

# Ephesians 4:11-16

- towards a mature church -

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## Introduction

- ❖ Before Paul gives specific directives for the Christian's behaviors, he starts with the identity of the church, its ministries, the importance of sound doctrine, the unity of faith and knowledge, the service of all its members, and the maturity of the church and the individual believer. "Only such a growing-to-maturity church characterized by love will survive the enemies' cunning attacks against it. That the church is often riddled with divisions and hatefulness, heresy and immaturity, shows how successful the enemy has been in exploiting the church's failures and how derelict the church's leaders and members have been to heed Paul's words."<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological notes, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline below show some overlap with other sermon outlines taken from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a "stand-alone" and as part of a series.

## Literary and historical context

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<sup>1</sup> Klein, W. W. (2006). In T. Longman III & D. E. Garland (Eds.; Vol. 12, p. 123).

❖ The City of Ephesus:<sup>2</sup>

- The city was an important administrative and commercial hub of the Roman province of Asia. Nowadays the remnants of the magnificent city theatre can still be viewed. It had a seating capacity of 24,000 people (Acts 19:30-41). The temple of Artemis was famous and already classified in the ancient world as one of the seven wonders of the world. Numerous other gods and goddesses were worshipped.

❖ The City of Ephesus in the New Testament:

- Paul visited Ephesus for the first time only briefly on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 18:18-22). After he had left the city, Priscilla and Aquila continued to preach the gospel (Acts 18:24-28).
- Paul visited the city for a second time and stayed there for more than two years (Acts 19): **“This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.”** More churches were probably established during these years (Rev 2-3) in the Roman province of Asia.
  - Paul must have encountered severe conditions while he was in Ephesus. In his letter to the Corinthians, he wrote: **“If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus** for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’” (1 Cor 15:32). The majority of recent scholars postulate that Paul was in prison one or more times while he was in Ephesus.
- Paul met the Elders of the church on the beach of the city of Miletus (Acts 20:13-38) when he travelled to Jerusalem.
- Jews from Asia recognized Paul when he entered the temple in Jerusalem: **“Some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple.** They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him” (Acts 21:27; 24:19).
- Later, Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3) to support this church through teaching and instructions.

❖ Finally, the apostle John received his Revelation of Jesus Christ and sent it to the seven churches in Asia, the first being Ephesus (Rev 1:11; 2:1-7). According to old church traditions, John probably stayed in Ephesus.

❖ An overview of the letter to the Ephesians and the context of 2:19-23:

1:1-2	Salutation
1:3-14	Blessing or glorification of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
1:15-23	First prayer and thanksgiving to God
2:1-22	Gentiles and Jews are both made alive in Christ – a new creation, a holy

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<sup>2</sup> Arnold, C. (1993). Ephesus. In *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (pp. 249-253). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

	temple in the Lord
3:1-13	Admonition: don't be discouraged because of my sufferings (Paul)
3:14-22	Second prayer and glorification of God
4:1-6:9	Admonition: live a life worthy of the calling you have received: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4:1-16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live a life of love within the community of the church, which is the body of Christ</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 4:17-5:20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live a life of love as a new creation in Christ, as children of God, filled with the Holy Spirit</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 5:21-6:9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live a life of love, especially within the family-household</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
6:10-20	The spiritual warfare
6:21-24	Greetings

## Form and structure

- ❖ Ephesians 4:1-16 consists of three parts:

<b>The Trinity and the Unity of the Church (verse 1-6)</b>	
<i>Reason:</i>	<p><sup>1</sup> As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.</li> <li>• <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.</li> </ul> <p><sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—</p> <p><sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism;</p> <p><sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.</p>
<b>The glorified Christ, the unity of the church and the individual Christian (verse 7-10)</b>	
	<p><sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.</p> <p><sup>8</sup> This is why it says:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.”</p> <p><sup>9</sup> (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the</p>

	lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)
<b>Christ the head of the church, his body (verse 11-16)</b>	
<i>A. growth into maturity of faith</i>	<sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,  <sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
<i>B. immaturity and instability of faith</i>	<sup>14</sup> Then 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 men in their deceitful scheming.
<i>A'. growth into maturity of faith</i>	<sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From 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.

