

"MEASURING YOUR MATURITY"

Eph. 4:11

V. 8 - He gave gifts unto men - ancient triumphal processions people received coins or gifts from the Hero.

Paul drew upon this custom to say that Christ also gave gifts. He gave them not to angels in Heaven but to followers who were still on earth.

V. 11 - He named some -- Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers - and those on earth who were to work for the Christian cause.

How can we understand these gifts? Specific purposes.

Point is there were gifts of Christ to His people. This not to say every Pastor or teacher is perfect, but he is God's gift to the church. God will not hold him guiltless who destroys his gifts.

"Rolling Fences" -- A man received a little piece of the King's land on which to build his house and put a fence around it. Which he silently pushed outward by slow degrees and enclosed year by year a wider area.

Gifts are given by which we enlarge the Kingdom of God. We have as much as we desire, as we take, as we use, as we can hold.

V12-13  
Old Testament - a beautiful type of service in the Tabernacle.

Three divisions, Tribe Levi, a part of Tabernacle entrusted. First family Merari.

Cared for silver sockets made of atonement money, the boards, pillars, and bars.

The cloudy pillar rested. Merarites laid the silver sockets on the sands, erected the boards of wood overlaid with gold upon the foundation.

Second family of Gershonites began to minister.

Cared for beautiful curtains, coverings, hangings and the ords.

Beautified the work of Merarites and strengthened it with ords.

Third Kohathites.

Carried the Holy vessels, the Ark into the Holy of Holies and placed in the Holy place the table of shewbread, candlestick, golden altar of incense.

Placed in the courtyard - Brazen altar, laver, and other furnishings.

V. 12-13 - Type in these three families of Levites. The Merarites, Gershonites and Kohathites worked together for the erection of the Tabernacle in the wilderness until it was completed -- so the gifts to the church, Pastor's, teachers, are for the perfecting of the saints for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Families of Levi did their work under the supervision of God's high priest,  
Aaron.

V. 13 - The unity of the faith is in the mind of Paul.

Also, the full grown man -- fulness as measured by Christ himself. Accurate knowledge.

All believers are in the ministry and must function in their place in the body which God has appointed them.

If you are a Christian and a religious "do-nothing" - you are a puzzle to the angels and a delight to the demons of darkness.

The gifts are bestowed that you may serve other members of the body of Christ.

Tragic - we need to be ministered unto -- and never come to the place of ministering to others.

V. 13 - How long is this ministry to continue?

Til we all come - unity of faith.

Perfect man.

Measure of Christ.

Full spiritual stature.

When will this goal be reached? - not until the last member has been added to the body of Christ. When we come to glory at end of the age.

Beautiful thought every time you use my gift speak to a neighbor, teach a Sunday School Class, you may be doing something to add the lost member to the body of Christ.

The results of attaining the goal - V. 14-17.

V. 14 - Think of the benefits of spiritual maturity and doctrinal stability.

Easy to apply these words -- noted for creeds and errors in the name of Christ.

Affected by every "wind of doctrine".

Tossed to and fro -- carried about -- a ship abandoned in a storm -- like balloons thrust into the atmosphere, subject to every current and cross current.

Uncertain footing on a tossing deck.

"No more children" - not wish to stay in a state of protracted babyhood.

A mother talked with her pastor in Texas. There was evidence of great grief. Husband was a drunkard. He thought her sorrow stemmed from the husband. As opened her heart, her child was 27 years old and had the mind of a 2 year old. She was unable to control her grief. The undeveloped state of her daughter.

I wonder how God feels as He looks down from Heaven upon those who have been members of the Christian family 20-30 years, yet in spiritual growth they are like little children, they are affected by every religious movement that comes across their pathway. A new thing - some cult, and they are ready to follow.

Christians need to be "rooted grounded" -- false teachers in the present day are increasing.

*Some people have a head like a door knob - anybody can turn it!*

In every church there are certain members who must be protected. They are like children. They are dominated by a desire for novelty, they are at the mercy of the latest fashion in religion. Influenced by the last person that they talk too -- childish, inability to concentrate on essentials.

