

Mature?

Ephesians 4:1-16

Although God lives in us, we remain spiritually immature until we begin the work of creating unity in the church.

- God lives in us
- We are Spiritually Immature
- Creating Unity brings Maturity

1. God lives in Us

Christianity ... becoming a Christian doesn't just mean you are nice ..

... being a Christian means you are new.

And here, Paul is telling us what makes someone a Christian.

v. 15 says: ... *we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ*

... grow up into Christ, who is the head ...

What exactly does that mean?

The theme of this series is Who We Are ... and we are looking at 12 powerful identifying words that Paul gives us.

We are not who the world says we are, or who we say we are ... we are who God says we are.

Paul has spent three chapters telling us who God the Father says we are in Christ Jesus ...

... Now, Paul is now encouraging us to live in a way that reflects who God says we are.

Well, look at the first few words of verse 5

“—one Lord, one faith, one baptism”

The key word in this phrase is “ONE”

The word **Lord** points us to Jesus,

... the word **Faith** points us to God the Father (which we see in verse 6)

... and the word **Baptism** points us to the Holy Spirit (which we see in verse 3 “the unity of the Spirit.”

This idea of unity ... or ONENESS through redemption, is a theme that Paul is constantly mentioning throughout this letter.

- (Ephesians 2:11-22) **“one body:”** We have all been reconciled to God through faith in Christ and have become part of the *same* body of Christ—the church.
- (Ephesians 1:13-14, 19-20) **“one Spirit:”** We have all been marked by the *same* Spirit as belonging to God, and they experience his *same* power at work in their lives.
- (Ephesians 1:5), **“one hope:”** We have all become adopted children of God and therefore look forward to the *same* inheritance.
- (Ephesians 1:9-10), **“one Lord:”** We have all heard the good news and have bowed their knee to the *same* King Jesus.
- (Ephesians 1:13; 2:1-10) **“one faith:”** They have all been given new life from God “through” the *same* gift of believing in Christ. that joins us to him and all the benefits of the salvation.
- (Ephesians 1:7) **“one baptism:”** They have all made the *same* public declaration of their allegiance to Christ, symbolizing that they have died with Christ, risen to new life.

Last week we talked about being “filled with the fullness of God” ... that is what this is about.

To be filled with the fullness of God **means** ... in a nutshell ... that if you are saved, you have the life of the Trinity living within you.

You have in you the life of God ... the life of the Trinity!

Do you think that anything in the world can challenge that?

NO! ... God lives in you!

2. We are Spiritually Immature

The first two words of verse 13 are key to understanding what Paul is trying to tell us.

*“**until we** all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”*

UNTIL ... means we have not yet attained.

WE ... means that Paul is including himself in this statement.

In verse 11 we see that apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd teachers serve a purpose ...

... to equip the saints (that is all believers) for the work of the ministry (to each other)

... and that is supposed to keep happening until we ALL “attain to the unity of the faith...”

God has given these gifts to the church so that we can mature ... they are the resources God has provided to facilitate our growing.

In other words, the reason we need to be part of a community of faith (a church) is because otherwise we remain infants.

Now here is the contrast that Paul is presenting ...

Because we have the life of the Trinity in us, we are spiritual babies.

... Children are born, and they are first babies.

To be an infant is good **but to stay one** is bad.

Here in chapter 4 Paul gives us three characteristics of spiritual (and physical) babies.

- **Look at the exhortation in verse 2.**

... Paul wants them to be humble, gentle, patient ... and bearing one another's burdens with joy.

... Now Paul wouldn't write this if they already were ... he is writing this because they need to be.

What is this ...

Babies are not humble, gentle, patient, and helping others ...

... With a baby it is all about them.

... They are hungry, or need their diapers changed they cry ... and cry ... and cry harder if they don't get fed ...

... I've seen my children get red and angry in the face ...

... and not just when they were teenagers ... they did it as babies

... babies are self-centered

... part of parenting is teaching children to not be self-centered, so we tell them to share, we tell them not to fight ...

... we teach them they can't always have their way.

The same is true of spiritual babies: they often get their feelings hurt;

... they feel slighted even when they aren't.

... they are consumed with worrying about that people are looking at them ...

