

Sermon Title: Let Us Grow Up
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:15-16 (Ephesians #26)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-9-22

Come with me to Ephesians Chapter 4; and this will be our fourth and final visit to this sentence which runs from Verse 11 through Verse 16. I've been talking about some of these *spectacular* sentences that the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul to write, and how precise and detailed they are. This one is 121 words long in Greek—probably about 140 words in English, because Greek is more precise than English. The very best of our English translations almost all make it into at least two sentences. The two exceptions I've found to that are the King James Version and the new Legacy Standard Bible. But whether you punctuate it into as sentence or two sentences, it is spectacular.

Let's take one more look at this whole sentence before we look in detail at a couple parts of it. Ephesians 4, starting at Verse 11—"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 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. 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; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 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" (NASB-1995, and throughout, unless otherwise noted).

In our daily e-mails, we are in John Chapter 13; and somewhere in the last few days, we were at John 13:35—"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." This is God's plan for how to *put on display to the world* how He can transform lives; and we can *show* that we belong to Him by how we belong to each other.

Now, we have been at this in three visits to this one sentence before today. Here are some bullet point reminders of what we have learned so far: "Pastors and teachers" are placed in the Body of Christ to equip Christians; they are responsible to equip Christians to do "the work of service" in "the body of Christ" (vs. 12; cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-13, 27; Col. 1:18, 24). Every Christian, therefore, is to be "equipped"—and is *responsible* to be equipped (Rom. 12:2; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18), and to "serve" (Gal. 5:13).

This process never ends in this live, because it is to go on "until we *all* attain" (vs. 13)—and if we all reach maturity, we're going to have a whole bunch of mature Christians; and mature Christians are good Gospel-spreaders, so there will be new believers who will need to be matured. This is God's plan, until He is finished building His Church (Matt. 16:18).

We must let *no one* remain immature. It is *not okay* for somebody to saved "by the skin of [their] teeth" (Job 19:20), and just barely hanging on to get into the Kingdom of Heaven. No, if you belong to Christ, it's *transformation* (cf. Ezek. 36:27; Phil. 2:13). You're a "new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17), and *growth* is part of that spiritual life.

And how do we accomplish this? Well, we stopped here last time: "speaking the truth in love" (vs. 15).

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There is one more command in our text. It doesn't really *sound* strongly like a command because it's the *friendliest* form of command. In the Greek of the New Testament, there are several different ways that you can give a command. One of them is like: "*Stop! You're on the wrong side of the road!*"—super-duper, life and death, immediate emergency, don't do anything else! Then, there is the general command: "Don't ever drive on the wrong side of the road." And then, there's the command that makes it as a general principle: "Thou shalt not drive on the wrong side of the road."

And then, there is this "friendliest" version; this is the one where you say, "Hey, come on. Let's do this." You have your arms around somebody's shoulders, and you say, "This is the way. Come on. I'll show you how we do this. Let us proceed together with this." This is the best way to translate it. If we have any grammarians in the crowd, it's called a "hortatory subjunctive"—and that's not unacceptable for saying in public, even if you don't know what "hortatory" means. It means it's an exhortation.

"We are to grow up in all aspects" (vs. 15)—that's the command. There are three essential elements of *how* we grow that are described in Verses 15 and 16. They explain what it takes to "grow up in all aspects" as a member of the Body of Christ. So, here is how we will outline this last little portion of this sentence: You Must Be Led By The Head; You Must Be Connected To Others; and, You Must Be Actively Serving.

As we focus on those three thoughts, don't lose sight of what we have already gleaned. This is God's overall plan for building His Church. There is no reason to wonder why you're not growing and more excited about your faith than you used to be, or why you lack maturity, or why it seems that God isn't using you, if you're not *sold out* to doing all you can to *be equipped* to do the work of service! This is the plan; it's all in that same overall plan. This is why we gather together as a church. This is why our relationships with other believers, in the context of the local church, *have to be* the highest priority relationships after our own families. We *belong* to each other (Rom. 12:5).

