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C0502 -- Jan. 12, 2005 – Ephesians 4:13-16 – Growth of Christ’s Body

v. 11 is a representative list of some of the spiritually gifted persons given to the Church. If you’re a believer here then you are a spiritually gifted person. Here is a list of gifts Christ is giving to the Church today, remember, these are not authoritative offices but gifts: teacher, evangelist, pastor, helps, administrator, exhorter, giver, mercy, ruler, server, faith. You have at least one of these gifts. I didn’t list all of the gifts mentioned in the NT because Christ is no longer giving some of the gifts to believers. Remember, a gift given to the Church once was given to the whole Church because the Church is an organism that spans from the Day of Pentecost to the Rapture. Christ sovereignly gives the gifts and the measure of the gift and He decides when to give the gift. Therefore, He doesn’t have to give all the gifts to every generation but just once at His discretion. Some of the gifts were foundational and that’s why Christ isn’t giving them anymore (Eph. 2:20 apostle and prophet). Others were related to new revelation God was giving and so Christ isn’t giving them anymore because the canon of Scripture is closed (e.g. word of wisdom, word of knowledge). v. 12 describes what the gifts were given for. The immediate purpose is to be equipped. All believers must first be equipped with Bible doctrine. The short term goal is that they may do the work of ministry. You were given a gift to do something, to do some ministry. The long term goal is that the body of Christ may be built up. So, everyone has a gift and everyone is supposed to be equipped and every one is supposed to do ministry so that the body of Christ will be built up. If you’re not exercising your spiritual gift then the rest of the body suffers.

Greek Text 4:13 mechri katantesomen oi pantes eis ten enoteta tes pisteos kai tes epignoseos tou uiou tou theou, eis andra teleion, eis metron elikias tou pleromatos tou Christou,

Translation 4:13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of Christ’s full stature.

mechri katantesomen oi pantes eis ten enoteta tes pisteos kai tes epignoseos tou uiou tou theou, “until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God”. This verse gives the duration of the Church’s growth in history. There are three prepositional phrases that follow in succession leading to the final goal of the church measuring up to the full stature of Christ. Each prepositional phrase begins with *eis*, “to”.

The conjunction **until** (*mechri*) when *used with an aorist subjunctive* denotes an ongoing action until a future point event in time. In other words the immediate goal of equipping believers to do ministry that ultimately results in the building up of the Church will go on until some future event. The Church began on the Day of Pentecost (Matt. 16:18; Acts 1:5; 11:15; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22-23). That’s the day equipping began. The apostles were the major equippers initially. They used evangelism and apologetics with unbelievers and they disciplined others like Christ disciplined them. And this method is supposed to go on and on until the Church measures up to the stature of Christ. When will the Church measure up to Christ’s stature? At the pre-trib Rapture. The Greek construction leaves open the possibility that this can be attained at-any-moment (imminence). Imminence means that the Rapture can happen at-any-moment. It means no signs precede the Rapture. If the Rapture can happen at-any-moment then we can say with confidence that the Church can **attain to the unity of the faith** at-any-moment. **unity of the faith** refers to the **one faith** mentioned in 4:5. When the last person God has chosen to become a part of the Church exercises **faith** in Jesus Christ the **unity of faith** will be complete and the Rapture can take place. That’s the force of *mechri* with the *aorist subjunctive*. Paul’s use of the adjective **all** shows that the pre-trib Rapture is for **all** saints and not just the good old boys. The idea that the pre-trib Rapture is only for a select group of extra holy saints is not biblical. The pre-trib Rapture is for **all** who have exercised faith in Jesus as their personal Savior.