- ❖ The third part has an ABA'-structure:
  - A: unity and growth of the body becoming mature;
    - B: the contrast: being infants and immature, easily influenced;
  - A': unity under the head of Christ, growth building itself up in love.
- ❖ This central (B) part describes not a future situation but the present.

### Technical, theological and hermeneutical notes

- ❖ Literary notes:

- The authorship and addressees of this letter have much been debated.<sup>3</sup> Pauline authorship is affirmed by tradition and autobiographical information.
- ❖ General theological notes:
  - The letter to the Ephesians is essentially Trinitarian:
    - Ephesians 1:3-14. “Praise be **to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**.... Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised **Holy Spirit**, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.”
    - Ephesians 1:17: “I keep asking that **the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father**, may give you the **Spirit** of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.”
    - Ephesians 2:18: “For through **him** (Jesus Christ) we both have access to the **Father by one Spirit**.” (See also Eph 2:22; 3:5.)
    - Ephesians 3:14-19: “For this reason I kneel before the **Father**,... I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through **his Spirit** in your inner being,<sup>17</sup> so that **Christ** may dwell in your hearts through faith...”
    - Ephesians 4:4-6: “There is one body and one **Spirit**— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—<sup>5</sup> one **Lord**, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one **God and Father** of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”
      - Paul begins his letter with an exclamation of praise to God (Eph 1:3) and the mercies of God, especially his love: “But because of **his great love for us, God**, who is rich in mercy” (Eph 2:4).
      - Christ is the exalted one (Eph 1:21-22). He is the head of all creation (Eph 1:10) and especially of his body the church (Eph 4:15).
  - Unity of the believers with Christ, the “saints in Ephesus, **the faithful in Christ Jesus**”:
    - The expression “in Christ” or “in him” occurs thirty-four times! There is a mystic corporate unity and solidarity of all believers in Christ, which is practised in the local congregation.
      - In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7). “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan” of God (Eph 1:11).

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<sup>3</sup> Arnold, C. (1993). Ephesians, Letter to. In *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (pp. 240-242). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

- God “made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:5-6).

❖ Hermeneutical notes:

- Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians, although both assertions have been contested by scholars (see above).
  - For the exposition, it is fruitful to refer to the implied author and the implied addressee. We can’t meet Paul nor the Ephesians personally. There is a distance of place and time between the first readers, Paul, and the 21<sup>st</sup>-century reader. But we can get to know them both through the contents of this letter. The author (Paul) tells some things about himself, personal information, style of writing, his concerns. The same is true for the Ephesians, but the information we receive is given by the implied author.
- The implied author makes himself known by:
  - Personal remarks, such as “**As a prisoner for the Lord,**” which tell something about his situation.
  - The use of personal pronouns, such as “I”, “my” and to a lesser extent “we”, because in this case he includes others as well.
  - His theological statements, acclamations and prayers, which are embedded in the larger Christian community.
- The implied audience is made known by the author of the letter:
  - When he writes about their local and sometimes personal circumstances.
  - When he uses specific personal pronouns, such as “you”, “we” – including himself, “they”, when he is writing about others.
  - When he uses imperatives and specific figures or style, such as hyperboles, understatements, irony. Take, for example, Ephesians 4:2-4:
    - “**I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received**” (verse 2) tells us something about Paul and the Ephesians:
    - To Paul, it is important (“**I urge**”) to live a life worthy before God.
    - Paul is concerned about the conduct of the Ephesians (“I urge **you**”). These concerns are exemplified by verse 3: “**Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.**”
    - Because, by implication, (some) were not humble and gentle; (some) were not patient, not bearing with one another in love. And by doing so, breaking up the bond of peace (verse 4).

