

“Christ’s Body: The People of the Church” Ephesians 4:12-16, Sermon Notes
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Saving Grace Bible Church
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Morning Worship Service

Text:

“for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him, who is the head, *even* Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:12-16 NAS)

Text Purpose: To show the marks of a healthy Church

Sermon Purpose: To explain what the Body of Christ does when Christ is leading as its head

Introduction

The Church belongs to Christ

Christ leads His church through leaders He gives to the Church

- There is a begging question that we must answer in regards to the Church. If God gives leaders to lead the Church then how do they lead and still Christ is the head?
- What are these leaders called to do?

It is easy to think that the Pastor has authority and he decides what the Church is supposed to do

- CEO Model Church
- Christ gives His authority to one who acts as CEO

Others think the Elders are the authority and they decide what the Church should do

- Church run by a board of directors
- Christ gives His authority to a board of directors who then decide what the Church should do
- But this is not how we operate at SGBC

Others say the Church decides what they are to do

- Church is democratic
- Christ gives His authority to the congregation

None of these properly reflect God's design for leading the Church for all of these take the authority from Christ and place it somewhere else

Christ leads the Church by sending His servants to deliver God's Word and to uphold God's Word

- Simply Christ leads through His Word
- The Apostles and Prophets of the early Church delivered the Word of God to the Church. Their work lasted through the first century and then was completed
- The Apostles laid the foundation of the Church
 - They gave the Word of God
 - They setup the pattern of Deacons and Elders
 - They even gave instructions on how the Church should worship and serve one another
- Modern Prophets herald the Word of God
 - They proclaim it
 - They are not declaring new revelation to the Church today. Instead they are making clear God's revealed Word
- Evangelists
 - They proclaim the Word of God
 - They start Churches
 - They proclaim the gospel
- Pastor\Teachers
 - They teach the Word of God
 - They administer the Word of God
 - They counsel by God's Word
 - They defend the Truth

So Christ leads through his Word and He gives ministers to the Church to uphold His Word

Once Christ is leading His Church it becomes evident in the body of Christ. Eph 4:12-16 gives us the evidences of Christ leading His Church

These leaders are given to equip the saints

“for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;”
(Ephesians 4:12 NAU)

- Equipping has the idea of preparing something or making something perfect

The Word here translated in Eph 4:12 as equipping is used only here in the NT

- This is because this is the only place it is used as a noun - καταρτισμός
- Literally the translation would be “for the equipment of saints”
- Say it another way: Here is how you can view your spiritual leaders: (Pastors and Elders)
They are for your help in spiritual service
- Your spiritual leaders should know the truth, be able to refute error, give sound wisdom and advice, demonstrate a life of wisdom, and should be there to help you in the time of need live like the Lord Jesus Christ
- “For the equipment of the saints” this is a strange translation
- Noun which translate with a verbal idea. This is why all the English translations translate it as a verb
- The verbal form of this word is used in multiple places in the NT (13x in verbal form) - καταρτιζω
- You see the translation of this word is a verbal idea
- This word was used in extra biblical writing to refer to the setting of a broken bone or setting a dislocated shoulder
- The point is to set or equip something to make it useful again
- This is the NT verbal idea of the Word. To make something useful again

We need equipping to do God’s work:

(Now the God of peace) “*equip* you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Hebrews 13:21 NAU)

Hebrews 11:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:10;

“A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.” (Luke 6:40 NAU)

“Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets.” (Mark 1:19 NAU)

- Spiritual leaders prepare God’s people to do God’s will
- They make them ready for the challenges and difficulties of doing God’s work
- They are restoring God’s people by helping them respond properly to the sin in their lives (i.e., confession and repentance)
- They build up God’s people to make them useful to accomplish God’s work

Spiritual leaders have an important responsibility in helping the Church accomplish God’s will

From our text we can see 8 evidences of body life in a ministry lead by Christ:

1st mark of a healthy Church: A Body Equipped to Work for Christ vs 12b

“for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;”
(Ephesians 4:12 NAU)

- Some translations say for the work of the ministry
- It is the same idea. The ministry is service
- The idea here is that God’s leaders prepare us to serve

It is important to understand here that the saints are equipped to work. No one person or group of people can accomplish everything that needs to be accomplished to fulfill God’s work

- Even if the Pastors or Elders had the ability to do all the work they do not have the time or resources to accomplish all the work
- This is by God’s design for the whole body to experience the joy of doing God’s work

What kind of work is the Church to do?

