

"The Essential Nature of the Gathered Church" - p. II

TEXT: Eph. 4:12-14

Scripture reading: Romans 15:1-13

Introduction: Our walk in unity - vv. 1-6

I. The gracious giving of Christ - vv. 7-11

II. The full measure of Christ - vv. 12-14

(Eph. 2:19-20; I Cor. 12:28)

A) A progressive plan - vs. 12

B) A perfecting plan - vs. 13

1. Unity: bonded in peace

1a) Unity of the faith

1b) Unity of the knowledge...
(I Cor. 1:10; Phil. 2:1-4; Eph. 5:21)

2. Maturity: stature in Christ
(I Cor. 3:1-3; Col. 1:28-29)

John MacArthur, "...*disunity in the church comes from doctrinal ignorance and spiritual immaturity.*"

C) A protective plan - vs. 14

1. Windy doctrines:

2. Tricky deceivers:

Conclusion: Implications from our study of Ephesians 4:12-14;

1) Since Christ's Word is key to our growth, then so also are hearts that will submit to it

2) Passion for unity and maturity will require passion for Christ

3) Since growth is progressive, then service must be enduring

"I believe that every Christian ought to be joined to some visible church; that is his plain duty, according to the Scriptures. God's people are not dogs, else they might go about one by one; but they are sheep, and therefore they should be in flocks." Charles Spurgeon

ADDITIONAL QUOTES TO CONSIDER:

Pastor John MacArthur,

"Spiritual service is the work of every Christian, every saint of God. Attendance is a poor substitute for participation in ministry."

James Montgomery Boice,

"What is the purpose of Christ's gifts? It is to serve Christ's people, so that the body itself might become increasingly unified in faith and mature in practice. This can be stated emphatically. If a Christian is using a gift to bring attention to himself rather than to Christ, he is misappropriating it and will answer to his Master in the judgment.

If a Christian is more interested in having others serve him than in his or her serving them, he is dishonoring his Master, who came "*not ...to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many*" (Mark 10:45).

If a Christian is using his gift to build his kingdom rather than Christ's and thus divides the church instead of uniting it, he is betraying Christ, who is committed to the unification and maturation of His body.

Let us be done with our little kingdoms as well as with the spirit of complacency that does not care if the church is divided or immature. On the contrary, let us seek out our gifts and ask how we may use them to the building up of Christ's body. Christ does not squander His gifts; each one is essential. He does not withhold His gifts; they are poured out in full measure. He is not indifferent as to how His gifts are used; He has His own wise and lofty purposes in view. He does not give His gifts at cross-purposes; all are to serve and edify the church. He does not abandon those to whom the gifts are given; rather He continues to work through them and in them for the church's well-being. Where the gifts are received in this spirit and are so used, there the unity of the Spirit is maintained, and the body of Christ is built up '*until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature*'."

Martyn Lloyd-Jones,

"Is it not increasingly obvious that it is our failure to study the Scriptures that leads to the troubles and the confusion, the divisions and the schisms, the heart-rendings, the heart-breakings, the jealousy, envy, rivalry, and all the muddle and confusion in the churches, and that causes Revival to tarry? How can the Lord honour a Church, such a collection of people? We must return to the biblical teaching concerning the Church. This is not something theoretical for church elders and leaders only, not only something to be discussed in Church councils. This Epistle was written to every member of the church at Ephesus. We must all have clear ideas about these things so that when we read about them we may have opinions and express them. It is our duty to see that the Church functions as her Lord intended her to do. Let us therefore, all of us, humble ourselves before Him, let us confess our pride or our jealousy, our envy or failure, our self-seeking, our self-importance, our feelings that we are neglected. Let us return to Him, I say, and humble ourselves before Him; let us ask Him to make plain and clear to us what He has called us to do, what He desires us to do: and then let us rise up and do it with all our might, relying upon the might and the authority and the power of the Holy Ghost Himself."