## Exposition

### Verse 1-6 summary

- ❖ The apostle Paul is concerned about the Christian life of the Ephesians. Their lifestyle doesn't accord their calling. This calling is already mentioned in Ephesians 1:18 and is founded upon the exposition of God's grace and glory in Ephesians 1:3-14.
  - "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world **to be holy and blameless in his sight**" (Eph 1:4).
  - "For we are God's workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus to do good works**, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph 2:10; also: Eph 4:21-24).
  - "**And live a life of love**, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph 5:2).
- ❖ They must make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit.
  - This unity is a major theme in the letter. "And in Christ you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit" (Eph 2:22).
  - This unity is founded in and guaranteed by the Trinity (Eph 4:4-6).

### Verse 7-10 summary

- ❖ These verses serve as a bridge between verse 1-6 and verse 11-16.
  - There is unity (verse 1-6) and at the same time diversity according to the grace of Christ (verse 11-16).
- ❖ The questions raised by the citation of Psalm 68:18 will not be discussed here. Suffice to note that:
  - "When he ascended on high" refers to Ephesians 1:20-22, 2:6, 4:9-10.
  - "he led captives in his train" refers (probably) to Ephesians 3:1 and 4:1:
    - "**Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles.**" (See also: Philip 1:13-16; Col 1:24; 4:3, 18; 2 Tim 1:8, 16; 2:9; Phm 1, 9.)
  - "and **gave** gifts to men" refers to Ephesians 4:11:
    - "It was he who **gave** some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers."
- ❖ Verse 9 and 10 seem to be a comment on Psalm 68:18 to explain that this particular verse speaks of the eternal Son of God (Eph 1:3) who descended to earth in whom we have redemption (Eph 1:5), who ascended on high (1:20) to fulfill everything (1:10; 1:23).

### Remark

- ❖ “This verse in Greek begins a sentence which ends with verse 16. It will be useful to show how the thought progresses in the Greek text”.<sup>4</sup> See above. For clarity, the discussion of these verses is divided into three parts.

### Verse 11-13

- ❖ “It was he who gave some”:
  - “It was he” with emphasis.
  - Acts 20:28: “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.” See also Hebrews 13:17.
  - “Some”: not everyone is called to be a pastor and teacher or apostle.
- ❖ “To be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.”
  - “Apostles.” Paul is referring to the apostles as the inner circle who have been witnesses (Acts 1:21, 22) from the baptism of Jesus to the time he was taken up. Paul was an apostle (Eph) among others (Rom 16:7). These apostles cannot be compared with missionaries today, because today’s missionaries haven’t been eye-witnesses, like the apostles.
  - “Prophets.” Meant are the New Testament prophets like Agabus (Acts 11:27, 28), Judas and Silas (Acts 15:32) and other (Acts 13:1). Other Christians were gifted with prophecy (Acts 19:6; 21:9; Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 11:4, 5; 12:10; 13:2; 14:1) but didn’t have an official status as a prophet.
    - Apostles and prophets may be called the first generation ministries, who laid the foundation (Eph 2:20; 3:5; 1 Cor 12:28).
    - There were also itinerant people traveling around who claimed to be apostles (Rev 2:2) or prophets (2 Pet 2:2; 1 Jn 4:1; Rev 2:20).
  - “Evangelists” like Philip (Acts 21:8) and Timothy (2 Tim 4:5).
  - “Pastors and teachers.” These are not two different ministries but it is one ministry. This figure of speech is called a hendiadys: the same thought (hen = one) expressed by (dia) two words (dys = two). They take pastoral care for the congregation by teaching “implying that a shepherd who does not feed will fail in his duty; and so will a teacher who fails to be a pastor; Acts 11:26” (Paul and Barnabas).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 100).

<sup>5</sup> Smith, J. H. (1992, p. 1383).