- Anything that comes up in the ministry
- Anything that Church life brings up
- The term for service here is the same word we get deacon from
- It is a general term which means service
- When it is translated as ministry as it is in the ESV or KJV it gives us the sense of formal service for God
- But the word is much broader than that. It refers to service and had the idea of waiting on tables

A sign of a church blessed by Christ is a body of believers serving others

2nd mark of a healthy Church: A body of growing believers 4:12c

“For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;”
(Ephesians 4:12 NAU)

- This is our goal for all of our service
- Our goal is the maturity around you
- Here Paul says spiritual leaders are building up the body of Christ
 - The idea for building up is the idea of constructing a house
 - When we are serving one another and when spiritual leaders are doing their work in the Church people are being built into the body of Christ

"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts 20:32 NAU)

- It is the ministry of the Word of God which is given by the spiritual leaders in the Church which builds and sanctifies the body of Christ

The Church as Christ has designed is going to be marked by a growing body of believers. Growth can happen in so many ways

1. Numerical growth
2. Greater influence
3. Church can have a reputation of godliness like the Thessalonians
4. Greater work of service
5. Greater spiritual development
6. Discipleship and ability to reproduce itself
7. Missions and outreach
8. Self-sustaining
9. Stable ministry

All of this to say we recognize the building and growing of church as more than simply size of congregation or state of the music team. We recognize it as the evident work of God as He transforms sinners, brings them together to sacrificially serve other sinners, and as a result brings glory to His name

- The Church is not built on programs
- While we may want to expand our programs to reach out in greater ministry we recognize the Church is not programs
- Nor is the Church a building for people to come visit
- Nor is the Church for unbelievers to find a place to be comfortable

The Church is a group of believers who are being built together into the body of Christ. When the Church is healthy and growing it will be like a rescue mission which brings in the dead, the hopeless, and the lost. A healthy body of believers is the context God uses to put His glory on display

- We serve to build up and strengthen one another
- I know a church is healthy and growing when I see spiritual encouragement and edification
 - Mutual accountability
 - Deep spiritual discussions
 - Rich fellowship
 - Lasting friendships

Our aim ought to be to make people better and stronger. My hope is to make the people around me better

- I have told our men in our leadership meetings and men's meetings, it is hard to hate someone who lovingly serves you
- We seek to serve and build people up because we do not know how God is going to use someone to open up more ministry for us

The Church which is led by Christ is a body of growing believers who are actively serving one another

- They are showing a greater love for others

3rd mark of a healthy Church: A Body which is Unified 13a

“until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13 NAU)

There is a lot of desire for unity in the Church

Here in Eph 4:13 this is unity through doctrinal faithfulness

You cannot have unity where you have doctrinal error or ungodly living

- I have said this before and someone said to me that I was arrogant for making a statement like this
- But this is plainly the meaning of this text. There is a unity of “the faith”
- The article before the noun faith denotes a particular body of faith. Or in other words “Sound Doctrine.”
- Churches either unify under truth or they avoid differences. Christ calls us to unity under the truth

A church which is under Christ is growing in sound doctrine

4th mark of a healthy Church: A Body which knows Christ vs 13b

“until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13 NAU)

- Increasing in the knowledge of Christ
- His work, life, message, practices, purposes
- You know His life and character
- You know what is consistent with Christ and His ways
- You are becoming like Christ

5th mark of a healthy Church: A Body which matures into the image of Christ 13c

“Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13 NAU)