Not only is there to be **unity of the faith** but **unity...of the knowledge of the Son of God**. The word here for **knowledge** is *epignosis* which we looked at in 1:17. Whenever you add *epi* to *gnosis* you make the knowledge directional knowledge. Knowledge that is moving toward something. In 1:17 it was **knowledge** directed toward God. Here **knowledge** is directed toward the **Son of God**. This is the only time Paul uses the phrase **Son of God** in Ephesians. The significance of this title is that it refers to the deity of Jesus Christ. The Bible declares explicitly that Jesus is God five times (John 1:1; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8; 2 Pet 1:1; 1 John 5:20). A person must believe in the deity of Jesus Christ in order to become a part of the Church. The way **unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God** is accomplished is through gifted persons who Christ gave to the Church. When we use our gifts to do ministry we have an effect on Christians and non-Christians. When we exhort, teach, pastor, give, etc... we help bring about this unity. But we also have an effect on non-

Christians too, particularly those who have or had the itinerant gifts mentioned in v. 11, like evangelist. Evangelists take the gospel everywhere they go and non-Christians respond by faith and go to church where other gifted people minister to equip them so they can become teachers of others. Spiritual gifts are therefore not for self-edification but for body-edification (1 Pet 4:10). A Christian who just builds himself up but never edifies the rest of the body is demonstrating immaturity not maturity. He may know a lot but if he does not share this with others then how can the body benefit? The gifts can't really be used apart from the body (give examples)

eis andra teleion, "to a mature man". Next, the church has to become **a mature man**. This is not talking about individual believers maturing. If it was it would say **mature men** but instead it says **mature man**. The word for **man** here is not the same word used in 2:15 of the "one new man" (*anthropos*). There Paul wanted to emphasize a new people of God, the Church. Here Paul wants to emphasize the growth of the Church *from infancy to manhood* so he uses the word *aner*. The Church began on the day of Pentecost as a baby. Christ was the head. Now, when you picture a baby one of the funny things about babies is that they are out of proportion. The baby's head is much bigger in proportion to their body than an adult. This is because the baby's body hasn't matured yet. It has to grow and mature so it will be proportionate to the head. Now, this is the way the body of Christ is. On the day the Church was born, Pentecost, the Church was all out of proportion. Christ, the head, was mature, but the body was small and immature. The body had to grow numerically and doctrinally. When the body grows up proportionate to the head then the Church will be a **mature man**. So, just like a baby has to grow up into an adult so the Church has to grow up into a **mature man**. The growth here is body growth, not individual growth. Individual believers grow when they are with other believers and not in isolation. This is why there was such a togetherness in the early church (Acts 2:41-47). The nourishment Christ gave to the Church to grow into a **mature man** is gifted persons! You have some essential function that is necessary to the growth of the Church!

eis metron elikias tou pleromatos tou Christou, "to the measure of Christ's full stature." The **fullness of Christ** is a synonym for the Church. So, the **fullness of Christ** will be reached when the last person God decided to be a part of the Church becomes a believer. At that point the **fullness of Christ** will be complete and the Church will be Raptured.

v. 14 gives the negative purpose of spiritual gifts, namely, that individuals will avoid being caught up in false doctrine (HVP). v. 15 gives the positive purpose, namely, for individuals

to grow up in Christ in respect to all things. v. 16 continues the theme of growth but in respect to the whole body and not just the individual.

Greek Text 4:14 hina meketi omen nepioi, kludonizomenoi kai peripheromenoi panti anemo tes didaskalias en te kubeia ton anthropon, en panourgia pros ten methodeian tes planes,

Translation 4:14 in order that we might no longer be children, being tossed back and forth by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine by the cunningness of people by deceitfulness towards the scheme of error.

hina meketi omen nepioi, “in order that we might no longer be children,” gives the negative purpose of the giving of spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts were given so that individual believers would not be deceived (wanderers) but would be able to grow up in Christ. Gifted people are therefore given to protect us from deception. The word for **children** is *napios* and here refers not to age but to childish understanding. Believers are to be *childlike* but not *childish*. *Childlike* in our trust of God like a child trusts his parent but not *childish*, chasing every new doctrine that comes down the pike. Every believer is born in spiritual infancy having only a *childish* understanding of Bible doctrine. We therefore need to grow up and not remain *childish* in our understanding. The believers in the Book of Hebrews failed to grow up. They should have been teachers by then but they remained **children** (Heb. 5:12-6:2); they weren't growing up. We are to **no longer be childish** in our understanding. The characteristics of childish understanding are given by two participles that describe the affects of waves and winds of doctrine on children.