I was hearing somebody discuss this week, some people that are writing things, talking about how the "old model of church" has to be replaced with a "new model." "The 'old model' of gathering together—well, you can't *do* that now, in this world; now, we have to figure out how to connect people who *don't* get together and rub shoulders and work side-by-side." In other words—"We are going to try to build a 'church' that isn't Christian!" That *isn't* what Jesus wants! It's not an "old model," it's the *only model!* It's God's plan!

Recall from where we left off last time that, in contrast to the *inconsistency* of immaturity—where people can be "blown around" by "winds of doctrine," some new novel idea that comes along—the opposite of that is: "No, we're not going to be 'blown around,' we are going to be constantly 'speaking the truth in love' to each other."

And remember, I said it's a really interesting thing, where they took the word "truth"—which is an abstract noun—and turned it into a verb. It would literally be: "truthing each other in love." When we are together, we are *anchored* in the truth—and we *speak* truth, and we *practice* truth (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Jn. 3:18).

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These final two verses of this spectacular sentence need our attention. In the past several weeks, I have said that, in order for this church—this little part of the Body of Christ that we love so much, Heritage Bible Church—if we are going to continue to forge ahead toward maturity, and toward fulfilling Christ's plan for building His Church, it requires *full buy-in* from each one of us to do what He calls us to do. We are *all* part of this! This isn't what *somebody else* ought to do, this is what we *all need to do*.

A sentence popped into my head, sometime in the pre-dawn hours this morning as I was making my final pre-church pass through what I had written for this; and it just occurred to me: Every church is smaller than it looks. What do we mean by that? What we mean is: Christ is building His Church, and He is building it with the parts that are described in this passage. *Wherever* Christ is building His Church, our enemy—Satan—is *counter-sowing, counterfeiting*. In the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, the "wheat" represent true believers in Christ, growing up and bearing fruit (Matt. 13:26); "tares" are weeds that look just like wheat, until the harvest. Satan is a counterfeiter (2 Cor. 11:13-14), and *every place* where there is *genuine faith*, there is counterfeit faith (e.g., Jude 4, 12).

So, when I say every church is smaller than it is, the *real Church*—the Body of Christ—is *smaller* than what it looks like (cf. Phil. 3:18). Some of the Reformers called it the "Visible Church" and the "Invisible Church." Well, the "Invisible Church" is the work of Christ; the "Visible Church" is what we see on the outside—and, yeah, *it has its issues*, because there is "an enemy" at work here (Matt. 13:28).

Now, when I look around, and I see your faces—and I *know* it's the promise of God, that there are counterfeits wherever the true is—I look around and I say, "Oh, surely not *here!*" But just maybe, God might use this portion of His Word to help someone's eyes be opened today (see 2 Cor. 13:5; 2 Pet. 1:10a); and by His Spirit, perhaps you would begin to see: "Wait a minute! I haven't *really understood* what this is about! And I *don't want to be* an anchor dragging along, and I don't want to be a spectator watching what everybody else is doing. I want to be part of what *God* is doing." And if that is the case, oh, make it so, we pray, Lord!

You Must Be Led By The Head—let's dive in, in the middle of Verse 15—"But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ." When there is this kind of real-life, godly interaction—"truthing each other in love"—growth toward the perfection that is Jesus Christ takes place.

He wants us to "grow up." Physically speaking, that describes the growth of a person; you start out as a small, helpless infant, and you grow and you get strong and you learn and you develop. That is used as a metaphor for the Body of Christ growing more and more into the "image" of Christ (Rom. 8:29; cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10).

Now, when I say that for us—collectively, as a church family—to be what God wants us to be, this requires *total buy-in* from *all of us*. What do I mean by that? How far should we take this? I mean, just *how much* of your time and energy and resources should you commit to being more like Christ?

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Well, there's an easy answer; it's right there in the sentence: "we are to grow up in *all aspects* into Him who is the head, even Christ." "All aspects" is literally "all things." *Every single thing you do* is part of God's personalized, loving curriculum to help *you* become more like Christ (cf. Lk. 6:40); so that then, as we come together and we are "truthing one another in love," we are *collectively* maturing to be more like Christ—so people can see how we interact with each other, and say, "Oh, wow! *That's* a kind of life I don't know! I need to get in on that!"