- Church which makes Christ-like people
- Gal 2:20 – Christ living in and through the people in the Church
- Titus 2:11-14

6th mark of a healthy Church: A Body with stable and growing spiritual lives vs 14

There will be a decrease in carnality or worldliness and an increase in holiness

“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;” (Ephesians 4:14 NAU)

The result of working hard for Christ, growing and maturing under sound teaching, unifying in the truth, and increasing in the knowledge of Christ is spiritual maturity

It will produce a life of stability:

Look at Eph 4:14

- What does spiritual maturity look like? It is described here as stability

“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;” (Ephesians 4:14 NAU)

- Here Paul speaks in the negative – “we are no longer to be”
- We are not running after books like the Shack
- It is not fitting for us to be immature
- The other points have been from the positive stand point here from the negative. We are not immature
- They have talked about what we should be doing
- This here is now the negative stand point and it is what we should not be
- We should not be children

This section is a comparison between the immature and mature; the child and the adult; the unstable and the stable person

The word for child here in Eph 4:14 is used 14x in the NT. It's the word νήπιος (ne-phi-os) which means child or infant

- Commonly referred to a child who could not care for himself
- Child in age and stature or a child in thinking (childishness)
- Childish behavior, or childish thinking
- Kids are helpless and destructive

Now look at how Paul describes immature here:

Immaturity is described as a boat which is a drift and tossed here and there by waves

- Boat at the mercy of the waves
- Boat which is driven by the wind
- Boat which is carried off course

It is very dangerous for a boat to be a drift especially as you get closer to shore. The waves and the wind cause the boat to crash against the rocks and it will sink the boat

What does this immaturity look like in the Christian?

- Lives which are unstable and unreliable
- Emotionally unstable, emotional roller-coaster
- Never satisfied, often fearful
- Weak understanding and no desire to grow or change
- Evidence of areas of carnality or worldliness. Might be strong in many areas but have an area or two left open to worldly pursuits
- Naïve and lead astray – can't see dangers

Notice the end of this verse:

This text teaches us there are false teachers who will push us further into ungodliness

- Those who seek to trick you
- Those who seek to lie to you
- Those who are crafty in their schemes

“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;” (Ephesians 4:14 NAU)

- Willing to lie and deceive about their intentions
- Willing to feed your wants and desires
 - Cater to your struggles
 - Feed your cravings
 - Learn of your fears and insecurities and then use these fears and securities to manipulate and control people
- They create environments where sin cannot be confronted or when it is confronted it is top down. What the people have done to sin against the leadership

An immature body cannot see when the error presented cannot possibly be true

- They train people to live on greed or fear rather than faith and thus rob people of stability in the midst of trials and difficulties

Notice what Paul says here in vs 14

“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;” (Ephesians 4:14 NAU)

While it is true some doctrines are hard to understand and we have to work hard to stay on the right track

- But even more concerning is that there are people out there who want to take advantage of us

Notice how Paul describes this work: He describes it with three terms

- Trickery – Craftiness – Deceitful scheming

Trickery – As the word describes it refers to tricking people and was often used to refer to a game of dice and consequently came to refer to the trickery in gambling

- False promises
- Lure of quick gains
- Promise of pleasure
- Cheat to win

Craftiness – Tricking with evil cunning. Deceiving with the purposed to take advantage. People do what they are doing purposefully

- They present schemes
- They work at misrepresenting the truth
- They promise one thing and deliver another

IN deceitful scheming

- They plan to do evil
- They may not be aware they are doing evil
- They are not doing God's will therefore they practice evil

A Christ lead Church is mature in the face of trials and temptations. They stand strong when faced with error. They are stable and consistent no matter the season of life in the rest of the world

7th mark of a healthy Church: A Body practicing loving communication vs 15a

“but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,” (Ephesians 4:15 NAU)

In contrast to being immature and tossed here and there by every wind of doctrine and in contrast to being like children, we are to speak the truth in love

- These next two points are closely related
- In fact they are one main idea here but I wanted to draw out two distinct ideas here
- First is that we are going to be a body which speaks the truth in love

There are two different ways to interpret this phrase

- Most translations say “Speaking the Truth in love”
- Some have argued the meaning is “confessing the truth” or “confessing the truth in love”

While the word could be translated either way I think the best translation is as most translations state it “speaking the truth in love.”