kludonizomenoi kai peripheromenoi panti anemo tes didaskalias “being tossed back and forth by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine”. Children by definition are easily influenced and confused in their thinking. That's why Paul describes such instability by the participle **tossed back and forth by...waves**. Childish believers are thrown around and in confusion by the world system which is ultimately under the rule of Satan and his demonic powers. The second participle is the phrase **carried about by every wind of doctrine**. The participle **carried about** means “to make dizzy, to turn around”. It also denotes confusion like the first participle. Importantly, both of these participles are *passive* meaning that whatever is causing the confusion is coming from some outside force. We know this is Satan and the demonic realm trying to confuse new or old believers who are in spiritual infancy. If Satan and the demons can confuse childish believers then the believer can never find stability. Often these believers give up on the Christian life and resort to his old HVP. Just like when a child is raised in an unstable home he often has difficulties as an adult establishing a stable home so the same is true for the Christian. This

is why it is critical for immature Christians to get in a class where solid discipleship is taking place. Otherwise he remains childish in his understanding and open to confusion from Satan and the demons. That the confusion is coming from every direction is signified by the phrase **every wind**. Satan uses any and all means to confuse the Christians thinking, particularly when they are vulnerable as new believers. This is why it is so important that the gifted persons function properly so that this confusion is avoided. The teaching of pastors and teachers in particular is important. Their teaching should be oriented in one direction rather than many directions. That's why I mention worldviews on occasion. Christianity gives the one way of viewing the world. One direction teaching produces stability and unity whereas. It teaches you how to think and live. Teaching from **every** direction produces turmoil and confusion.

What are some of the dangerous doctrines that Christians today are being tossed back and forth by?

Partial or Full Preterism: the view that most or all of Bible prophecy was fulfilled in 70AD. Full preterists go so far as to say that the 2nd Coming already happened in 70AD and we are now living in the eternal state. Partial preterists don't go so far, they still allow for a future 2nd Coming. **Open Theism:** the view that God limits his power to protect human free will. The future is open and contingent upon human choices. God is open to the direction man wants to take history. God is the great predictor of human behavior and predicts what choices we will make but the future is open. **Process Theology:** that God is in process. He limits His knowledge so that He is learning just as we are learning as history unfolds. These people are trying to avoid the idea that if God knows the future then the future is certain. Therefore, they say that the future is open and God is open. God is changing in that His knowledge is increasing as history progresses. Both Open Theism and Process Theology are attacks on the attributes of God (omnipotence and omniscience). **Seeker-Sensitive/Church Growth Movement:** this is a major movement in America. These false churches have a false theology of the Church (Ecclesiology). They teach that the Church's major purpose is evangelism contra Eph. 4:11-16. The regular church meetings are evangelistic and not teaching. They are all about positive thinking, never say anything negative. Therefore they have a false theology of Depravity. They do not communicate that man is a depraved sinner and at enmity with God. Instead they believe that unbelievers are actually seeking God contra Rom. 3:11, Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3. They have a very pragmatic perspective on ministry. If it works do it. They have a false theology of Salvation by proclaiming only that Christ loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life, thereby de-centralizing the cross of Christ and the substitutionary atonement. The mega churches are all caught up in this movement. They are all about positive thinking and

pragmatism. They are also closely tied in with the **Charismatic Movement** which has a false doctrine of the Holy Spirit. They emphasize the Spirit over Christ contra Scripture. The Spirit was sent to exalt Christ not Himself. Christ is the center not the Spirit. They also have a false doctrine of Sanctification by teaching instant sanctification through the experience of speaking in tongues or 2nd baptism. They also downplay knowledge and emphasize experience and emotionalism contra the abundant testimony of the NT. So, if you are a part of any of these then you need to heed what Paul is saying here.¹ This is childish stuff. You are **being tossed back and forth by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine** and you have to grow up and become stable doctrinally. That's what this church is here for. So you can grow up and become stable mature individuals; teachers of others. How this confusion takes place is described next?