- Christ himself is the Good Shepherd (Jn 10).
- “When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?’ ‘Yes, Lord,’ he said, ‘you know that I love you’ Jesus said, ‘**Feed my lambs**’” (Jn 21:15).
- “They devoted themselves to **the apostles’ teaching** and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).
- “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16).
- In his farewell speech, Paul said to the elders of Ephesus: “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. **Be shepherds of the church of God**, which he bought with his own blood” (Acts 20:28; see also 1 Pet 2:25; 1 Pet 5:2).

❖ **“to prepare God’s people for works of service.”**

- “prepare” = “**καταρτισμός**”: **equipping** God’s people for service<sup>6</sup> *training, discipline*.<sup>7</sup> “In the context of the edifying of the body of Christ, to denote the equipment of the saints for the work of the ministry. The establishment of the community in work for the kingdom of God in the widest sense thus constitutes for Paul a material precondition of the upbuilding and consequently the actualisation of the community.”<sup>8</sup>
- “God’s people” = “**ἅγιοι**”: **the holy ones**; *believers, loyal followers, saints* of Christians as consecrated to God.<sup>9</sup> They have themselves *consecrated to God, holy, pure, reverent*.<sup>10</sup> The NIV uses different words for the same
  - Ephesians 1:4: “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be **holy** and blameless in his sight.”
  - Ephesians 2:19: “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with **God’s people** and members of God’s household.” (Eph 3:8)

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<sup>6</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 526).

<sup>7</sup> Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996, p. 910).

<sup>8</sup> Delling, G. ἅγιος, ἐξαρτίζω, καταρτίζω, καταρτισμός, κατάρτισις. In G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds; 1964, Vol. 1, p. 476)

<sup>9</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 11).

<sup>10</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 10).

- Ephesians 3:17-19: “And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, **together with all the saints**, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” (Eph 1:1; 6:18)
- Ephesians 5:3: “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for **God’s holy people.**”
- “works of service” = “**διακονία**”: 3. **functioning in the interest of a larger public, service, office.**<sup>11</sup> This can be a broad range of services. See Romans 12:3-8. It is certainly not limited to the financial support of the poor (Acts 1:17; 20:24; 21:19; Rom 11:13. Tychicus was called a servant (deacon) of the church (Eph 6:21; See also Eph 3:7, where Paul called himself a servant of the Gospel.
  - **“There are different kinds of service**, but the same Lord” (1 Cor 12:5; 12:6-8; Rom 12:8-10).
  - “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is **given for the common good.**” “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines” (1 Cor 12:7, 11).

Ephesians 4:12,13 (ESV)

to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,  
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,

- ❖ **“So that the body of Christ may be built up.”** By spiritual edification, and especially by teaching (Eph 4:11).
  - The apostle is merging two images into one:
    - “body” = “human body”
    - “building” = “holy temple”

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<sup>11</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 230).

- “In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. **And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.**”

❖ **“until we all reach unity in the faith”**

- “**until**”: the final goal. See also Ephesians 4:4-6 and Ephesians 3:17-19. This is a process still continuing today!
- faith = “**πίστις**”: 2. **state of believing on the basis of the reliability of the one trusted, trust, confidence, faith** in the active sense=‘believing’,<sup>12</sup>
- This faith is a gift: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, **it is the gift of God—**” (Eph 2:8).
  - Both the saving “faith” and the “pastors and teachers” are a gift of God, and these gifts are therefore precious in his eyes. This asks for a receptive mindset.
  - Through this faith “**Christ may dwell in your hearts**” (Eph 3:17). This statement makes clear that disunity in faith results in a severe problem.
  - This unity of faith is based on the unity of Christ, the Lord: “**one Lord, one faith, one baptism**” (Eph 4:5).
  - This faith precedes knowledge. It is a prerequisite for true knowledge of the Son of God. Without faith, it is impossible to be touched by the love of Christ (Eph 3:18).