"In *all things*"—when God adopted you into His family, He called you to live in light of belonging to Him *in everything* (cf. Mk. 12:30). *Every facet* of our individual lives, as well as our relationships with one another, need to be patterned after Christ (Phil. 2:15).

Now, pay attention to how masterfully Paul—inspired by the Spirit, of course (2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Pet. 1:21)—weaves together this continuing metaphor of a physical body as a way to picture our lives together in Christ: "We are to grow up in all aspects *into Him who is the head, even Christ.*"

"Christ...is the head of the church," which is His "body" (Eph. 5:23; cf. Col. 1:18, 24). That was part of the introduction to this; it's at the end of Chapter 1, Verses 22 and 23. Quite a picturesque thought. Think about it: What happens to a body that isn't in conformity with its head? If the body isn't listening to the head—well, that's total paralysis, and that leads to atrophy...not much gets done. If the body *twists* the desires of the head and there is confusion, then there is a lack of coordination; there are awkward movements, spastic actions, and the body can actually hurt itself. If the body just *refuses* to move and exercise, there is undevelopment and weakness.

Our goal is to be a full grown, well developed body which acts in accordance with the desires of our head—and our head is Jesus Christ. And when that happens, the body becomes an expression and a visible illustration of the desires of the head. They will "know" we are Christians by our "love for one another."

That's why it is *so valuable* to repeatedly read and study the Gospels. I don't think you can get too much of thinking about Jesus, knowing about Jesus, reading about Jesus, pondering how to be like Jesus (Heb. 12:2a).

And again, connect it to this context, where you learn that God desires for "pastors and teachers"—which He has strategically placed in the Body—to "equip the saints" (cf. Acts 20:32). The "equipping of the saints" comes as the result of bringing them under the authority and the knowledge of the Bible (Jer. 23:22; Jn. 17:17; Jas. 1:21).

You have seen it so many times; look at it again: Second Timothy 3:16-17—"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; *so that* the man of God may be adequate, equipped for *every good work.*" "Every good work" God wants you to do, He will equip you for by His Word (2 Pet. 1:3), and He will enable you to do it by the power of His Spirit (Phil. 4:13).

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So, do you know what the Head of the Church wants? Do you know how He wants us to be organized? What He wants us to do as we gather? How He wants us to spread the Gospel? How He wants us to treat each other, and to care for each other? You Must Be Led By The Head.

Now, secondly: You Must Be Connected To Others. The beginning of Verse 15—"from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies..." We'll stop there for a moment.

There are a couple of interesting words here: "fitted together" and "held together." "Being fitted together" translates a cute little 17-letter Greek word that I would never humiliate myself by trying to pronounce from memory in public; but the form of it means: This is something that God is *continually* doing *for you*, and *in you*, and *through you* every day—fitting you better and better to be part of this functioning body. It's an ongoing process in which He is managing the growth and the maturity of the body. He is the One—Jesus, who is the Head—who said, "I will build My church" (Matt. 16:18).

The other word—"held together"—translates another cute little Greek word; this one is only 14 letters long. This one also describes a continuous process that means: "to cause things to coalesce." You know what "coalescing" means—coming "together" (Phil. 1:27); to be "knitted" together (Col. 2:2), "united" together (Phil. 2:2). It describes growing, maturing, and being more and more unified.