False systems - as slight of men - cunning craftiness. They wait to deceive.  
Matt. 24:24. *wifely - hearts - (children) - home -*

I John 4:1 -- "Try the spirits" -- First, find out the attitude of the system of teaching towards the Bible. Whether they hold part or the complete revelation of God.

Some will tell you another book is needed. *(Mormonism, Seventh Day Adventism,*

Russellism, and Eddyism all have books they say are inspired like the Bible and they place them beside the Scriptures.

A second thing to find out is belief concerning the Person of Christ. Born of virgin, atoning work, resurrection.

Jehovah's witnesses founded by Judge Rutherford does not believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The church goes on and then cults come and go. Solid food is always found in the church.

There are certain people - guarded against, Paul says they are clever, skill in manipulating arguments, seek to lure people away from the faith.

Talk religion against the church and link up with fashion of world. Vacillation of purpose.

Wave tossed - uncertain footing.

Wind borne - blown hither and yonder.

Cunning deceit - dice - gamble.

*Wind can help a sailor who has no port.*

If we are immature and gullible we hinder the work.

Greatest portion of New Testament -- tells Christian people God wants their lives and mature.)

Paul wrote to Corinth, I had to treat you like babes in Christ -- feed you milk -- you could not eat meat. He wanted them to grow up, not stay babies all their lives.

Problems with babies -- can't carry on a conversation. How about feeding babies. Do you remember smearing pablum all over everything. Wonderful when he learned to feed himself.

Paul in Eph. grow until you come into perfect man - graphic figure, instability, helplessness -- easy prey for peddlers of religious fads and heresies.

Slight of men - originally meant "dice throwing". Planned deliberate to lie in wait. Wait to ensnare.

V. 15 - Gives a standard of maturity.

In V. 14 - It is stated negatively.

In V. 15 - Stated positively.

Key - in love - exhortation in the spirit.

I Cor. 13:1-3 - "Though speak with tongues of men and of angels and have not love - it profiteth me nothing."

Contrast: Difference begins attitude other members of Christ's body.

Genuine teacher loves people and wants to help them. Teachers grow and the church grows.

False teacher pursues his own ambitions and exploits people for his own ends.

The greatest evidence of the truth of the word of God is a transformed life.

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan had four sons. All of whom were preachers. The youngest son, Howard, considered a great preacher, took his father's place. Someone asked Howard a question, "Who is the greatest preacher in your family?" Howard, who had great admiration for his father without a moment's hesitation answered, "My Mother".

Howard was right - many times though a mother may never stand on a platform - she may preach great sermons in her daily life.

Dr. Kenneth Chafin has a prayer -- "Thank you, God, for being so wonderful, for you know all about us and you still love us."

Maturity leads us to try to give love to others who need it. Babies cry for

attention, God wants to grow up.

Dr. Roy Angell tells the story of a fellow whose wealthy brother had given him a new car for Christmas and he found a little boy rubbing it and shining it.

The boy said, "This your car, mister? Yes, it is. Boy, that's pretty - where did you get it?"

He answered my brother gave it to me for Christmas, and started to climb into the car, and the little boy said something -- the man asked, what did you say, son?

The boy repeated and the man said that again - for it was so unusual.

He expected him to say, "I wish I had a brother like that - but the boy said, "I wish I could be a brother like that!"

The man said what did you say that for? Well, you need to understand my little brother -- I would sure like to be a brother to him and do things like that for him. Could I meet your little brother? Just a minute, I'll get him.

He soon came out carrying a crippled boy on his back -- this is brother. Brother, you see this car - his brother gave it to him - one of these days, I am going to be that kind of brother to you. I'm going to give you everything you need, someday.

The man's eyes were filled with tears as he took the boys downtown shopping for Christmas presents for both of them. The man said, my brother has given me trips to Europe, me and my wife - given me cards, jewelry, made the major payment on our home - all of these things for Christmas. We thought those were wonderful Christmases -- but the greatest Christmas I've ever had was the one when I gave those little boys something -- just a little bit out of my pocket. Some of my love!

That is the joy of giving love -- mark of Christian maturity.

Our church is a growing, loving fellowship.

V. 17 - Love fits the joints of the body together.