❖ **“and (unity) in the knowledge of the Son of God”:**

- Note that Paul refers to the knowledge of the Son of God (See also Jn 3:14, 15). Why this change? Lenski: “By not naming the object ‘Christ’ but ‘the Son of God’ Paul makes manifest the divine greatness and glory of him whom he has just described as the Ascender and Descender who fills all things (verse 10). **Our oneness centers in him.**”<sup>13</sup>
- This unity in faith implies unity in knowledge. This knowledge of the heart, knowing God.
  - “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, **so that you may know him**

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<sup>12</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p.818).

<sup>13</sup> Lenski, R. C. H. (1937, p. 534, 535).

**better.** I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:17-19).

- “And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, **to grasp** how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and **to know this love that surpasses knowledge**—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Eph 3:17-19).
- This knowledge will prevent that the church, and individual Christians, will be influenced by every wind of teaching.

❖ **“and become mature”**

- “mature” = “**τέλειον**”: 2. pertaining **to being mature, full-grown, mature, adult.**<sup>14</sup>
- This is a way of speaking of growth and maturity in the Christian life; “the singular is used because the corporate nature of the experience is being emphasized. It is the church as a body, the ‘one new man’” (RSV) in Ephesians 2:15.<sup>15</sup> Paul is primarily focussing on the mature church, and secondly on the individual Christian. Within the body of the church little children, which are not mature, can grow up.
- The apostles, we know from their letters Paul, James, Peter and John, were mature and wise Christians.

❖ **“attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”**

- ESV: to **the measure of the stature** of the fullness of Christ
- “measure” = “**μέτρον**”: 2. **the result of measuring, quantity, number.**<sup>16</sup>
  - Ephesians 3:18, 19: “to grasp **how wide and long and high and deep** is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge.”
- ESV: “stature” = “**ἡλικία**”: 2. **the age which is sufficient or requisite for certain things, maturity.**<sup>17</sup> 2. *prime of life, manhood, (...) maturity.*<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 995).

<sup>15</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 103).

<sup>16</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 644).

<sup>17</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 436).

- Maturity of a man/women is determined by a set of socially accepted standards.

<b>Maturity</b>
In psychology, maturity is the ability to respond to the environment being aware of the correct time and location to behave and knowing when to act, according to the circumstances and the culture of the society one lives in. Adult development and maturity theories include the purpose in life concept, in which maturity emphasizes a clear comprehension of life's purpose, directedness, and intentionality, which contributes to the feeling that life is meaningful. <sup>19</sup>
<i>This (psychological) description is helpful to understand the Christian maturity in Christ. <b>The Word of God describes this as wisdom.</b></i>

- **“of the fullness of Christ.”** This is an explanation of the character of the maturity of a Christian. The full maturity is determined by Christ, his love, his righteousness, his mercy. See also Ephesians 3:19.
  - Another aspect of this maturity is the fruit of the Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal 5:22, 23).
  - O’Brien: “If ‘fulness’ denotes something like the divine power, essence, and glory, then the references to ‘the fulness of God’ (Eph 3:19) and ‘the fulness of Christ’ (Eph 4:13; Col 1:19; 2:9) are appropriately explained. According to Colossians 1:19, Christ is the person in whom God in all his fulness was pleased to take up his residence. All the attributes and activities of God—his spirit, word, wisdom, and glory—are perfectly displayed in Christ. In him all the fulness of deity dwells bodily (Col 2:9).<sup>20</sup>

❖ This is the new man and the new creation:

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<sup>18</sup> Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996, p. 768).

<sup>19</sup> Maturity (psychological). (2020, May 13). Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maturity\\_\(psychological\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maturity_(psychological)). See also for references.

<sup>20</sup> O’Brien, P. T. (1999, p. 149).

- “His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace” (Eph 2:15).
- “to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:32, 24).

