

NOTES FROM PASTOR TIM'S SERMON 30th April 2023 am

Sabbatical message "Growing up into Christ"

Text Ephesians 4 verses 1-16

Scripture references from the ESV

Ephesians 4:1-16 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 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."^[a]

⁹ (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?^[b] ¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^[c] and teachers,^[d] ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,^[e] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ 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 so that it builds itself up in love.

Who does the church depend on? It's a question that needs to be asked at the start of Pastor Tim and Jo's three-month sabbatical. We are all prone to thinking one or other of the following:

- other people (Pastors, Elders, Deacons etc) are necessary for the church to function.
- we, ourselves, are necessary for the church to function and without us, everything will stop.

We may become so dependent on human support that when those supports are taken away, we begin to worry that everything will collapse. Alternatively, in our pride, we can

imagine that we are the glue that holds everything together, and if we are not around, then it will all fall apart. We do this not only with church but with our families, friends and other significant people in our lives.

- The root of this is the sin of idolatry. We are putting other people or ourselves in the place that God should have.

The answer to the initial question can be found in **vv15-16** (above). Paul uses the picture of the body to depict the church. Just as a body is made up of different parts, so the church is made up of people who have different gifts, personalities and experiences. A body is dependent on the head to function, and in the same way.

The church is dependent on its head, the Lord Jesus Christ

Leaders and members are important for growth but ultimately

Broadstone Baptist Church depends on Christ.

That has always been true and always will be true. There has been a church in York Road for 90 years and in all that time, including the 18 years that Pastor Tim has been here, Christ has been the one who has overseen it. During the next three months, and when (God willing) Pastor Tim returns, Christ will continue to be the one who holds the church together.

- As a church, we need to continue to look to Christ.

Over the next three months, we will be working through Colossians and will consistently be pointed to

Christ as the head of the church.

Paul gives three things that Christ accomplishes in the church, as the church looks to him and depends on him.

1. Christ is the one who unites us. A human body has lots of different parts, all of which work together, so that the body grows physically, mentally and emotionally. It does not fight against itself. A body that does that is sick. A healthy body has lots of different parts, but every part belongs to the one body. It is a united body, made up of

diverse parts, all of which are important.

That is what church is, whether it be the universal church or the local church. Although we are all different

- In the way we look, think and act
- In what we can do and how we dress
- In how we were brought up and where we are from

yet we are all united under one head, the Lord Jesus Christ

Paul emphasises the oneness that we share in and through the Lord Jesus Christ (vv4-6 above). We are one body united by one Lord. We believe in one faith and come under one God. That is what we are and **not** what we are trying to become. Because of that we have a responsibility (v3). In order to **maintain** (not create) that unity, we need vv1-2. Paul was not present with these believers to hold them together, but he knew Christ was with them and that they had a unity in Christ that was far greater than any differences they might have. To maintain the unity, they **all** needed to

- Act with humility and be gentle and patient with one another
- Bear with one another's differences, irritations and quirks

They all needed to do this, not through gritted teeth but in love. As a church, we too need to

maintain the unity in the bond of peace.

That unity and peace is very precious because it has been purchased with the precious blood of Christ.

We must guard it.

It will not be easy to live out what we are called to, but Christ is present to help. We must all rely on Christ, confessing to him when we are struggling and asking him to give us grace to see others as he sees them – valued members of his body to which we have all have been joined.

Christ is the one who unites us and who keeps us united as we depend on him.

2. Christ is the one who causes us to grow. Paul speaks about the various activities that the church is doing and makes clear that he expects every member of the church to be involved in the ministry of building up the body, encouraging the church and its leaders. We are not to pull down and discourage, because when we do that, we are doing Satan's work for him. We serve a God who creates, and so the elders are to exercise their ministry to ensure building up of the church (v12). Paul goes on to say

(v16) that the whole church is to be involved in building the church up and enabling it to grow.

The unseen hand behind the growth is that of Christ (vv15-16). It is from Christ, from our head, that the church is joined and held together in unity, and from Christ that we exercise our various gifts to serve one another so that the church builds itself up. Over the last 18 years, the church here has grown in all sorts of ways, but

Christ has done it.

