

## 2098 - GROWING UP TOGETHER - Eph 4:11-16

Paul is here speaking about the **Church** of Jesus Christ! He is saying that God has given the Church certain leaders who can **equip** the people of God so that **each of them** can do their **particular** ministry in the world. These leaders are called apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and their work is to **equip** the saints for **their** work of ministry in the world in which they are placed. All are **not** leaders!

The **Church** is made up of **individuals**. The Church's **objective** is to **Christianise the world** so that everyone works to bring **glory** to God! If the **individuals** in the Church are not in good shape, the **whole** movement will **not** be **effective** and it will not fulfil its goal! So it is **vital** that the Church leaders do their God-appointed work so that *each part is working properly and building itself up!*

So the **1<sup>st</sup> priority** of the Xn is to make sure he/she is **growing** in the Lord! We are commanded to *grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!* All of us have a role to play in the Church - all Xns have at least one gift, and has a definite role to play in the world **for the Lord**. It may be a very humble role, but it is a role nevertheless which brings glory to God. In order to play that role, we must be able to govern ourselves well. If we cannot govern ourselves, we cannot govern our family or our Church or anything!

Now Peter tells us plainly we have **add** to our faith several virtues! [2P1:5] We must not only be *rooted* in Christ, but also we must be *built up in Him and established in the faith* [Col 2:7]

Now – there is no such thing as **DIY sanctification!** You cannot ‘Grow in Christ’ on your own! *God sets the solitary in families* [Psa 68:6]. **Everyone** had a father/mother - oh my **how sad** it is for many today!!) God Himself is a **Family** of Three Persons – each with His own particular function and ‘calling’! Cohesion, co-operation.

John wrote his epistle so *that you also may have fellowship with us* [1J1:3] In fact *the blood of J C His Son cleanses from all sin* is **based** on the fact that *we have fellowship with one another* [see 1J1:7] and it is only **then** that *the blood of JC cleanses us of all sin...!!*

When God builds us up **spiritually**, we are *built up a spiritual house*

[1P2:5] in **union** with others, **not** in **isolation!** When God converted us, He **joined** us with **every other believer** in the world! Therefore Paul says we must be *eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit*, **not** ‘eager to make unity’ [Eph 4:3]! Believers in Russia, China, Africa!

Small groups **especially** are to have this unity! Philippi is a good example. Paul: *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you... because of your partnership in the gospel* [Phil 1:3cf] Look *I ask you also true companion, help those women who have laboured side by side with me in the gospel, with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers* [Phil 4:3cf] Did you think Paul did it on his own? It’s not the way Paul himself saw it! The building up of Christ’s kingdom is a **Team Work!** We are *working together with Him* [2Cor 6:1] No one in the congregation should feel ‘**left out!**’

### **The USE of our GIFTS**

Every Xn, when he is ‘born again spiritually’ has the **seeds** of **all** the graces in Him, just as a baby has all the member parts of a physical body! But he/she has also a **particular gift** suited to his ‘calling’. (every Xn is ‘called’ to a particular service in the kingdom!)

It is **only** when **all** these gifts are **used together** that there is real growth of the **whole** body. Look: *from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow* [16]. Paul is speaking of the Xn Church here – not the human body! The sign of a ‘good church’ is when **all** its members are doing what it was meant/ designed to do! To function **efficiently**, we must remember **5 things:**

**1<sup>st</sup>** – we need to **believe** in the **Biblical Truth** of **Body Ministry!** To get this message ‘Home’ Paul uses the illustration of a **human body** *just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body though many, are one body, so it is with Christ* [1C12:12] Hymn=“Christ has no hands but our hands, to do His work today; He has no feet but our feet to lead men in the way; He has no voice but our voice, to tell men how He died; He has no help but our help, to lead them to His side”! Beautifully true!

As God has given the human body **different** members for different

**functions**, so God has given to **every Xn** a **gift!** We **must use** it! *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us let us use them* [Rom 12:6]! God will require of **you** the **full** use of the gift He gave you! Sins of **omission**= equally **reprehensible/blameworthy!**

What is a **monster?** A body with one organ **out of proportion!** Films = a huge head or eye! Paul is saying that *if the whole body were an eye?* [1C12:17] In Corinth there were **disproportioned!** All had gifts. No doctrine! No fellowship! Denominations can be like that!

