

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4

“11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

“Being No More Children”

So we have studied the five gifts given to the Church and next week we are going to consider how all this works together as each of us do our part. Before we consider our text in verse 14, I want to read what should now be a familiar passage without verse 14 so we can see the flow of Paul’s thought:

“11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; [that] speaking the truth in love, [we] may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

That has a nice flow to it, but the Apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit did include verse 14, as a sort of parenthetical remark, and so this morning we will consider his warning which reads: “14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,”

We saw last week that those gifts are intended to bring maturity in our life and so Paul begins verse 14 with, “that we should no longer be children, setting up the contrast with maturity. Verse 15 then says, “but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—”

➤ Again we see the contrast!

So the first thing to ponder is why the Apostle uses the word ‘children’ to draw this contrast.

‘Children’ is a VERY popular word in the Scriptures appearing about 1200 times in most Bibles. Obviously it can have a lot of meanings and Paul’s use here could be confusing. God’s people in both the Old Testament and New Testament are referred to as the Children of God, so when the Apostle says that we should no longer be children it certainly cannot be that title or status he is referring to.

The contrast of a mature adults verses children makes sense, but even there we must consider how Jesus said we were to be as little children! Of course Jesus is there speaking about the honesty and innocence of child-like faith as opposed to the pride of hardened religious leaders so again it would not apply to Paul’s usage here.

- We must remember that just as we can contrast a wise mature adult with a prideful foolish adult, the same can be true of children.
- You can have an obedient child who like Jesus is increasing “in wisdom and stature, in favor with God and men.”

- **Or you can have a selfish out-of-control child who thinks the world centers around them and wants everything NOW.**

Since verse 14 is surrounded with our growing mature, the spoiled child is the sense of childishness we should see here in verse 14. What we want to consider this morning is the danger that such childishness can be in our lives and here we have some strong examples and warnings in the Scriptures to assist us!

In this Ephesians passage the Apostle says that to be so is like a wave being tossed to and fro in a storm. Not a watery storm but one of confusion and conflict so we are “carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,”

This is very similar to the Apostle’s warning in the Book of Colossians which follows what I have often called my life-verse in Colossians 2:6: “6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,” But of course the Apostle Paul does not stop at verse six and we will go on to consider what he presents there as the fuller understanding of the summary given in verse 14 of our text.

First, we see the same contrast we have in our morning text: Colossians 2: “6 As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,⁷ rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.”

This of course requires the gifts that Paul has told us God has given: Being rooted in the Apostle & Prophets and built up by Pastors & Teachers and being those thankful evangelists. In both passages the Apostle calls us to maturity and then warns us about protecting our maturity...

8 “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

Here the Apostle provides a few more details about how we can end up being tossed to and fro... And if we do end up that way, we have been cheated!

The attack seems to come in two forms: Fancy arguments that Paul calls philosophy which can be very sincere, and those who purposely try to deceive people.

The first could be the people who tell us that Genesis is not real history because they cannot figure out how to reconcile it with secular science and so they create popular things like theistic evolution or framework theologies to fit the Bible into the world’s philosophies.

- These people are very wrong, but they are not being deceptive.

Staying with the issue of origins you certainly do have those who are being downright deceptive:

[story about Lawrence lab] We must also remember how so many tyrants of the 20th Century applied Darwin’s theory to politics and after it cost the lives of tens of millions of people, they now tell us that evolution had nothing to do with it.

- That is a very deadly deception!

And the same deception impacts individuals as well: Tell children they are just advanced animals and what do they then think of themselves... And others. That goes a long way toward explaining the suicide rate among young people today as well as the increasing violence.

So whether you have intellectual and philosophical pursuits or just plain deception, the Apostle lumps them together under the lesson we have seen many times from the Book of Ecclesiastes:

“according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

- If we operate, even as Christians, under the sun or without God, then all is vanity or vapor!

And the Apostle Paul could not have made the contrast more clear: 9 “For in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; 10 and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.”

And looking for that child-like faith that Jesus promoted I will ask the children, how much principality and power does “all” include? So once again it comes down to wisdom verses foolishness, or maturity verses childishness. Which do we want to be? We must remember that we ALL begin our Christian journey as babes in Christ whether we are baptized as infants or as a converted adult.

AND we must remember that Jesus stressed that child-like faith is important because it does not come with all our adult baggage. When I first began to read the Scriptures with New Eyes after my conversion I knew no more to start with than any of the young children here this morning. Now I could read faster and perhaps learn more complicated things, BUT I also had to clear out all the old worldly thinking!

- So the critical thing in both cases is for us to desire growth and to avoid those pitfalls of vain philosophies & worldly temptations.

As an adult I would be more tempted to want everything NOW, which is a very childish attitude.

- We must be willing to let God teach us the lessons He wants us to learn on His timetable.

A real sign of maturity is showing self-control and the wisdom of Proverbs pulls no punches in showing the importance of self-control.

Proverbs 25: “27 It is not good to eat much honey; So to seek one’s own glory is not glory.

28 Whoever has no rule over his own spirit [self control] Is like a city broken down, without walls.”

I guess the only way we can relate to that powerful verse today would be to think about someone coming through and removing all the locks from our doors or windows... or better yet removing them altogether!

- We should desire those city walls of self control!

What are some other ways we can compare wisdom with foolishness?

- A mature person is content with what he or she has and is not always thinking the grass is greener on the other side of the fence.

A wise or mature person stays focused on the task at hand while the foolish person gets distracted by every new shiny object that comes along. Think about those Greek philosophes at Athens who spent all their time considering some new thing...

- But never coming to the truth but rather ended up with a city full of dumb idols.

Now we stress learning a lot here at Church of the King, but maturity is far more than just intellectual advances. Right doctrine is essential to a mature faith and being able to share and defend the faith is required as well. However maturity and wisdom are required to know how we are to apply such knowledge in our lives.

A child grows into a mature person, not simply by growing physically or just with the amount of facts that he or she knows. They grow in wisdom and stature before God and men as they learn to have self-control, how to worship, and many other good habits.

So how do we tell how they are doing?

We ask some basic questions, like how do they treat their parents, are they studying God’s Word and worshipping Him on the Lord’s Day & do they enjoy the company of godly friends & family?

On the other hand we would see them as being tossed to and fro if they had no respect for their parents, missed Church more than they attended and were greatly influenced by the latest fashion trends and worldly peer pressure.

We see this principle in a passage from Peter’s first letter that we often use in our time of confession during worship:

I Peter 1: “13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,”

There we see mature children and not those tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine. We do not want to be like those in Athens chasing after every new thing,

- **But rather those building our lives on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets!**

We want to be those who know how to save as well as to spend!

We want to be those who are ready to give an answer for the faith that lies within.

We want to be those who understand the importance of proper submission as well as proper leadership.

And next week we learn that we grow up into Christ, so this is certainly a life-long journey where we can never say that we have arrived!

Each of us are individuals, and thus we are not all at the same place in our journey. We will not all have the same strengths and weaknesses. I may need to mature in an area that Roger is far ahead of me and I may have other lessons to teach because of my experience. And as we shall focus on next week we function as a body.

- **As such we keep each other accountable to make sure we are moving toward maturity and not falling back into childish habits.**

We see this attitude from the Apostle Paul in almost all of his epistles and I will leave you with his admonition to the Saints in Philippi:

Philippians 2: “2 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. 14 Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”

Communion Meditation: III John

“To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth:

2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. 3 For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”