en te kubeia ton anthropon, en panourgia pros ten methodeian tes planes, “**by the dice-playing of people in deceitfulness towards the scheme of error.**” Literally, the Greek word for “trickery” (*kubeia*) means “**dice-playing**”. Satan and demons are **dice-playing** with believers to confuse them. The word indicates that the dice are loaded. That is, the dice have been tampered with unknowingly to play in the favor of Satan and the demonic powers. This simply means that Satan and the demons have an agenda. They are pushing their anti-God agenda through the doctrines of men that confuse people and give them the wrong perspective on evidence, information and interpretation. Satan loves to cause confusion and indeed is the author of it. Because childish believers haven't grown up they are vulnerable to these attacks. If you don't think you can be tricked you are right where Satan wants you. Secondly, Paul says that this **dice-playing** or **trickery** is **in deceitfulness**. This refers to the corrupt and disguised agenda of Satan and the demonic powers. They are masters of deceit. They've been doing this for at least 6,000 years, they know human nature and our weaknesses and they deceitfully capitalize on childish believers. Finally, where is all this heading? The preposition *pros* is directional meaning that the goal of this deceitful trickery is **towards the scheme of error**. The word **scheme** is from an old Greek word *methodos* from which we get the word “method”. Childish believers are being deceitfully tricked into a method of error. The Bible is not only concerned with *what we learn*, the content, but *the way in which we learn*, the method.

The Bible is quite clear that the teachers “methodology” is just as important as the “content”. Satan and the demonic powers want to lead us to adopting a false “methodology” in our thinking. They can do this through teachers who use a false methodology (e.g. teachers who lead you into an experience or emotional high, teachers who play on positive thinking, teachers who play on autonomy by saying that you have to decide, you have to be the judge). When we buy into these methods we are incapacitated as effective Christians

for Christ. Spiritually gifted people who use their gifts frustrate Satan's plans because they equip believers to detect deceitful tricky teachings and to avoid them. Notice that there is only one **method** or **scheme of error** not many. The text says **the scheme of error**. All false methods are at base one. They all play on human depravity and are anti-God. Once Satan cunningly deceives us into accepting His false methodology then the Christian is in a dangerous position. He can't grow, he can't help preserve unity, he causes turmoil and confusion in the church. (e.g. acceptance of scientific method, acceptance of scientific method applied to various disciplines (i.e. secular psychology, sociology), the abstraction of mathematics and logic, the separation of law from God's revelation [Law School], reduction of humanity from the image of God to impersonal material governed by biological, chemical and physical processes). This is all very dangerous stuff that is taking place on our College Campuses and lots of it is coming into the church. But even before college in the early elementary years of education this introduction of a false methodology is taking place. The American education system, which used to be the #1 education system in the world is totally at odds with God. Today, the method of teaching is not that children are to be taught by some external authority who knows but to be his own self-teacher in the learning process, which is basically one of self-realization (the realization and centrality of self). In this method the child is subconsciously taught how to be an autonomous judge and from that point it's no wonder he rejects the gospel since he has already been trained that he must judge the credibility of God and the gospel of Christ. It is very unfortunate that American Christians have allowed secular humanists to build into our children the critical spirit. By doing so they are playing into the age-old scheme of Satan and the demonic powers and they are preparing young Christians to buy into the **scheme of error**.

Verse 15 gives the contrast for the individual and v. 16 for the corporate church.

