

JOURNEY TOWARD MATURITY

EPHESIANS 4:11-32

Text: Ephesians 4

Introduction:

We have consider a number of journey's in this series of messages "The Journeys of Faith"

Tonight I continue, not so much as a journey of faith, but rather the end result of the journeys of faith; "The Journey Toward Maturity."

Note again Ephesians 4:11-13

Ephesians 4:11-13

¹¹ And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; ¹² For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: ¹³ Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

According to verses 11-13, God gave the church her spiritual leaders for the sole purpose of promoting spiritual growth within the body of Christ.

Just as every parent in the world is delighted when they see their children growing and maturing, God is blessed when He sees His children making the

transition from babyhood into adulthood in a spiritual sense. God wants us to move from the spiritual nursery to the spiritual battlefield. He wants us to leave the realm of milk, bibs and diapers and He wants us to enter the realm of meat, battles and devotion.

God's plan for every one of His children is to see them all reach spiritual maturity!

Notice with me as we consider this “Journey Towards Maturity,” or the “Marks of a Maturing Church.”

1. THEY ARE MARKED BY A CALM STEADFASTNESS (VS. 14-16)

Ephesians 4:14-16

¹⁴That 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; ¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: ¹⁶From 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.

These verses point out three areas where the growing believer is found to be steadfast and stable.

A. They Are Steadfast in their Doctrine (vs. 14)

Ephesians 4:14

¹⁴That 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;

They are not constantly being taken in by the false teachings in the world around them.

The maturing believer is one who knows what they believe and why they believe.

They are spending time in the Word of God and are not deceived by the lies, tricks and traps of the enemy!

2 Timothy 2:15

¹⁵Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

B. They Are Steadfast in their Development (vs. 15)

Ephesians 4:15

¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

The growing believer has a deep attraction to the truth of God. They are constantly adapting their lives to the teachings of the Bible. They take the time to find out what God wants from their lives and they change whatever it takes to line up with His will.

1 John 2:3-4

³ And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 John 5:3

³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

C. They Are Steadfast in their Devotion (vs. 16)

Ephesians 4:16

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.

Just as our human bodies are knitted together in a wonderful way, so the body of Christ has been carefully "compacted" together

Each member in the place that pleased the Lord

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

¹² For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and

have been all made to drink into one Spirit. ¹⁴ For the body is not one member, but many. ¹⁵ If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁶ And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body *were* an eye, where *were* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *were* the smelling? ¹⁸ But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. ¹⁹ And if they were all one member, where *were* the body? ²⁰ But now *are they* many members, yet but one body. ²¹ And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. ²² Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: ²³ And those *members* of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely *parts* have more abundant comeliness. ²⁴ For our comely *parts* have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked: ²⁵ That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one for another. ²⁶ And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. ²⁷ Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

The growing believer wants to find his place in the body and fulfill that place to the best of his ability. It is a sign of spiritual maturity when a believer does his/her best to carry out the assignments they have been given by the Father above.

Note:

When a part of these physical bodies doesn't live up to its assignment, it causes problems for the whole body. When one part fails, the whole body suffers!

The same is true in the church.

When every person participates and does what they have been assigned to do, things function smoothly when they do not do what they are supposed to do, the whole church suffers as a result!

2. THEY ARE MARKED BY CLEAR SEPARATION (VS. 17-24)

Ephesians 4:17-24

¹⁷This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, ¹⁸ Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: ¹⁹ Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. ²⁰ But ye have not so learned Christ; ²¹ If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²² That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; ²³ And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; ²⁴ And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

A maturing believer is easily identified because he/she is so different from the world around them.

A. They Are Separated From the Works of Darkness (vs. 17-19)

Ephesians 4:17-19

¹⁷This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, ¹⁸ Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: ¹⁹ Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Paul makes a distinction between how the lost man lives and how the saved man lives.

When a person receives Jesus as their personal Savior and is born again, they literally receive a brand new life.

They can no longer walk as they once walk.

They can no longer live as they once lived.

You see, the lost man lives like he does because he is blind to the causes and consequences of his actions. He doesn't know where he is headed and he doesn't see the need to be different than he is.

The maturing believer, on the other hand, is no longer in darkness.

B. They Are Separated From a Walk of Darkness (vs. 20-24)

Ephesians 4:20-24

²⁰ But ye have not so learned Christ; ²¹ If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²² That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; ²³ And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; ²⁴ And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

The believer has received a change of life that results in a change in his walk.

We are called upon to "put off", once for all, the ways of the old man who is just growing worse day by day.

We are called upon to "put on", once for all, the new man, who had been created in righteousness and holiness.

3. THEY ARE MARKED BY CHRIST-LIKE STANDARDS (VS. 25-32)

Ephesians 4:25-32

²⁵ Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: ²⁷ Neither give place to the devil. ²⁸ Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. ²⁹ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace

unto the hearers. ³⁰ And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: ³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

As we enter this section of the passage, Paul begins to talk about the maturing believer's day to day walk. He focuses primarily on how he acts, reacts and interacts with, around and to his fellow believer.

Notice:

The emphasis in life is removed from "self" and is focused on "others."

The Maturing Believer Are:

A. Christ-like In How They Act (vs. 28)

Ephesians 4:28

²⁸ Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

Instead of taking what belongs to another to satisfy personal lusts, the believer is challenged to go to work so he can make money to help others. The whole point here is that self ceases to be great motivator in life! Others grow in their importance to us. The maturing Christian is one who has begun to look beyond self.

Philippians 2:4

⁴ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

B. Are Christ-like in How They React (vs. 26-27; 31-32)

Ephesians 4:26-27

²⁶ Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: ²⁷ Neither give place to the devil.

Ephesians 4:31-32

³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: ³² And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

These four verses all talk about the same thing. They speak of learning to control your anger when you are offended and of learning to offer forgiveness when you have been hurt! The maturing believer does not allow the hurts they suffer at the hands of others to cause them spiritual problems! (vs. 27) tells us to be angry without sinning. How is this possible? It can only happen when you are angry only about the things that anger God!

Any other kind of anger opens a door in your life which the devil can attack you, v. 27.

Ephesians 4:27

²⁷ Neither give place to the devil.

And, if you give him an inch, he'll become your ruler!
Verses 31-32 tell us that we are to refrain from getting even and lashing out at others.

We are to forgive them to the same extent that we ourselves have been forgiven!

We are to do so even if they don't make it right with us.

C. Are Christ-like In How They Interact (vs. 25, 29-30)

Ephesians 4:25

²⁵ Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

Ephesians 4:29-30

²⁹ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. ³⁰ And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

These verses talk about how we relate one to another.
We are to always speak the truth, v. 25.

When we lie to a fellow believer, we are lying to the body of Christ and to ourselves!

We are to watch the evil words that try to pour from our mouths.

When we speak it should be to edify, or build up someone else!

Anything else grieves the Spirit of God and hinders the church!

Ecclesiastes 5:3

³For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice *is known* by multitude of words.

Close:

When you were growing up, did your parents ever say to you, "I wish you would grow up!"? You know what they meant, don't you? They wanted you to act more mature than you had been acting.

Everyone in this room who is saved ought to be moving steadily toward maturity in the Lord with each passing day.

Are you maturing?

Do you possess the marks of a maturing Christian?