#### Verse 14

- ❖ **“Then we will no longer be infants.”** The apostle is concerned about the spiritual well-being of the saints in Ephesus. They are acting like infants, spiritually immature. In Ephesians 4:17-5:17 he expressed his concerns more fully. He includes himself (“**we**”).
  - **“infants”** or **“very young children.”** See also 1 Corinthians 3:1.
- ❖ The following images relate to seafaring and a ship at sea. This is interesting because these images are useful when people have some personal experience. Ephesus had a harbour.
  - **“Tossed back and forth by the waves.”** Like a small boat in the storm.
  - **“And blown here and there by every wind of teaching.”**
- ❖ **“And by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.”** When faith is immature, lacking knowledge. This was not only a problem in Ephesus but also in Corinth and Rome:
  - “But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Cor 12:3).
  - “I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them” (Rom 16:17).
  - **“Cunning”** will distract the attention of men.
  - **“Craftiness:”** an example this craftiness is found in Luke 20:20-26.
  - **“in their deceitful scheming.”** Ephesians 6:11-17 will help to understand this expression, where the same word “**μεθοδεία**” is used: “the devils’ **schemes**.” See also Eph 6:11.
  - “deceitful” = “**πλάνη**”: **wandering from the path of truth, error, delusion, deceit, deception.**<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 822).

- I suggest another translation of this part of Ephesians 4:14: **“And by the cunning and craftiness of men aimed at methods of confusion (deceit).”**
- ❖ Paul doesn’t mention any particular errors or false doctrines. Lenski comments: “It uses Bible passages (apparently according to their real meaning) and reasonings (apparently sound) and thus easily fools the “infants” in Christian faith and knowledge, who have not yet grown up to Christian manhood and the age-measure of the fulness of Christ.”<sup>22</sup>

#### Verse 15-16

- ❖ **“Instead, speaking the truth in love.”** This is, what pastors and teachers (Eph 4:11) need to do. But not only the pastors (Eph 4:25). It contrasts the previous verse (cunning, craftiness, deceit).
  - This is summarized in Ephesians 4:20-24:
    - “You, however, did not **come to know Christ** that way. Surely you heard of him and **were taught in him** in accordance with **the truth that is in Jesus**. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” See also Colossians 2:6, 7.
  - **“the truth”**:
    - Ephesians 1:13: **“And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth,** the gospel of your salvation.” See also Ephesians 4:21, 24.
    - Ephesians 4:25: “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and **speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.**” See also Ephesians 5:9; 6:14.
    - Ephesians 6:14: “Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place.”
- ❖ **“we will in all things grow up into him.”** It means that “the growth, the maturity, of all Christians is directed toward the goal which is Christ himself, to become like him and to be completely (*in every way*) incorporated in him.”<sup>23</sup>
- ❖ **“who is the Head, that is, Christ.”**

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<sup>22</sup> Lenski, R. C. H. (1937, p. 541).

<sup>23</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993. p. 106).

- “**head**” = “κεφαλή”: *head*. “**Christ is the head** not only of the body of Christians(church), but **of the universe as a whole** (Eph 1:22), **and of every cosmic power, the head of all might and power** (Col 2:10).<sup>24</sup>
- “The figure of Christ as *the head* of the body, the church, means that he rules, he governs, the body.”<sup>25</sup>

❖ The present writer suggests the following translation:<sup>26</sup>

Suggested translation	Ephesians 4:16 (Greek)
from him	ἐξ οὗ
the whole body,	πᾶν τὸ σῶμα
joined and held together by the support of each ligament, according to the strength allotted to each part,	συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβαζόμενον διὰ πάσης ἀφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας κατ’ ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου μέρους
brings about the growth of the body itself for the building up in love.	τὴν αὐξησιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ.

❖ “**From him the whole body...**”

- “**From him.**” Christ is the head (ruling) and also the source (nourishing) of the church.
- “**The whole body**” is the local church.
  - “**joined and held together by every supporting ligament.**” In the previous section Paul mentioned the works of service by God’s people, prepared to do so by the teachers and pastors. (Eph 4:11, 12). “**joined**” is also used in

<sup>24</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 542).