Greek Text 4:15 aletheuontes de en agape auxesomen eis auton ta panta, hos estin he kephale, Christos,

Translation 4:15 but rather being truthful with love, we might grow up to him with reference to all things, who is the head, the Christ,

aletheuontes de en agape, "but rather being truthful with love,". The **but** marks a strong contrast here. Most translations say something like "speaking the truth in love", but the idea of the participle **speaking the truth** is not only **speaking** but **also living**. In short, Paul is saying **being truthful** in both your life and your speech. Your life ought to be a demonstration of truth. This is in contrast to the **deceitful trickery** of v. 14. Deceit and trickery hide their true intent. We are to be straightforward, honest, truthful. **truth** is that which really is. It's reality, the true state of affairs. Our speech and our conduct ought to

be a demonstration of the true state of affairs as opposed to hiding or suppressing the truth (Rom. 1:18) through trickery and deceit. The spirit-filled Christian is to be marked by conduct and speech that are in accordance with truth. A Christian can speak the truth and yet not speak it in the sphere of love. e.g. I can give you true Bible doctrine but in an unloving way. If I do this my message is inconsistent with my method. The way I deliver a message must not be inconsistent with the message itself. Like the teacher who lectures his students on the idea that the lecture method is the worst method of teaching. If it truly is the worst method then why are you lecturing to us? In the same way, if I correct my brother with truth but in a way that runs him down and crushes him then I have given truth but not in love. I've been inconsistent. Paul is exhorting us to not be like the deceitful tricksters but consistent to the truth in life and speech. When we do this it results in harmony and growth rather than disharmony and stunted lives. The believers' growth is Paul's next concern.

auxesomen eis auton ta panta, “we might grow up to him with reference to all things,”. Instead of remaining childish in our thinking we ought to **grow up to him with respect to all things**. It is the gifts given to believers today as well as the foundational gifts that help accomplish this growth. The subjunctive here indicates that we **might grow**, not necessarily that we **will grow**. Only if the gifts are used in proportion to the measure given will growth actually occur. Where are we to grow? **to him**, to Christ. Christ is our model for how to live and speak truth. He is our goal. In what areas are we to grow? **with reference to all things**. Since Christ is the creator of everything in the universe then every area of life is being referred to here. We want to have the DVP for every area of life. We are not called to just grow up in one or two areas but in every area; spiritual things as well as earthly things for He is the author of both (John 3:12). How do we do this? Remember the *epignosis*, the knowledge that was directed toward Christ in v. 13. To do this we have to make Christ and His word our starting point **with reference to all things**. When we talk about earthly things this means taking God's word as the starting point for every area of human study or endeavor (biology, art, music, etc...) when God gives facts about these areas of life they need to be the starting principles from which we work out our thinking about them. In terms of spiritual things this means taking God's word as the starting point for spiritual living and thinking, particularly in the realm of morals and ethics (humility, contentedness, goodness, love, unity, etc...). To **grow up** obviously refers to the sanctification process. You've got to **grow up** so that you are constantly dissecting whatever is coming in. You're not passively accepting information from TV, radio, etc...into your brain but your mind is dissecting and categorizing information in terms of biblical categories of thinking. Taking every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). To do this you first have to realize there are only two ways to think about things. One starts with

Christ the other starts with Satan. There is no neutrality. And at every moment you are caught on one side of the fence or the other and you should be constantly working toward evaluation of every bit of information in terms of Christ and His word. He is the starting point or reference of all truth and we want to think like Christ did in reference to earthly and spiritual things.

hos estin he kephale, Christos, “who is the head, the Christ,”. This defines **to him as the head, the Messiah**. By referring to Christ as the head Paul is referring to Him as the head of the Church which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23). By referring to Him as **the Christ**, Paul adds the article to emphasize that the head of the Church is the Messiah, the same one promised to Israel in the OT.

Greek Text 4:16 ex ou pan to soma sunarmologoumenon kai sumbibazomenon dia pases aphas tes epikoregias kat energeian en metro enos ekastou merous ten auxisin tou somatos poicetai eis oikodomen eautou en agape.

Translation 4:16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together through every supporting connection according to the working in measure from each individual part, causes the growth of the body to building itself up in love.

