

# GOD'S GOAL IS FOR HIS CHURCH TO COME TO MATURITY

Ephesians 4:11-16

God has given the five-fold ministry gift to the church: *"And He himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers"* v.11

He gave these five ministries for a three fold purpose: *"for the equipping of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"* v.12

- Equipping of the saints - *equipping means perfecting, making fully qualified for service and has the sense of setting a broken bone in place. Every saint is to be equipped to minister in the body of Christ.*
- For the work of the ministry – each five-fold gift must do the work of their particular ministry so that the grace of each gift can be released into the body. As the body receives the grace of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher it will then grow to maturity.

- For the edifying, or building up, of the body of Christ. Jesus is building His church through the five-fold ministry gift that He has given. The church which is to grow to maturity will not be built without the five-fold gift fully restored and functioning.

**UNTIL – there is a goal for these ministries to achieve & that is to bring the church to maturity!**

**What are the sign-posts that show that this goal has been achieved?**

**(1) "till we all come to the *unity of the faith*"** v.13. This means there will be 'consistency in profession of religious truth'; coming into true oneness about what we believe. Jude exhorts us to *"contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"* (Jude 3). This is the *"apostles' doctrine"* (Acts2:42).

The church is to come into oneness in believing the WORD OF GOD. *"stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel [word of God]"* (Phil.1:27).

**(2) "to the knowledge of the Son of God"** v.13. This 'knowledge' means – recognition of, full discernment of - the Son of God. Paul prays for the church in Colossae that they may attain to *"the*

*knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ"* (Col.2:2).

There is a knowledge of the mystery that is revealed to us through coming to know who the Son of God is. Peter received this revelation, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Matt.16:16), and it was on this revelation of who He was that Jesus said, *"I will build My church"* (Matt.16:18).

The Son of God is Jesus, Messiah, the promised King who has all authority.

**(3) "to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"** v.13. 'Perfect' refers to that which has reached an end, that which is finished, complete. It signifies consummate [total/complete] soundness, and includes the idea of being whole, it denotes maturity. Jesus prayed for us in John 17:23 *"I in them and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one"*.

'Stature' means maturity in size or years, one of the same age or as big as. The church is being measured and the measuring is in relation to the stature of the fullness of Christ.

God created man in the beginning in His own image and likeness. The evidence that this body which is His church has come to 'a perfect man' will be that we are reflecting Him. We are *"predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son"*

(Rom.8:29). The church is to “bear the image of the heavenly Man” (1Cor.15:49).

**(4) “That we no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting”** v.14. Paul exhorts the Corinthians, “Do not be children in understanding; ... but in understanding be mature” (1Cor.14:20).

The writer of the book of Hebrews condemns those he is writing to for remaining babes, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, ...; you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe” Heb.5:12-13.

But those who have become mature are those who “by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” ( Heb.5:14), and are able to teach.

There is a time for growing up, to be fully established in the word of God. Peter says we are to be, “established in the present truth”, not following after “cunningly devised fables” (2Pet.1:12;16).

When we are established in the word of God then we will no longer be ‘tossed to and fro’.

**(5) “speaking the truth in love”** v.15.

Jesus prayed for His disciples, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (Jn.17:17). The truth is the word of God. This is the word we are to speak in love.

For too long Christians have claimed to speak the truth but because it has not been spoken in love it has brought division and fracture in the body of Christ. Speaking in love will bring redemptive unity and enable the saints to function together.

**(6) “grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ”** v.15. This church that is growing up to maturity is the body of Christ. “He [Christ] is the head of the body, the church” (Col.1:18). “Christ is the head of the church; and He is the saviour of the body” (Eph.5:23).

This mature body is the fullness of Christ, “And He put all things under His [Christ’s] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph.1:22-23).

**(7) “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies”** v.16.

The body is a many membered body, each part having a different function. “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are

one body in Christ and individually members of one another” (Rom.12:4-5). We are joined and knit together as the body.

Having been equipped through the ministry of the five-fold gift, each member becomes rightly related to the Head [Christ] and begins to function. This is how the church will come to maturity.

It is “according to the **effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love**” (v.16).

‘Working’ means ‘operative power’, it is the power of the Holy Spirit at work in every member of the body that enables the growth to happen.

The **key characteristic of the mature church is LOVE**, God’s sacrificial, self-giving love!

The mature church is mature because **every part functions effectively**, having been joined and knit together – true unity

Each part and **every joint supplies life** and every part works for the up-building of the whole

**All of this life flows from the Head, our Lord Jesus Christ!**

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