... or how they are treating them

... spiritual babies take criticism personally ... **babies are self-centered.**

- **Look at verse 14 the phrase “no longer children”**

Babies are children ... children are gullible ... they are undiscerning.

You know how you get a baby's attention? “Jingle keys ... flashing lights ... show them something sparkly ...

... and you'll get their attention for a minute or two.

There are a lot of ministries where this is the program for church growth ...

... flashing lights, show something sparkly ... do something spectacular

... get their attention for a few moments ...

In Luke 10 something very interesting happens.

... Jesus sends out the disciples and 70 others and sends them ahead of him into every city ... before he arrived—because the harvest was ready and plentiful.

... and when they came back, they were astounded “*Jesus, even the demons are subject to us in your name...*”

... Jesus kind of pushes back there in Luke 10:18

... he says, "I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning ... don't rejoice that you can command demons ... rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."

Jesus is saying, "grow up."

... don't become infatuated with the spectacular.

Adrian Rogers used to say, "*Miracles are good, but Jesus is better.*"

Babies like milk, babies like everything to revolved around them ...

Babies are self-centered ... babies are undiscerning ...

- **Then look at the phrase in verse 14 "tossed to and fro..."**

Babies are unstable ... they go back and forth.

- **UNTIL** ... means we have not yet attained.
- But then he uses the word **WE** ... means that Paul is including himself in this statement.

Paul is saying that he is immature ... WOW!

We are simultaneously immature and maturing.

In salvation God grace makes us a living baby ... that's the beginning ... then we begin the process of maturing.

This should be true of all of us.

There are two truths you need to take away here.

- **First...** Don't be shocked at the immaturity of other believers
- **Second** ... Do put up with spiritual immaturity in yourself.

Question:

Are you more humble, happier, more self-controlled and have more inner peace than you had a year ago?

Do you have the courage to ask someone who really knows you if the answer you give yourself is true or not?

The life of the Trinity lives within us.

Although we all begin the Christian life as spiritually immature

3. Creating Unity brings Maturity

Verses 15 and 16 describes what is supposed to be happening in a church ... in a true community of faith.

Look at it with me.

Paul, throughout these 16 verses is defining maturity.

- It means togetherness with humility, gentleness, patience, bearing one another's burdens (v.2)
- It means "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (v.3)
- It means "common hope, common faith, common worship." (v. 4-6)
- ... "unity of the faith (again) and ... "unity of the knowledge of Christ" (v.13)
- It means doctrinal and theological stability (v. 14)
- It means together, "speaking the truth in love." (v.15)

Paul says all of this in the context of people living life together... not an isolated individual.

This means that spiritual maturity comes through deep involvement in faith community ...

... deep involvement where there is intention and action to increase in faith, love, and relationship.

Paul is saying, you can't just "**drop into**" **church occasionally** ... and expect to grow.

Paul is saying "you can't be **on the "outs"** with people ... **avoiding one another** ... and expect to grow.

Notice the practice of "speaking the truth in love" within the community of faith.

We will not grow if we are not in a community that has this balance of truth and love together.

Love without truth is deadly ... because we can't know ourselves from the outside unless someone else tells us.

Example: Have you ever heard yourself on a recording? It is shocking because you don't hear yourself from the outside ... you hear yourselves through the bones in your neck

Truth without love is also deadly ... because you won't receive the truth if you don't believe the person giving it to you loves you.

We need to live in a community that has truth and love in balance where people are growing in maturity.

How is such a thing ... how is such a community possible in this world?

The answer is verses 7-10.

⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." ⁹ (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

This is what Jesus had to do in order to give to the church these gifts ...

... This is what it cost God to give us grace.

Maturity begins to happen as you begin to understand what your spiritual maturity cost God.

Story of the lady who started a business but for whatever reason couldn't seem to move forward. A friend agreed to come in and handle the bookkeeping. In a short time the company began to grow and expand. One day the lady came in to look at the books, when she saw the before and after she cried, "I didn't realize how big a mess I was in."

Can you have truth and love ...

Can you admit that you were in a bigger mess than you ever imagined you could have been?

Do you see all that God the Father, Son, and Spirit have given for you that you might have life ... and have it more abundantly?