**2<sup>nd</sup>** You **accept** that gift which God had given you – **without coveting** one He has **not** given you. A gift after all, is a gift! Don't feel bad about not having one you would love! God has **withheld** gifts, *just as He pleased* [1Cor12:18] **Accept** God's 'position' in life for you. **Discontentment** with your 'station' in life is a big sin with many consequences! Remember it is **sinful** that *the ear should say 'Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body'* [1Cor 12:10] For you to say 'Because I am not a ten talented brother in Christ, I am not a functioning Xn'! Do your best & **thank** God for other people's gifts

**3<sup>rd</sup>** Never seek to be **independent** of other Xians! Never begin to think "We **don't need** him! We would be better to be without him in the church"! We **all need** each other! Just as the human body does! Try and be prepared to **learn from** others. **Ethiopian Eunuch** would never have been converted if he took that attitude towards Philip – 'No thank you Philip, I am perfectly capable of working this thing out for myself. Off you go!' Remember **Apollos?** He was a great preacher, an *eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures* – yet he was **humble** enough to 'allow' Priscilla and Aquilla to teach him the *way of God more accurately!* [Acts 18:26]. And **because** of that humility God blessed him for when he went to Achaia *he greatly helped those who through grace had believed* [18:27] It is **team work!** Never seek to be independent of other Xns – you **learn** from them **all!**

**4<sup>th</sup>** Remember God **prefers** the person with the **less obvious** talent but who **uses** it well, to the **more obviously talented** person who is lazy/indifferent! You/I may **think** there are members in the church who **seem to be weaker** [1C12:22] but the Word says they **are indispensable** [1C12:22] *God has so composed the body, giving greater*

***honour*** to the part that ***lacked*** it [1C12:24] You know, there are ‘**hidden members**’ of our physical bodies which play a **vital role** in our health and life – some of which we **don’t even know** about!

**APP** Have you seen any of the 400 little **taste buds** in your tongue discerning the difference between a strawberry and a chocolate éclair! You can’t see the **kidneys** but 14gls of blood are cleansed every hour by them! Have you seen any of the **10 million nerves** which send and interpret messages prescribing a response to one? There are **6 billion** of your ‘type’ in the world each with a different **voice pattern** and **fingerprints** and **DNA**! When you were born, God did **not** say ‘Now I wonder what we can do with this one?’ He **made** each of us **individually** and **deliberately** for a **purpose**! Every weak Xn has a part to play in building up the Kingdom of God! The Great Day will reveal how many ‘nobodies’ in the Church were **hugely** ‘somebodies’ which were the means of the Church surviving!

**5<sup>th</sup>** Perhaps the greatest way we can **contribute** to the growth of the Church is to **feel the pain** of our brethren who are **hurting**! *if one member suffers, all suffer together* [1C12:26] Christ felt the pain of persecuted Xns *Why are you persecuting Me!* You know, Paul wanted to **feel** the pain of his brothers who were suffering! Look: *I count everything as loss...that I may know Him...and the fellowship of His sufferings* [Phil 3:10] **That** is why Paul has been so much used – despite the low numbers in his ‘flock’! **So different** from the Cors who wanted to demonstrate their ‘clever gifts’ for all to see! **That** is when there will be **true growth** in the Church!

The trouble with us and many Xns today is this: we want to be **seen** to be doing good. We want gifts that everyone **recognises**! We want to be on the front page of the Church magazine! We want a public profile! Thus Paul had to address the Cors *Are all apostles...prophets* ie do you **all** have the **gifts** of these callings? ‘Well, you could have fooled me, for I see every one of you trying to be an apostle, trying to be a prophet - and **none** of you being a **consoler** of the poor, a **helper** of the **hurting**! None of you are being a **servant** to **others**! None of you **humbly/quietly/unobstrusively** serving Christ in a **private capacity** – you are all wanting to be doing something that others can **see** and **acknowledge**’! We must build up the Body of X!