Now, here comes one of the most crucial, essential concepts of spiritual growth in all of the Bible: In this metaphor of "the body," *every person* who believes in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior *is* part of this "body." This is *foundational*. Romans 12:4-5—"For just as we have many members in one body"—speaking of our physical bodies—"and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13, 27). Your body works together as a unit: You have eyes, you have ears, you have hands, you have feet, you have internal organs—but they all work together (1 Cor. 12:14-20), under the authority of the head. And when you become a Christian, you become part of something *way bigger* than yourself! (1 Cor. 12:25-26)

Now, in our Western mindset, we are *really big* on emphasizing the need for *personal* faith in Christ. You do not get into Heaven on anybody else's coattails (e.g., Matt. 3:9; Jn. 8:39). You do not get into Heaven by your parents taking you through a ritual. You get into Heaven on the merits of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9), and you receive His "forgiveness" (Acts 10:43) and "eternal life" as a "free gift" that you could never earn (Rom. 6:23; cf. Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16; 3:21). And when you do that—which *has* to be individual—you become part of the collective (Jn. 10:16).

Now, the Roman Catholic view, the Eastern Orthodox view, turns that around. They say, "No, your parents *bring you*, and do that rigmarole over you, and you become part of the collective—and then, maybe someday later, you grow into personal faith or maturity." No, it's the other way around—*but those two things are inseparable*.

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And we have this idea that, "Well, as long as *I* believe, and *I'm* saved, and *I'm* not going to hell, *then I'm just fine!*" That's not the end of the story. You then become part of a collective entity; and you no longer belong to yourself—you belong to your Master in Heaven (1 Cor. 6:19), and you belong to *all* of your brothers and sisters in your family (Rom. 12:5b; 1 Cor. 1:2). And, by the way: We are going to see that repeated again later in Chapter 4, in the context of how we care for each other.

So that's why I have said *countless* times: You *cannot* practice Christianity in isolation from the Church, which is the Body of Christ. You don't get *saved* by joining the church (Eph. 2:8); but once you put your faith in Christ, you *are* adopted into the family of God (Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5), *supernaturally* placed into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), given the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:12)—and now, you are part of something bigger than yourself.

So, look again: "from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together *by what every joint supplies...*" Now, *there* is a key phrase, a *vital* statement. Think about your body: There are all those interesting, unique parts; they *all* have to be connected, by way of the nervous system, to the head. You Must Be Led By The Head. *But*, they *also* have to be *connected to each other*. The joints in your body are the connections. If you see a hand that isn't attached to a body, you are grossed out, appalled, and saddened—and that is *exactly* how you should feel if you ever see a person who says, "I'm a Christian, but I don't to the church." You should be *appalled!* That's a *contradiction* in terms.

We *need* the connections, and the joints are the connections. To claim to be a Christian while avoiding connections with other Christians is oxymoronic—*spiritually* moronic, for that matter! It's a contradiction in terms. You would never say, "I'm a member of the marching band, but I only play by myself." You'll probably get arrested for walking around, tooting your horn down the street all by yourself. You would never say, "I'm a member of the football team, but I only work out by myself, and I don't do that 'football game' thing." How *silly* is that? (cf. Prov. 18:1)

This has always been a problem with Christians—*especially* in our country, because of that emphasis on individual faith; and there are a lot of factors that bring that to bear upon us. But that idea of individual autonomy does not merge with God's plan for building His Church. It's never a good thing. And it is *inexcusable* for anyone who understands Ephesians 4, and many other texts as well.

There are *dozens* of commands in the New Testament that tell us how to treat one another. And there's this really cool Greek word that can be translated only one way: "one another." It's a reflexive plural pronoun. We're told how to treat each other, and how to interact with each other. *Not one of those commands* to "one another" can be obeyed if you're not in contact with "one another"! We *belong* to each other.

Now, these are *unprecedented* times in our society. And that's a *perfectly* safe thing for any pompous preacher to say anytime. It's *always* "unprecedented"—we've never been in 2022 before! Okay, but, there are some special things that have been going on in the last couple of years, that have affected "one-anothering."

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There *are* some people with physical conditions that make it *very dangerous* for them to interact with other people, in light of this silly little virus—and it's not *silly* if you die of it; they would suffer horribly and perhaps die if they catch this, and they need to be very careful, and probably isolated. Now, the numbers that fit that are very small. They would be people with extreme or terminal chronic respiratory diseases, and those with severely compromised immune systems. *Life is tough* for those folks right now!