<sup>25</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 106).

<sup>26</sup>This translation is based on the “Naardense Bijbel,” a Dutch translation. The Greek text (Nestle, E., & Nestle, E. (2012, Ef 4:16):

ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβαζόμενον διὰ πάσης ἀφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας κατ’ ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου μέρους τὴν αὐξησιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ.



Ephesians 2:21. Does supporting ligament refer to the “teacher and pastors”?

- **“body.”** Bratcher and Nida comment on this figure of speech: **“The figure stresses the close, organic, living relationship between Christ and his people.** It is not simply a functional, an official relationship, like that of a president to a business organization or of a chairman to a committee, but a relationship of a common life, a mutual, interdependent existence. Of course there is no idea of equality: Christ is the head and the church is subordinate to him.”<sup>27</sup> See also Ephesians 1:23; 2:16; 4:4, 12; 5:23; Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13, 27. **The church as the body of Christ is his visible presence in this world.**
- **“As each part does its work.”** See also the suggested translation. See also 1 Corinthians 12:7, 11.
- **“Grows and builds itself up in love.”** The purpose of the church is a Christ-loving Christian community:
  - “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (Jn 15: 9-12).
- **“in love”** is an important theme in this letter. Christians love each other because God in Christ showed them his love first. See also the First letter of John (1 Jn 4:7-21):
  - Ephesians 1:15: “For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and **your love for all the saints.**”
  - Ephesians 3:17-19: “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, **being rooted and established in love,** may have power, together with all the saints, **to grasp** how wide and long and high and deep is **the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge**—that you may **be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.**”
  - Ephesians 4:2: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, **bearing with one another in love.**”

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<sup>27</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 37).

- Ephesians 4:15: “Instead, **speaking the truth in love**, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”
  - Ephesians 5:1, 2: “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and **live a life of love, just as Christ loved us** and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” See also Ephesians 5:25-34.
  - Ephesians 6:24: “Grace to **all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.**”
- Then the ultimate goal will be reached, the upbuilding of the church. The sphere (Lenski) in which this occurs is love, the love of Christ (Eph 3:18, 19). The church and the individual believers are no longer infants, but mature, Christ-like Christians.

## Application

### Praise and worship

- ❖ Praise Christ. He has given ministers to the church (Eph 4:11).
  - He is the exalted Christ (Eph 4:7-10; Eph 2:19-23).
  - He is the head of the body, the church. Explain that the church is the visible representation of Christ in this world, which will be filled by the Spirit, wisdom, love, knowledge of Christ. The church will share in the glory of Christ.
- ❖ Praise God. He has given the life-saving faith (Eph 2:8). He is the source of knowledge.
- ❖ Praise the Holy Spirit who is the bond of peace and unity. (Eph 4:2, 3).
- ❖ Praise the Father, the Son and the Spirit. The unity of the church is founded upon and created by God.

### The Minister and the Church

- ❖ In these days there are many leaders in the church, who adorn themselves with titles like an apostle of a prophet. These two ministries have laid the foundation of the church.
  - This does not mean that the spiritual gift of prophecy ceased to exist (1 Corinthians 12-14).
- ❖ The evangelists and teachers and pastors are the ministries given to the church today. Evangelists share the same mission with missionaries. The teacher and the pastor is working locally.
  - Teacher and Pastor are the same ministry. A good teacher acts like a pastor tending the flock. A good pastor teaches believers.
  - **Emphasize the priority of teaching and instruction in the church.**

