

The Fullness of Christ – Ephesians 4:14-16

Ephesians 4:14–16 (NIV)

¹⁴Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

¹⁵Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

As Paul concludes this treatise on essential unity within the church he uses three distinct analogies to drive home the point:

Analogy 1 - Infant / Young Child (v.14)

- Generally speaking, upon what or whom does an infant rely for their existence? In what ways are they dependent upon others?

- Regarding the character and capabilities of an infant / young child:
 - o What is their attention span? Level of discernment? Ability to be influenced?

 - o What similarities exist between young children and new Christians?

- Paul has just concluded a segment (vs.11-13) in which the overwhelming thematic emphasis is God's gifts to the church for the sake of equipping, building, unifying, and maturing the church. If an individual believer were to remain in an "infant" phase, what would that communicate with regard to the effectiveness of God's gifts in the life of that person? What does this say about the person?

Analogy 2 – A Mature Body (vs.15-16)

- In contrast to an infant / small child, what are some of the physical characteristics and capabilities of a mature human body (*broadly speaking*)?

- According to vs.15b-16, there seems to be four important and inter-dependent realities for the church to reach full maturity. Identify them in the space below. Why are they necessary?

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Analogy 3 - Storm-Tossed Ship (Implied): Paul is now writing Ephesians from incarceration in Rome, but his journey to Rome was no pleasure cruise! (See Acts 27...later). For 14 days the ship carrying Paul to Rome was battered by wind and waves so badly that seasoned sailors were terrified. Here Paul addresses two ways that unstable Christians are tossed about like a ship in a storm: *“and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.”* Read the following passages and define how this happens:

- 2 Peter 2:1-3

- Jude 3-4

- There are three phrases underlined in the passage above. What do these terms imply with regard to the intent of those who seek to impede the maturity of the believer?

- Consider our present times. What are some of the other primary sources of fear, worry, and anxiety from OUTSIDE the church that has Christians blown about?

Speaking Truth in Love

- What is “truth” without “love”? (See 1 Corinthians 13:1-2)

- Is it possible to have – or demonstrate – Biblical “love” without embracing “truth”? (See 1 Corinthians 13:6 and John 17:14-19)

- How does a balance between “truth” and “love” lead to effectiveness:
 - o For the individual?

 - o For the church?