No one that I've ever met *wants* to get Covid-19. I've been there, done that—one year ago this week, Marsha and I got it. We didn't get one of the *serious* cases, but *it was no fun!* And in our case, we had lingering fatigue for *weeks* afterward, even though we hadn't been in the hospital, we hadn't had those terrible things. I remember about Day 7, I was making the half-day between bedroom and living room; and I said to Marsha, "Take a good look at this. If I live to be 107, this is who I'm going to walk!" I have *never* felt like that before!

And then we think about, well—How do you *obey Ephesians 4* in a context where something like that is around, and you're being told that there are going to be *countless thousands* or *millions* of people who die? Now, that was *dead wrong*. Some people died—and that's *never* fun, that's *never* good—but it wasn't what we thought it was. But we had to try to walk through that maze of confusing, contradictory, and often very counterproductive machinations that the authorities were putting on us for dealing with this virus; and we took the steps which the Elders of Heritage Bible Church thought most prudent in order to try to minister to as many people as possible, as we could in a safe manner.

I was usually the lightning rod, because I would publicize things; and I got some of the most interesting responses. One guy said, "What are you doing, kowtowing to those people?!?" I have never heard from him again. He *says* he's a member of the Body of Christ. And we had people who said, "I'm sorry. I can't come to your church—you're so reckless, you're allowing more than ten people in the building! You're allowing more than 50 people in the building!" And I had people who said, "*What do you mean*, requiring masks?" We put a sign out front: "Masks Required For Attendance." Two people said, "I'm never coming back again! You didn't even say 'Please!'" So, we had a situation now where people are making some *radical* statements about things that have *nothing to do* with the Biblical truth that we are trying to obey here.

Among other things: In that time, we began providing livestreaming for our services. Trust me, it was a big step of faith to allow *my* face to be put out live on the internet, and recordings of it out there. You're welcome—I'm humbling myself to do that. But, we did that. Others had been doing it before us. We did that to allow those for whom it is extremely dangerous to go out and to risk being exposed to Covid, so that *at least* they could see and hear the preaching and the music of the church. Livestreaming is a useful tool—part of the "toolbox." For years, we have used radio, we have used tape recordings, we have used CDs; now, it's audio files. There are tools that are helpful for getting teaching out there.

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But, understand this: While it is a useful tool—and I'm sure it's here to stay; it allows those who are sick or incapacitated to at least keep up with what's happening—but understand, and you folks on livestream, understand: You're keeping up on what is happening where *you aren't*. *This* is the gathering of the Body of Christ.

And livestreaming is *not the same* as being in a worship service, attending a Bible study, sharing a meal with other Christians, or serving together on some kind of project. It's watching TV! Now, my remarks about my mug on television notwithstanding, *it's better content* than a lot of what you can watch on TV and internet—but *it's not* being in church.

And those people who are talking about the "old model" of church needing to be replaced—*they're wrong!* It's not the *old* model of church, it's *the church!* There is *only one model!* And we have to be *it*.

Now, you folks that are here—gold stars for you. Praise the Lord! Glad you're here. I love you all. If you are among those who, *for a time*, need to remain isolated—we are really happy to have the tool to be able to let you look in. But, if it's necessary for you to remain *physically* separate from the *body* of which you are part, that means that there is more work to do; you're going to have to work *all the harder* to make sure that you don't contribute to the Body of Christ being—and I'm going to invent a new sin—*disjointed*. We *need* to be joined *at the joints* with other Christians!

So I need to say that, if you're watching a livestream because you *can't* be here, we're really glad to be able to provide that to you. But, if you're watching a livestream broadcast of a church service—this, or if you ever watch any others—because you choose to find it more convenient or more comfortable than attending in person, *right now* is the moment for you to repent of the sin of disjointing, and to recommit to being present in person.

I made a few comments, sort of to that effect; and I've got some people so scared now that, if they can't get to church, they send me e-mails. If I've terrified you, I'm sorry about that. But, *that's so cool*, because it says: "My *commitment* is to be there, and I'm sorry that I can't be." That *has to be* the attitude, because *we belong to each other—just as profoundly* as we belong to Christ!