- This is especially necessary when people prioritize speaking in tongues and the gift of healing. Teaching precedes these gifts and enables Christians to use them to the benefit of the congregation. (See also 1 Cor 12:7-11; 12:27-31.)
- ❖ While preaching and teaching this part of Scripture, it is important to focus on:
  - The ministry of the evangelist, pastor and teacher is a gift from Christ, the supreme head of the body, the church.
  - The task is to prepare, to instruct the believers for mutual service in love.
    - “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16, 17).
  - This is only possible when they are themselves men (women) of faith, knowledge and love!
    - “We can never know any person simply with our mind; and knowledge of such a person as is envisaged here must involve the deepest possible fellowship.”<sup>28</sup>
    - “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.” “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Tim 4:13, 16; Paul to Timothy).
  - They strive for unity in faith and knowledge, and the Christ-like maturity of Christians. This is a continuous process because there always will be new generations Christians.
  - The pastor-teacher must be aware of “by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.” This requires continuous study of the word of God, and prayer. Nowadays it is especially the prosperity Gospel which is attractive but not Scriptural.
- ❖ “Thus right from the outset Paul rejected the all-too-common tendency for laypeople (and some pastors too) to let the “professionals” do the ministry. Paul spells out what pastors ought to do with their leadership gifts—equip saints—and

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<sup>28</sup> Foulkes, F. (1989, p. 128).

what the saints should be equipped to do with the grace that has been given to each of us (v. 7)—the work of serving”.<sup>29</sup>

### The mature Christian and the unity with Christ

- ❖ The mature Christian is a follower of Christ (Eph 5:1, 2) and a new creation in Christ (Eph 4:20-24).
- ❖ The mature Christian has a stable Christian character. This character can be described with the fruit of the Spirit:
  - “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law”(Gal 5:22, 23).
  - “Maturity brings with it the capacity to emulate various forms of teaching, to accept what is true and reject what is false.”<sup>30</sup>
  - The mature Christian doesn’t seek its own growth but the growth of the body.
    - “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves” (Philip 2:1, 2).
  - The mature Christian seeks wisdom and tries to grasp the love of Christ (Eph 3:17-19) together with the community of the church.

### Apostles and Prophets

- ❖ **Adama Ouedraogo** writes about African prophets and apostles:
  - The emergence of African prophets and apostles allowed for the proclamation of the equality of blacks and whites in faith and ministry (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). It also established the principle of the separation of the Christian faith from all colonial political connections. These positive effects justify the reputation these men enjoy.

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<sup>29</sup> Klein, W. W. (2006). In T. Longman III & D. E. Garland (Eds.; Vol. 12, p. 117).

<sup>30</sup> F.F. Bruce quoted by Foulkes, F. (1989, p. 129).

- However, there are also some more negative aspects associated with the emergence of African prophets and apostles. Many of them lack biblical and theological training and rely solely on their own gifts. But the growth of the church depends on the exercise of a variety of complementary gifts. An apostle or prophet cannot go it alone without the help of teachers (Eph 4:11–14). Those who want to preach the word of God must therefore study it seriously or surround themselves with those who have done so.
- Despite their claim to be promoting mainstream Christianity, many African prophets and apostles do not take the Bible as the basis for their faith and conduct. Instead their teaching is based on direct revelation that they receive from God for their prophetic and messianic mission. They regard these teachings as additions to the Bible. However, the Bible warns against making the slightest addition to the word (Rev 22:18–19).
- Many African prophets and apostles also indulge in a personality cult. They cloak the events of their lives, including the circumstances of their call, in mystery, sometimes citing biblical allusions to the Messiah. They give the impression that they have come down from heaven like Jesus or that they have as much power as he does. Some even claim to be Christ’s successors or even another Christ. Such claims make them objects of worship. Sadly, many of them gain almost total control of the minds of their followers. The NT warns us against such people (Matt 24:11, 24; Jude 4–16).
- While the negative side to the African prophets and apostles is a sad reality, we should not forget to express our gratitude to God for the true prophets and apostles who have exercised and continue to exercise an honourable ministry to the glory of God. This group includes men such as Samuel Ajayi Crowther of Nigeria, who is considered to be truly a father of the African church.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Adeyemo, T. (2006, p. 1460).

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