how the government, under President Obama is going to take care of an imaginary person named Julia from age 2 until age 67 with government preschool, college grants, medical care, guaranteed pay levels, help with her student loans, school for her kids, government loans, Medicare and a nice retirement on Social Security.

It is all made to sound really wonderful because they only tell you the parts that do sound wonderful.

It does not mention that most of these programs are not new under Obama; all but Obama's nationalized healthcare goes back as far as 1964 with various entitlements added by many administrations since. It does not

mention that these programs and others like them have already bankrupted our Nation. Let me repeat a quote you heard in last week's message from former President Ford; "A government that is big enough to give you everything you need is big enough to take everything you have."

When individuals help each other it all goes to the one who needs the help; when the government does it, most goes to overhead, administration costs, fraud and abuse; not to mention politicians taking their cuts and kickbacks as they dole out contracts to their cronies.

We have created a nation of citizen dependents who now outnumber those who work and pay taxes. As a result America will never be the same. There will be no return to the America we once knew. Oh, it will be fixed; it just won't happen until Jesus comes.

America was once, as intended by our founders to be:

Under God,
Of the people,
By the people, and
For the people.

Our government was modeled by our founders using principles of the congregational form of Church government found in the New

Testament as their guide. That guide has been all but completely abandoned.

Today the same abandoning of Biblical principles that is destroying the largest and most successful economy in the World is also weakening and destroying our Churches.

Of all the Churches we know who preach and teach real Biblical doctrinal truth; only one here and there is flourishing. Most are just hanging on and many are dying.

It only takes the passing of one generation who has failed to teach and prepare the next generation for a Church; even a great Church, to be destroyed.

I don't know if there is much we can do to stem the tide of decline in our Nation; do what you can; live by your principles and set an example; that much we can do.

There is however, plenty that we can do to keep Lighthouse strong and flourishing and ever abounding in the work of the Lord.

We must understand our purpose, we must be committed to our principles and we must stay committed to that which has made us what and who we are.

Lighthouse is like a diamond amongst a sea of glass beads. We are not here to get famous, we don't just care about filling the building and

we are not here for what we ourselves can get. We are here to bring glory to the only one who deserves it; his name is Jesus!

There are certain truths, principles and practices that set us apart from every other kind of Church there is. These truths, principles and practices have been handed down to us; from Church to Church to Church down through the centuries; they are the commands of our Lord Jesus.

Our text today is in a set of verses in Ephesians, Chapters 3 and 4. Here in these verses we find the key to the future of Lighthouse Baptist Church.

Ephesians 3:14 - 4:16

- 14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,
- 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;
- 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
- 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;
- 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

- 20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,
- 21 Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

- 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
- 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
- 3 Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
- 4 *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;
- 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
- 6 One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.
- 7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.
- 8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men...

Verse 11 says:

- 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.

In verse 11 we see that the Lord has given gifts to His Churches. He has given them Apostles and Prophets; we have today the work of these two gifts in writing and in our hands!

There are no other Apostles or Prophets in the sense of these we read of in the scriptures; their work is thorough and it is complete.

He has also given to the Churches evangelists; these are the preachers of the gospel. We can all see who they are.

There are also the pastors; those who do the shepherding; they are the overseers.

There are also the teachers; those who do the instructing.

Oftentimes these are all found in one man; I teach and I preach and do the overseeing work of the under-shepherd.

Others who are called of God perform various combinations of these three essential vocations.

It is to you who would become these gifts from the Lord to this Church, above all the rest that must be committed and faithful to the doctrine and truths that are our heritage in the Lord.

Today is not a complete dissertation on the subjects we will address; you will spend your life learning them all; but merely a few small points that the Lord has chosen for our admonition today:

I. First, there are certain truths that have been passed down to us.

A. We are guided in what we believe by those who have come before us. For example:

1. Verse 21 of our text today says:

Ephesians 3:21 Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

2. This command is a pretty good summary of why the Lord has left us here; after all, we who are saved would be far better off in heaven with the Lord.

3. Look at the different ways we could mess up this extremely important command:

a. The “glory” part: We could fail to give Jesus glory for all the good things that are done and take the credit to ourselves like the hundreds of “John Doe ministries” that seem to be everywhere you look today.

b. The “by Christ Jesus” part: We could operate as most do in our own power instead of the power of Christ in us. Most growing churches today are simply big business and are the product of marketing and merchandising.

Ephesians 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

c. The “in the church” part:

4. The Lord Jesus created and commissioned His Church as a living Body which would give birth to other Churches who would in turn give birth to other new Churches; perpetuating themselves all the way to the end of the world;

5. About five hundred years after this another group came along which became known as the Catholics.

6. The scriptures record their origin:

1John 2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

B. The term “catholic” means “universal” and thus began the false teaching that the Lord’s Church is universal.

1. The scriptures teach that a Church is a local body of believers, not some world-wide visible or invisible something else.