So, if you *must* be away from us *physically*—be it a day, a month, a year, until Covid is not a threat anymore, whatever that is—would you please prayerfully think about what *you* can do to make up for your absence? How many people might you talk to in a normal Sunday morning at church? Ten? Twenty? Thirty? More? So, if you *must* be away, you should also make *that many* phone calls, or send that many e-mails or texts or notes or cards, to connect with and encourage other saints—because *you belong to them*, and we *all need each other!*

If you can't serve in person, please, prayerfully think about other ways to serve the Body of Christ; or else, we're *dragging an anchor* that we ought not to be dragging.

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And by the way: It is the responsibility, as well, of those of us who are *not* isolated, to help *keep* us all connected. If you come to church, and you do talk to those 10 or 15 people, but you say, "I didn't see Fred and Mary today." Well, for goodness sakes, *call Fred and Mary!*

We need each other! We need to be a portrait of how the Body of Christ portrays the love that He has given to us. "Normal" is: We all gather together. So, if we have to live with *abnormal*, let's try to figure as many workarounds as we possibly can.

We Must Be Led By The Head. Also, You Must Be Connected To Others. Finally: You Must Be Serving Actively.

Remember, the first part of this long sentence—that every saint has to be equipped "for the *work* of service." "Work"—yep, four-letter word. Action word. It means "useful activity, productivity." It involves labor. There is plenty of *hard work* involved in helping people mature toward Christ. It involves "discipline" (1 Tim. 4:7; cf. Col. 2:5) and "diligence" (Rom. 12:11; 2 Pet. 1:5) over a span of time to produce spiritual maturity. Vital, dynamic Christianity *never comes* without work! And saints are not served and built up without the expenditure of effort, and *every individual* needs to be working.

So, look in the middle of Verse 16—"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." How are you "working," in the service of the Lord and His people? What is your ministry? If you can't answer that pretty readily, it's probably time to spend some effort and start serving (Gal. 5:13). I could suggest some good places to begin. If we had more time, I might elaborate a little bit on James 1:26-27. If you want to have a ministry, well, do what that passage says: "Bridle" your "tongue"—good place to start; stop talking about things that are wrong, or things that *someone ought to do*, and start *doing* something about them! "That's a great place to serve." And then, get busy!

A pastor friend of mine, with his tongue sticking out through his cheek, used to say: "Any job worth doing in the church is worth doing poorly." Because if it's not being done, it *needs* to be done; and if you are the one who sees that it needs to be done, *dive in and do it!* You say, "Well, I'm not very good at that." Well, then, somebody is going to come along and say, "You're not very good at that. Let me help!" But *don't just say*, "Somebody ought to do it"! We *belong* to one another.

Go visit a sick person, and help out. You might have to stay six feet away—somebody made up six feet as the magic number. Go help out! Do an odd job for somebody somewhere who needs help. Find a widow—pretty easy pickings there, as far as somebody that needs help! Go *do* something. Meet somebody's financial need. Teach a class. Help a teacher teach a class. Help a teacher clean up the mess after teaching a class. Commit yourself to specific prayer for individuals, and that you'll follow up with them. Find somebody to encourage. Help set up for the next activity, or clean up after that activity, or prepare food for that activity. Or, write an encouraging note to someone.

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Call a Christian friend—*just to let them know you care!* In other words: Open your eyes to the needs that you see, and do your best to meet them; and act toward someone else like you would like them to act toward you. That sounds like a "Golden Rule" to follow!

Listen: If we view church as a place we go to seek a blessing for ourselves (e.g., Job 21:15; Mal. 3:14), we have *missed* the point of worship! You can go to a *movie* to get a blessing for *yourself*; but you don't become "one" with all of the people at that movie, and all of the characters in that movie. We go to church to give God glory and to serve His people. Oh, and by the way: If you do that, you will get blessed...And you'll *also* get disappointed. But, you'll be part of what God is doing.