That is to say this is not about our personal testimony but about our conduct in our speech

This idea of speaking the truth in love is often confused:

- Often people view this to mean that when we speak truth to someone, the hearer must feel loved as the result of hearing the truth. (What determines loving is how someone feels when they are done hearing the message)
- Or people think love would never cause any hurt so if I feel hurt then the truth was not spoken to me in love. (Love is always soft and gentle)
- Or they assume that truth makes us feel good so if I feel bad then I did not hear the truth or I did not hear it in love (love always makes me happy so I must be happy when I hear the truth)
- Or people often equate if they like the message to wither it was spoken in love. If I like it, then the message was with love. If I do not like the message it was unloving. (Love is something I like so if I do not like your message it was not in love)

Again our emotions, desires, wants, or struggles cloud the issue

Paul is going to give us the key to loving communication in Eph 4:29 so we will expound more on this idea in that verse but we can say this by our context:

- Our communication is loving when in tone and in message it encourages others to grow in spiritual maturity

A growing body of believers speaks the truth in such a way that builds others up

- Speaks in a way that makes people want to listen and be a part of

Notice how the text proceeds

8th mark of a healthy Church: A growing body of believers

“but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,” (Ephesians 4:15 NAU)

- When our message helps people see how their life is contrary to the ways of God we are speaking the truth

Loving communication will

- gather all the facts
- speak according to those facts
- not embellishing any of the details
- give a clear path of restoration

Remember what the goal is here:

All our communication should demonstrate love by directing people to be more like Jesus Christ

- The more carefully and clearly we help people draw near to Christ in their thoughts, desires, and actions the more loving our communication has become

This leads us to the last point

9th evidence (yes I am avoiding 9 Marks)

“but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:15-16 NAU)

A healthy body of believers seeks spiritual growth

- We are to grow up into Christ

Here is the great mystery of the body of Christ. We need each other to grow up into what Christ wants us to be

Evidence of this:

1. Because members in our Church decided to give to a building you have lost your weekends for the last two months so that you could serve this body!
2. You get to fill up your service to Christ in how you serve this body of believers. God continually brings new opportunities to the body so that you can be involved in serving the body

Scripture Proof:

Paul does something unique here and shows us that it is not just teachers who build us up and train us

- Easy to see the teachers because they are up front
- They make decisions
- They are often speaking and directing

But here Paul points out we need each other

BUT even more than that:

Notice the end of verse 15 and start of verse 16 again

“we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted”

NOTICE:

- We are to be growing up in all aspects into Him
 - He is our head

Which means Christ is leading the Church. Christ is directing us and shaping us. The head supplies growth and direction. So we are to be entrusting ourselves to grow and to be directed

- Notice verse 16 through whom the whole body being fitted together

This church has continually grown by God pulling people from other areas and bringing them here to be a part of this ministry. As I have said before: God is cherry picking other churches and bringing people here to be a part of this ministry to build this body of believers

- This is not by accident. This is not random chance

Jesus Christ is actively building His Church and we get to be a part of His work

BUT it does not stop there, notice the rest of this verse

“from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:16 NAU)

Not only is Christ building but now that Christ has brought you here by His work YOU need to do your part

You need to supply your measure of grace in this body of believers

A healthy body of believers supply their part in encouraging the faith of others. The divine mystery of the Church is that Christ works and we work together to bring about the collective spiritual maturity of the body of Christ

We all have various gifts and abilities and they are intended to be used here for God's glory

- We want you using your gifts here
- We want people to be spent out doing God's work (many of you know what that feels like already)

Conclusion

The Church is led by Christ as He sends leaders to encourage the body to do the work of service

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