Christ may have used us to accomplish his work, but he is the one who has caused the growth.

Pastor Tim: My prayer for the church while I am away is that this growth will continue. How am I able to have confidence have confidence about this and what will it look like?

3. Christ is the one we grow up into. We expect people to grow into maturity. A newborn baby does not stay a baby! Paul expected the church to come to maturity (v13). The elders and the saints will have to continue their work until that happens. That is yet to come, but we should be progressing. What does a mature Christian look like? Paul says that mature manhood in the Christian life means growing **to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.**

Mature Christianity means becoming like our elder brother, the Lord Jesus Christ. Growth does not mean just growing in knowledge. Knowing facts about Jesus and knowing Jesus to the point that we become like him can be two very different things.

- You cannot know Christ without knowing about him
- You can know a lot about Christ without actually knowing him

The Christian who is growing in maturity is a person who is seeing the life of Christ being formed in them and is growing in their relationship with Christ. Growing up into Christ is growing into union with Christ. We grow into a deeper and more intimate fellowship with Jesus.

- He becomes more real to us and we experience his presence in our lives, and are continually enjoying him.

Pastor Tim: My prayer for the church, and for my family, is that over the next three months and into the future, Christ will continue to grow us in that way. When we all

meet again in August, may we all be more like Christ because we have come closer to him.

For that to happen,

**we are ultimately dependent on Christ to unite us, to grow us and to form his image in
us.**

Dependence on Christ does **not** mean being passive.

- The Christian life is not a case of sitting back and letting God do everything.
- The Christian life is about God being at work in your life by his Spirit, and therefore, you are enabled to work, and indeed must work.

We cannot work unless he is working in us, but then we must work **because** he is working in us. If we are going to grow to maturity as a church, we need to be active in two things.

a) We need to be active in truth (v15). The original Greek says 'truthing in love'. This is much more than the translation 'speaking the truth in love'. It means living the truth out, especially the truth of God's love.

b) We need to be active in love (v15). The life of Christ was a life marked by God's love. That is the kind of love that chooses to love those who are not worthy of love or lovely in themselves. If Christ is being formed in us, then we too are able to love like Christ, with God's love. We will love those who are not worthy of love (or think they are not), and we will love those we don't consider lovely.

Speaking the truth in love means living out the truth of God's love so that people both inside and outside the church see Christ in us and so experience this love themselves. That will only happen as we grow in our fellowship with the head, our Lord Jesus Christ.

- We need to spend time with Jesus confessing our sin in failing to love with God's love, whether it shows as impatience, unkindness, envy, pride, rudeness, selfishness, irritability, resentment or scepticism.
- We need to ask Jesus to fill us with his Spirit so that we love as he loved.

The more time we spend doing that, then the more we shall experience his presence and become like him.

The church does not depend on its Pastor, nor does it depend on its elders, though they have an important role to play and need your prayers and encouragement. The church does not ultimately depend on anyone of us.

**The church depends on Christ who works to unite us, to grow us and to form his image
in us.**

Pastor Tim: Over the next three months, I will be praying that Christ will do this for the church. Please pray this for Jo and me too. Pray that our growth will match yours so that when we meet again, we will all have grown deeper in our fellowship with Christ and more like him in our love for others.

Pastor Tim's prayer for the church:

Ever present, ever gracious God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit

You have promised that you will never leave us or forsake us.

Lord Jesus, as our head and chief shepherd, you are living among our church to

strengthen us,

guide us,

grow us,

unite us.

and fill us with your joy.

I pray for us as a church that you would give us the assurance that these things are true.

Over this next three months, may we experience the sweet fellowship of your presence. May we experience you growing us up into Christ so that we become more like Jesus and grow in our unity.

I pray for the elders:

May they have your wisdom, leading and grace to care for your people and equip them to serve one another.

May they be filled with joy so that they delight in you and delight in this precious work of shepherding your people.

Keep our eyes fixed on Christ and that glorious promise of eternity with him.

We ask this in the name of Jesus our Saviour.

Amen.