Look again: "according to the proper working of each individual part..." That phrase is, literally: "as every part is energized in proper measure." Again, it's connected to the context. We are told back in Verse 7 that Christ gave spiritual gifts, and it is "according to the *measure* of Christ's gift." The same word, "measure" there, is part of this word: "proper working of each individual part." There are no exceptions—*every* part of the Body of Christ is *part* of the Body of Christ, *needs* to be part of the Body of Christ, *needs* to *actively* be part of the Body of Christ, *needs* to be *engaged* with the Body of Christ, *needs* to be in *conjunction*—joints—with as many parts as possible.

The rest of the verse doesn't need any explanation. That's what this is all about: "caus[ing] the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

Do you have a ministry? What do you *do* that helps make the Body of Christ function? Sunday morning is the tip of the iceberg—it's the most visible, it's the obvious thing—but if you don't *have* a ministry, now is the time to get started. Find someone with something that needs to be done, and...well, *do it*. Find a need that you perceive that isn't being addressed, and go for it. Volunteer for a job. Be *faithful* at it. Give it six months of doing it regularly, and then decide if that's something that you ought to plug into for the rest of your life. God may give you *innumerable* opportunities, *if* you prove yourself faithful; and with each opportunity comes greater joy.

I hit upon something when we were studying Hebrews that came to mind here. Again, we don't have time to fully expound upon it; but, in a *very similar* fashion to what the Apostle Paul wrote here in Ephesians, the writer of Hebrews served up to his readers what I call the "Three Let-Us Salad." It's three commands; they are also in that friendliest tone of voice—or, tone of pen—but they're still binding, and they're still from God.

They're over in Hebrews Chapter 10, Verses 22 through 25—"Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." In other words: Let's come to faith in Christ. Then: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful"—let's be maturing, so that we're not blown around by "every wind of doctrine"! And then: "Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

Sermon Title: Let Us Grow Up
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:15-16 (Ephesians #26)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-9-22

It is by that which "every joint supplies"—"the proper working of *each individual part*"! And, by the way, there is a really interesting construction there; it's hard to get into English without is sounding silly, so they translate it: "Let us consider how to stimulate one another..." Literally, that says: "Let us consider one another unto stimulation." That means: Let's look around at all of the parts that we are joined to, and consider: "Now, *how* can I help that one be more productive?" Consider one another *for the purpose* of provoking to love and good deeds.

So, yeah: We Must Be Led By The Head—"Draw near" to Him (Jas. 4:8); "hold fast to Him" (Deut. 11:22; cf. Deut. 13:4; Col. 2:19). We Must Be Connected To One Another—considering one another "by what every joint supplies." And then: You Must Be Actively Serving—"each individual part" *is* essential.

And after the writer of Hebrews poured his heart out about the superiority of Christ, and gave them the "Thee Let-Us Salad," and he brought it to a conclusion, here is what was on his heart to direct his prayer life, at the end of Hebrews: Chapter 13:20 and 21—"Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

Let Us Grow Up—and let us pray:

Heavenly Father, we are sobered as we ponder what You call us to be in Christ, and that You have made us Yours in Christ—through nothing good that we have done! "Let us draw near...in full assurance of faith," confident in the finished work of Your Son, and the sufficiency of Your Word. Let us "hold fast" to You, "without wavering." Let us "consider one another," with the purpose of "stimulating one another" to greater "love and good deeds." I pray for those who can't be with us, that You will give them creative and resourceful ways to reach out from their isolation, and that You will give us the opportunity to reach out to those who can't be with us for a season. Let us not forsake making as many connections as possible with one another. Father, by Your grace, we all need greater boldness. We know that. We all need, by Your grace, to face and defeat our excuses, sometimes our fear of committing to each other. Let us never "lose heart in doing good." Help us to remember that You always provide the strength for the tasks that You call us to undertake. Please show us whatever we need to see about our commitment to the Body of Christ. Convict us where we fall short and conviction is needed. Strengthen us when we grow weary. Teach us to "bear one another's burdens," as You would have it to be. Father, it's a simple prayer, but it's a lifetime work: Let us "grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head of the Church, even Christ," in whose name we pray. Amen.