“from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together”. **from whom** refers to **the Christ**. Christ is the one who ultimately **causes the growth of the body**. Paul is moving to the church as a whole and away from the individual. Individual growth was the subject of v. 15 but corporate growth is the subject of v. 16. **the whole body**, which is the Church, is **being fitted and held together**. He’s drawing an architectural analogy here as he did in Eph 2:21. The **body** is a building that is being built up. This building began on the Day of Pentecost and will be complete on the Day of the Rapture. The Church is not just those believers living today but every believer since the Day of Pentecost. The Church is a living building that is continually being built up. Each of us, as we grow are like stones in the building that are being carved, chiseled, and smoothed to fit together perfectly (e.g. the ancient pyramids). Believers are not thrown together haphazardly, but skillfully. We are being intimately **held or joined together**. This shows how the body is growing. As individuals in v. 15 grow up into Christ so the entire body is growing into a solid structure that will be complete at the Rapture. **Being fitted and held together** are both in the passive voice meaning it is an outside force that is causing this growth. Namely, it is the grace of God acting on us to fit us together and hold us together intimately. How is this building held together and built?

“**through every supporting connection**”. The picture is that of individual believers exercising their spiritual gifts in order for the body to grow. Spiritual gifts are Christ’s determined means through which He is building up His body. **every** believer is therefore required to **supply** the connections, not just the leaders in the assembly. Every believer’s gift is necessary to make all the right connections toward unity. In the ancient world the word translated **joint** was used by Hippocrates to describe the function of the *ligament*. The *ligaments* are what connect bone to bone in the human body. So, here Paul may be using an illustration from Anatomy and Physiology. Paul loves to describe the Church in terms of architecture and anatomy and physiology. Architecture demonstrates that the body is still being built. Anatomy and Physiology show that the body is alive and interdependent. Like the cells and organs of the human body must interact in order to function so distinctly gifted believers must interact in order for the church to function properly. Growth occurs not in isolation but together. As I touch you with my gift and you touch me and others growth occurs. The amount of growth is what Paul touches on next.

“**according to the working in measure from each individual part**,”. The amount of growth is in proportion to the *energy* contributed by **each individual part**. The word for **working** is *energeia* and is only used of God and Satan in Scripture. So, whenever we exercise our spiritual gift it is God’s energy, in the person of the Holy Spirit, who is working through us. When we allow Him to **energize us** to the measure of the gift of grace we were given then growth occurs. Where did we see that word **measure** in this same chapter? v. 7 where Christ gave **each a measure of grace**. We are each to use our gift to the measure that it was dispensed to us, not more, not less. An analogy with the human body is once more appropriate. If we overtax the liver that cleanses our blood from toxins when we take in too much sugar, alcohol, etc...then it harms the body. That organ is doing too much work. If certain organs stop working then likewise this harms the body. Hippocrates remarked that good health results when the various parts of the body function proportionately to one another. Pain results when one part of the body is overtaxed or out of use. “Briefly then, each member of the body of Christ is to function to the measure Christ has given him or her (v. 7). When members fulfill their responsibilities, then the body of Christ can grow properly as Paul proceeds to develop next.”ⁱⁱ

“**causes the growth of the body**”. Here we come to the main verb *poieitai* which is a present middle indicative indicating that the **body** grows from within. You might think that the body is responsible for the **growth** but since Christ gave the gifts and is the head of the body He is the ultimate source of the **body’s growth**. Finally, the final goal is mentioned which parallels the end of v. 12 as...

“to building itself up in love.” The body here is a living organism that must be built up. Growth can never occur apart from love and so the **building** must take place in the sphere of **love** being exercised among one another. “As a child grows better in an atmosphere of familial love, so the church grows better in an atmosphere of love between believers. Paul enjoins believers to be truthful evn avga,ph| (v. 15) and to grow evn avga,ph| (v. 16).”ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ Additional false doctrines floating around are Contemplative Spirituality, Neo-Orthodoxy and Liberal theologies.

ⁱⁱ Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 576.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 578.

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