2. If you don’t even know what a Church is, how are you going to bring the Lord His glory as a part of it?

3. You could, as many have and do, look at **Ephesians 4:4** by itself and conclude that the Church is universal:

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

4. Were it not for the truths that have been handed down to us we might not look deeper and see:

a. That “all believers” are referred to in scripture as the “Family of God”; not the Church.

Ephesians 3:14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Ephesians 3:15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

b. That the “one Body” of verse 4 is the same “whole body” described further twelve verses later in verse 16:

Ephesians 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.

5. This is just one example.

6. We have been conditioned to think that traditions handed down are only of men and are therefore bad; not so in the case of what real Churches have handed down to their daughters:

2Thessalonians 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

C. Only when the truths handed down to us are learned, proved in scripture and earnestly contended for will Lighthouse stand and flourish in the next generation to come.

1. **Jude 1:3** Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

2. **1Thessalonians 5:21** Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

3. We evangelists, pastors and teachers must be true students of the scriptures and we've got to get it right or there won't be a Lighthouse of tomorrow.

4. And furthermore we must reproduce ourselves as the Lord calls others to this great and high calling.

5. This Church nearly died once because new leaders were not prepared and in place to carry on the work; we do not intend to let that happen again.

II. Next, there are also certain Principles that have been passed down to us. For example:

A. Only the saved belong in the Body.

1. We do not fill the Church with lost people; only the saved.
2. Oh, we want to fill the building with lost people but the building is not the Church; the saved, baptized members are the Church.
3. Membership is important: although it has nothing to do with being saved, it is essential to fulfilling your purpose in life as a believer.
4. It is our responsibility to make sure to the best it can be done that only genuinely saved people become members of this Body.
5. Since lost people are still under the control of their father the Devil, I think you are smart enough to figure out why that would be very important.

B. All the members are important and all the members are expected to do their part.

1. Last week we learned that;

Galatians 6:4-5

- 4 But let **every man** prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.
- 5 For **every man** shall bear his own burden.

2. We learned in

1Corinthians 16:2 Upon the first *day* of the week let **every one of you** lay by him in

store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

3. We learned in **1Peter 4:10** As **every man** hath received the gift, *even* so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.
4. You might say that the Lord has a policy of “no child of God left behind.”
5. Every member without exception is to grow up and become a mature and able member/minister for the Lord.
6. **Ephesians 4:13-15** says the we are to keep teaching and training:
 - 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:

III. And third, there are also certain practices that have been passed down to us. For example:

A. We practice “believers only baptism.”

1. If we do not hear a real testimony of your salvation that matches the scriptures, we will not baptize you.
2. First of all, if you are not saved first, your baptism is not real and what you are stating by your burial in the water is not true.
3. Second, your baptism makes you a member of Lighthouse Baptist Church and; sorry, we love you, but only saved people can be part of the Body of Christ.
4. In addition, even if you are saved, we do not accept the baptism of other groups that pollute or do not teach the real gospel; they are not real Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ and thus have no authority from the Lord to baptize anyone.
5. But we will give you a real baptism by the authority of a real Church.

B. We practice a scriptural observance of the Lord’s Supper.

1. The elements used in the Lord’s Supper we observe nearly every Sunday are unleavened bread (the Jewish matzo) and kosher wine, which are the same elements which were commanded in scripture to be used in the Passover.

2. Both the bread and the wine are unleavened, thereby symbolizing no sin in the body or blood of Jesus.

3. We invite only saved, baptized believers who are in fellowship with this Church who have examined themselves and are right with the Lord to participate; just as the scriptures command.

C. We spend the time necessary to teach people how to know for sure that they truly are saved; as Jesus commanded.

1. This is something you cannot do in 5 minutes at the front of the Church during an invitation.

2. Yes, it is a lot of work and time and effort to do what we do; but we believe you are worth it!

In Conclusion: Since Jesus thought you were worth dying for, we think you must be worth whatever it takes to teach you how to know Him.

Someone asked recently, how do I know that you have the truth and your way is right instead of all these others?

It is a good question; one that has no simplistic answer; but I will try:

Our heritage goes all the way back to Christ and the Apostles. We are not Protestants;

our lineage did not come through Catholicism.

More importantly, the traditions handed down to us were instituted by the Lord Himself; they are scriptural and have been practiced continuously for centuries.

What we believe and practice agrees with all the scriptures, in context; and we can prove what we believe; we can even prove that these scriptures are true.

The Lord honors our prayers and His presence with us is undeniable.

We know we are going to heaven and you can too; just let us prove it; we will show you how to know as well.