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Christ's Desire For His Church

EPHESIANS 4:11-16

Introduction

1. What is the church?
2. I can tell you that it is not this building.
3. The word "church" comes from the Greek term *ekklesia* which is a compound of two words *ek* and *kalew*.
4. It literally means "to call out of."
5. In the language of Paul's day, it could refer to any assembled group of people who had been called or summoned together for a purpose.
6. You and I have been called out of the world by our Lord, Jesus Christ, to be His chosen people.
7. Eventually, He will return from Heaven to take us home to be with Him eternally.
8. Until that time, He has a desire for us. What is it?
9. In the verses read for us a moment ago, Paul tells us what that desire is and how He intends for us to accomplish it.
10. Let's look at He has in store for us.

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I. Christ's Gift To His Church

A. WHAT IS HIS GIFT?

"And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers," (Ephesians 4:11, ESV)

1. There are different places in the New Testament where we read of spiritual gifts (i.e., 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Peter 4:11).
2. Here, however, Christ's gift is individuals who fulfill specific roles within the body.
 - a. Apostles and prophets
 - 1) Eleven of the original twelve apostles, (Peter, Andrew, James, John, Phillip, Thomas, Matthew, Bartholomew, James, Simon, Thaddaeus), plus Matthias (Acts 1:26) who took Judas' place.
 - 2) The "prophets" where those who preached in association with the apostles (cf. Acts 11:27ff.; 13:1ff.; 21:4, 9; 1 Corinthians 14:1)
 - b. Evangelists (i.e., Philip (Acts 21:8); Timothy (2 Timothy 4:5); Titus)
 - 1) The *obstetricians* of the Church.
 - 2) Those who bring about new births through the preaching of the good news.
 - c. Shepherds and teachers
 - 1) *Pediatricians* of the church.
 - 2) Those who nurture and care for the saints (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2)

". . . shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20:28)

"shepherd the flock of God among you . . ." (1 Peter 5:2)
 - 3) They also protect the flock.
 - 4) The feeding of the sheep is their top priority (cf. John 21:15-17).

2a**B. THE PURPOSE OF HIS GIFT**

" . . . for the equipping of the saints for the work of service (lit. ministry), to the building up of the body of Christ" (v. 13).

1. There is a responsibility which Christ has given to Billy, George, Larry, David, Ronnie and Keith as your shepherds, and to Kyle and myself as your evangelists.
2. It is to equip each of you for the work of ministry.
3. The bottom line according to Paul is that every single Christian is to be involved in some kind of ministry.
4. We all have a part to play in our Lord's body.

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II. Christ's Goal For His Church

A. THAT WE MIGHT NO LONGER BE CHILDREN IN THE FAITH

"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).

1. In 1 Corinthians 13:1, Paul said, "When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things."
2. What were you like when you were a child? What were your children like?
3. Children can be easily swayed — they want one thing today and something else tomorrow.
4. This is not our Lord's goal for His church.
5. Many of you have spent time out on the lake or one of our rivers here in the county.
 - a. Have you, at any time, seen a small boat floating by itself on the water?
 - b. The waves were rocking it back and forth, the wind kept moving it one way or the other.
6. This is another picture of what Christ does not want for each of us who are members of His body, the church.

- a. Believers who are easily persuaded or confused.
- b. Christians who jump from one opinion or belief to another.

Slide 4**B. THAT WE MIGHT BECOME A MATURE BODY OF BELIEVERS**

“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)

1. This maturity which our Lord desires in all of us has certain qualities to it.
2. Paul describes it in three ways . . .

- a. “To the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God”

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:4–6)

- b. “To a mature man”

“Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature” (1 Corinthians 14:20).

- 1) Like Enoch and Noah who “walked with God” (Genesis 5:22; 6:9).
- 2) Like Abraham who was “the friend of God” (James 2:23).
- 3) Like David who was a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14).
- 4) Like Paul who imitated Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

- c. “To the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ”

- 1) Ultimately, we compare our maturity to “the fullness of Christ.”
- 2) Christ’s goal is that this entire congregation will reflect in this community all the attributes and qualities of Christ.

3. For this to happen, all of us must work together so that there is spiritual

growth.

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III. How Does This Growth Take Place

A. WE SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

“but speaking the truth in love . . .” (v. 15a)

1. In Paul’s day, there were those who sought to gain a following through “trickery” and “deceit” (v. 14).
2. There are still those who do the same today.
3. But, Paul said that it is the speaking the truth in love which is a mark of maturity.
4. The truth we speak is God’s word (Psalm 119:160; John 17:17).

“The sum of Your word is truth . . .” (Psalm 119:160a)

“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.” (John 17:17)

6. It enables us to grow spiritually.
5. Immature Christians will typically do one of two things:
 - a. They speak the truth, but without love.
 - b. They love without speaking the truth.
6. Those who speak the truth without love, hammer away at others with the truth, but do it in an unloving way.
7. Those who love without telling others the truth, think they are preventing them from being hurt.
8. In reality, they are only slowing the growth of those from whom they withhold the truth.
9. Sharing the truth with our brothers and sisters in Christ is a mark of maturity, but we must do it with love, with understanding and compassion.

5a**B. WE GROW IN CHRIST**

“we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ . . .”
(v. 15b).

1. Mature believers search for the truth.
2. When we as a united body of loving and caring believers search for the truth and speak that truth into each others lives, we grow.
3. There is a “renewing” of our minds which brings about a transformation of our lives (Romans 12:2).
4. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:18, we behold “the glory of the Lord” and are “being transformed into the same image . . .”
5. In every way, we are becoming more like Christ.

Slide 6**C. EACH OF US DOES OUR INDIVIDUAL PART**

“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” (v. 16)

1. This church body is like our physical body.
2. Our physical body has a skeletal framework which is held together by ligaments and cartilage.
3. Muscles are then connected to these bones by tendons.
4. Each individual part of our body must work properly if we are to function at an optimum level.
5. If an artery is blocked, vital oxygen and nutrients cannot get to the part of the body which is downstream.
6. Those of us who have worked on an assembly line know what happens when one part of the line goes down. It affects the whole operation.
7. If we, as the body of Christ, are to grow, each of us must do our vital part.

8. Only then can this body of believers be built up in love.

Conclusion

1. You and I are a part of Christ's body, His church.
2. His desire is that we grow and mature and become more like Him.
3. He has put everything in place, but each one must do his or her part.
4. You men who are our elders, our shepherds, Christ has given you a responsibility — it is to feed His church.
5. Kyle and I as evangelists are to keep sharing the good news.
6. Along with the elders, we are to equip or train each of you for the work of the ministry.
7. All of us as Christians are to speak the truth in love and grow toward maturity as followers of Christ.
8. As we do this, our church family will build itself up in love.
9. Why is all this important?
10. Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us, and He is coming back to take us home with him.
11. But, He wants to present us to Himself as “a glorious church” without any “spot or wrinkle” but one that is “holy and without blemish” (*Ephesians 5:27, NKJV*).
12. Are you a part of Christ's church?
 - a. If so, then strive to do your part and grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
 - b. May God bless the day when you finally get to go home.
13. If not, why not choose today to confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Let Him wash away your sins in baptism.
14. Then you can start growing in Him. The transformation will be amazing!