

**Ephesians 4: 14 and 15; “Growing Up Into Christ”, Message # 29 in a series entitled
– “The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, A Bible Study prepared by
Pastor Paul Rendall, for August 25th, 2021.**

In this evening’s time together, I want to continue to speak with you about the reason that pastor-teachers were given by Christ to the Church. They were given for the equipping of the saints in relation to the truth of the word of God for 3 reasons according to verses 14-16. 1st – That we should no longer be children. 2nd – That we should learn to speak the truth in love. And 3rd – That we should learn to effectively work together to see the growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. All of these things that are mentioned here are mentioned so that we might grow up in all things into Him who is the Head of the Church, even into Christ Himself. And so, tonight let’s think together about the first two of these points, and ponder how this truth affects each one of us personally.

1st – Pastor-teachers were given to the church so that we should no longer be children.

What does it mean to be a child in the faith? Verse 14 says – “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.” Well, it means that spiritually we start out as babes in living our Christian life. We are weak in terms of our knowledge of the Bible, and the wisdom and experience necessary to live a righteous and a godly life. Look with me over at 1st Peter 2, verses 1-3. “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

Now, you can see here that Peter mentions many things which a babe in Christ might unconsciously or unknowingly bring in to the Christian life with him. Old sinful attitudes of malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and evil speaking. You are to lay them all aside Peter says, and desire the pure milk of the word that you may grow by reading it for yourself, and hearing it preached. It is when you are tasting of the good word of God, desiring the pure milk of the word in terms of the graciousness of the Lord to supply every good thing to you for Christ’s sake, this greatly promotes your spiritual growth. The pastor feeding you the word of God is like a mother giving you her breast as a little child.

Psalm 81, verses 8-10. “Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you!” “O Israel, if you will listen to Me!” “There shall be no foreign god among you; nor shall you worship any foreign god.” “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” This is where it all begins for the babe in Christ. It is in hearing God’s voice through the preaching of the word by the pastor-teacher Sunday by Sunday, that real growth takes place. You realize by hearing good preaching from the pastor-teacher that you are to be exclusively devoted to God; to worshiping Him and serving Him alone. At church you open wide the mouth of your mind and heart, and He gives you the pure milk of the word. Over time, you begin to grow up to be a mature Christian. You see the importance of being taught sound doctrine.

You see that God wants all of your attention, and all of your heart. You come to know that God is the One who feeds your soul through His word being preached to you. He is to be daily worshipped and adored. You are learning to trust in Him and to walk with Him, and you are praying to learn from Him, and to grow up in all things into Christ, the Head of the Body. You realize that you have an assignment from God; that you will learn from the pastor-teacher of your church, all the good doctrines of the Bible which will make you spiritually strong and discerning. You come to understand from him that you must learn all the practical applications of doctrine in terms of your responsibilities as a Christian.

Sometimes Christians do not grow up as they should. They remain babes in the faith. And there are definite reasons for this. Turn with me over to 1st Corinthians 3: 1-7. “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.” “I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able for you are still carnal” “For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” “For when one says, ‘I am of Paul, and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal?” “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?” “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.” “So then, neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.”

You see here that Paul could not speak to the Corinthian church as spiritual people. He could not feed them with the meat of the word of God. And the reason for this was that they had not laid aside the sinful attitudes and the old worldly ways of doing things from their old life before they came to Christ. They were still carnal. They were still fleshly in their thinking. This does not mean that there are 3 categories of people in the world. Unbelievers, Christians, and Carnal Christians. No, it means that when he saw the believers at Corinth acting in these carnal ways, he knew that he was going to have to go back to the basics in his teaching. He could not go on to feed them the more difficult doctrines, the ones that were more difficult to chew on spiritually speaking; the more weighty doctrines and duties of the faith. He had to keep feeding them the elementary truths of the word of God, the milk of doctrine and teaching.

The reason that he had to do this, was because they had not laid aside behaving like mere worldly people; people who would be carnal in their attitudes and actions. Look at Hebrews chapter 5, verses 12-14. “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.” “For solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” So the problem with these Hebrew Christians was that they weren’t acting upon the teaching that they had received by exercising their senses to discern what was good and evil. They just didn’t see it as important.

That was a real problem. Sound doctrine is not simply knowing elementary principles of Christ; the doctrines of our total depravity and total inability to save ourselves. The doctrines of laying a foundation of repentance from good works, of faith toward God, of the laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead. (Hebrews 6: 1 and 2) It is going on from there to learn the meat of the word; the doctrines of grace, and how God saves people from their sins from beginning to end. How He washes us and cleanses us by the water of the word and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. How He is working in our hearts to bring us to a better understanding of His ways, so that we will be more consistent in godliness and righteousness, holiness, and truth. It is learning how to exercise kindness and love toward all the brethren.

