

The Pearl of the Epistles – Ephesians

The Maturing Church

Ephesians 4:14-16

*Ephesians 4:14-16 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.*

Introduction

What is God's purpose for His church? How would you answer that question today? Previously, the Apostle Paul introduced special gifts of God's grace to church: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers.

What is the result on the body of Christ when the pastors and teachers do their job and the people accept the message? The result is a maturing of the church body.

That is the central theme in these four verses.

The Nursery, Sea and Hospital

I really enjoy the imagery and symbolism in the bible. Jesus used parables to get His point across to the masses as well as to His closest followers. There is something wonderful in a story that draws on a person's past experiences to make an understandable point from the teacher. Right away Paul uses intense imagery to trigger a mental picture.

That we– Paul is including himself with the church at Ephesus.

henceforth be no more children – The word “children” is the word associated with an infant that cannot speak. A child that cannot speak is helpless. He cannot communicate his wants, needs or desires.

The apostle is saying that we need to move beyond the childish condition and move to maturity.

tossed to and fro – This phrase suggests the idea of the action of the ocean as the waves are constantly moving and the billows rise and fall. Waves move in any direction until they are acted upon by another force; beach, sea wall, something floating in the water, or reefs.

This type of belief system is void and unstable. It lacks integrity, devotion and dedication. Paul warns the church that doctrine should not be changing just because there is a new variation from another theological direction.

carried about with every wind of doctrine – Carried suggests the idea that the person cannot move themselves, but rely on others. In this case carried about is the same term used of those that are sick. Others would have to carry them to the hospital or anywhere else for that matter.

I am going to generalize here, but I believe most people do not have a good understanding of what they believe and why. If believers do not study the bible, they cannot understand the teachings of the Lord. If they do not have a good foundation on which to build their theology, they are apt to follow one viewpoint for a while, and then move to another when challenged. They are vulnerable to every new opinion.

For example take Oprah Winfrey. She has frequently paraded so called spiritual leaders on her television program and people just follow them because they are on Oprah. With that kind of influence, there comes great responsibility.

Oprah professes to be a Christian, but through her statements on her television program, she has defied basic Christian theology for quite some time. She has proclaimed that Jesus is not the only way to heaven.

For a period of ten weeks, she had Eckhart Tolley, a leader in the new spirituality, on her web cast that was titled “A New Earth Online Class.” She called his book “A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life’s Purpose”, “one of the most important books of our time.” Mr. Tolley is a heretic and she admires and follows him. During an interview plugging the online class, she shared the core values of Tolley’s teaching.

*“God in the essence of all consciousness isn't something to believe, God is, God is. And God is a feeling experience not a believing experience...
And if your religion is a believing experience, if God for you is still about
a belief it is not truly God.”*

She finished off the first teaching with “Well, I am a Christian who believes that there are certainly many more paths to God other than Christianity.”

That would mean that Jesus wasn't enough. God's own beloved Son would only be a part of His plan of Salvation. What does the bible say about this? Look at Jesus own words.

John 14:6 *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

Is it any wonder that people are leaving mainstream Christianity when you have powerful personalities professing to be Christian, but educating their followers on heretical teaching?

Grievous Wolves

by the sleight of men – The enemy is cunning and skilled in illusion. The word slight is the Greek word for “cube”, “dice”. It means gambling. Some leave their religious beliefs to mere chance of other men. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but there are men and women today that pray on the weak, especially those that can be easily influenced because they do not have their beliefs settled.

and cunning craftiness – They will use any trick and deceit to gain a foothold.

whereby they lie in wait to deceive – Men will be patient and use any method of trickery to achieve their goal of deceiving professing Christians. The enemy of the Christian is well adapted to trickery, fraud, and deception. The Christian should be on guard by testing every doctrine using the Word of God.

Gracious Truth

But speaking the truth in love – the correct translation may sound awkward but it is “truthing in love”. This simple phrase really has two points. Speaking the truth and speaking the truth in love. There is a huge difference between the two. The truth needs to be spoken. There is so much error today that could have been avoided if only the truth would have been said.

Sometimes the truth is unpleasant and hurtful. Just speaking the truth can really cause damage. But to speak the truth in love can be healing. Truth should always be spoken in love.

No Christian should ever have to say, “Now this is the truth.” Our lives should live out truth.

may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ – by speaking the truth in love, we may grow and mature into Christ

From whom the whole body fitly joined together – By the power of Christ, each member is performing that ministry as God has called us to do. We function and perform at our best when the body is in unity.

and compacted by that which every joint supplieth – This phrase means, “every joint of supply”. The body of Christ is bound together in unity, truth and love. This joining together, supplies each member with nourishment.

according to the effectual working in the measure of every part – Every part is efficient and successful in working together as each part contributes. No one in the body of Christ is useless. Nor should anyone in the body overworked. By everyone doing their part, the Body of Christ grows and functions properly.

maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love – therefore the body mutually grows and matures by building itself up into image of Christ in unity, mutual love and harmony.

Every function of the body is important from the smallest nerve ending to the complicated operation of the brain. Nothing is useless in the body that God created.

Every member should contribute to the welfare of the body. The body works because every part is functioning. Each and every believer must do the ministry they are called to fulfill.

Therefore, each member of the body must be in unity. While the brain is very important to the body, the body could not live if the lungs, throat, kidneys, blood veins and bones don't work to their assigned intent. Each is important to the purpose of the body. This is the same way as in the Body of Christ. Every believer is important to the purpose of the Bride of Christ.

Conclusion

What is the purpose of God for His church?

Some might say that the church should follow the example of Christ and look at its social concern. Jesus spoke of the care of the brethren specifically in Matthew 25:31-46.

Others might say that the missionary emphasis is the purpose as Jesus spoke of going into the world and make disciples. In each of the Gospels and in the book of Acts, the Great Commission is given.

Still, others would say that the purpose of the church is a fortress in the midst of the world. A safe place where one can find peace.

The Apostle Paul presented these verses in answer to this question; “What is the purpose of God for His church?”

The church membership is to grow and mature.

The church membership is to watch and guard against wolves set to tear the church body apart.

The church membership is to unite in one body of believers in truth and love.

Robert C. Crowder