Look at Titus chapter 2, verses 1-8 and you will see just how practical sound doctrine can be. “But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things – that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.” “Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.” You see, when you are living like that, you are making progress towards maturity.

When a young Christian is tossed about, tossed to and fro, with every wind of doctrine, it breeds uncertainty in the heart about how you should live. Paul says that this happens to Christians sometimes because of the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful scheming. Usually it is when people add something to the gospel of the free grace of God in the gospel, that this takes place. Titus 1: 10-14 – “For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole household, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.” “One of them, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’” “This testimony is true.” “Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.”

You see, a Christian is really growing up into Christ when they do not give heed to such false teaching. Sometimes it is licentious teaching, teaching that it is permissible to be lazy and sensual. Other times it is legalistic teaching which adds the commandments of men to the commandments of God and thus people are bound up in their spirit and not set free to really serve the Lord in righteousness. No, we all need to learn to grow up into Christ.

2nd – The saints are to be equipped by pastor-teachers so that they can learn to speak the truth in love.

Verse 15 – But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ.” The context implies both individual Christians will grow up into Christ and also the whole local church will grow too, as the whole local church is united in this exercise of speaking the truth in love. It is evident here, that if the truth of the Bible is unitedly spoken in love, by those who love Christ, that they will, most certainly, spiritually, be growing up into Christ who is their spiritual head. Two simple but profound truths are set forth here. The first is – It is our speaking of the truth of the Bible which will help us to avoid error, both individually and corporately. And speaking the truth it is also the way to preserve others around us from error.

This is just the opposite of what has just been mentioned in verse 14 about the trickery of men in their cunning craftiness. The faithful Christian must be straightforward in every way about the truth. The truth that individual Christians speak and the truth that they speak together as a church should revolve around their relationship with Christ, who is the Truth personified. Look over at 2nd Corinthians 4: 1 and 2 – “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy we do not lose heart.” “But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” So, these verses are a perfect description, not only of what the pastor of the church should be, but also what those to whom he preaches, should be doing as well. Because they believed that Jesus died and rose again on their behalf, they believe and can speak about their faith in Him in the midst of all trials and difficulties, as being that which sustains them.

Look at verse 13 of this same chapter. “And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I believed and therefore I spoke,’ we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus, will present us with you.” “For all things are for your sakes, that grace, having spread through the many, may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.” The quote is taken from Psalm 116, verses 5-10 – “Gracious is the Lord and righteous; yes, our God is merciful.” “the Lord preserves the simple; I was brought low and He saved me.” “Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.” “For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.” “I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.” “I believed therefore I spoke, ‘I am greatly afflicted.’” “I said in my haste, ‘All men are liars.’”

Yes, this may be true, but David could trust in the Lord in this spirit of faith, and he would speak the truth in love. And therefore, the apostle Paul could do the same. And the church in Corinth could do the same. It is enough to be able to speak the simple and plain truth of what Christ has done for us by His power, through His gospel, and by His word. It is by this means that both ourselves and the whole church grows up in all things into Christ; learning from His word, sustained by His presence, helped by His power to do all things to the glory of God and in the process speak of His glory in what He helps us to do, to follow Him. And He will lead us to eternal glory. Yes, we will suffer with Him, and we may also die for Him. But we preach the truth of our belief in the future resurrection of the dead, and the eternal weight of glory that we will find there, being in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is because we know Him and have His promises, that we can also speak the truth in love to people around us. We speak of His love of perfect righteousness in everything that He did and said. We speak of His love for us in His dying for our sins. We speak of the love of the Father in His raising Him from the dead because the work of our redemption was complete. We speak of His love which goes beyond knowledge, as we know Him better. We speak of the love of God which the Holy Spirit pours out His love into our hearts so that we can learn to minister to each other and to sinners around us. We speak of our love of His word and our love of His people, and by doing this over the course of our life, we grow up into Christ Himself and become satisfied with His work in our heart and life, making us over into His image and likeness.

Speaking the truth is of the utmost importance in living the Christian life. And yet, it is essential that it be done in love. We should grow up into Christ in all things; being deeply rooted in Him, which means that we will be growing in our knowledge, our love, our faith, and in all the graces of Christ which are worked into our heart by the Holy Spirit. Growing up into Him means that we will consciously seek to leave behind the sinful things of our past, the wrong ways of thinking and sinful ways of doing things that we once engaged in, to learn the new and better way which Christ Himself teaches us, when we come to Him and learn from Him. Matthew 11: 29 – “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”