

Spiritual Structure of the Church

“From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

Ephesians 4:16 (KJV)

In this great chapter, the Apostle is giving a plan for world evangelism starting within the privacy of our homes and extending to every part of the known world. We have learned that one thing is for certain, it isn't going to happen with the resources of one person, one household, or one local church. He shares that gifts, ministry gifts, were given to the Church; Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers. The purpose for Jesus giving these gifts is to ensure that the Body is equipped to do works of service so that the Church will be built up. That work is to continue until unity of faith in the knowledge of the Son of God is realized which will bring forth maturity. This maturity is to continue to be cultivated until we come to the full stature of the Person of Jesus Christ.

In Colossians 2:9-10 he tells us that the fullness to which we are destined to reach has already been given to us. As Jesus is the completeness, the fullness of the Godhead, we are likewise filled with the fullness of Christ (fullness and completeness come from the same root word). So, in Christ, we enjoy having been made “His” fullness that He has received from the Father. The significance of that statement is, all that is needed to function as Jesus-people has been already been given to the Church. We don't need to seek for more of the power of Jesus, He is present in us!!

However, and that is a big however, that reality in the Spirit has to become a working principle in our daily and corporate lives not just a point for discussion. To function as a body requires a relinquishing of independence, an attitude of non-submission to the cooperation of others in the Church. It rejects the attitude of self-reliance and alienation that sometimes occurs in church-life. If we are going to succeed in carrying out the Great Commission, we are going to have to accept and adapt ourselves to depending upon others just as the physical body does in order to function within various environments.

The Apostle goes on to say we were not to walk as other Gentiles walk. He says they have hardened hearts and have lost all sensitivity to others, they organized their lives around their own sensual desires, and indulged every kind of impurity. In other words, they lived their lives with self at the center of all things. He continues to say that Gentiles order their behavior after the vanity of their minds or behavior that has no real fulfillment. Beyond and outside of themselves, meaningfulness and fulfillment do not exist.

Paul tells us that the life of Christ flows into the body from the head. Our Head is Jesus Christ. That life-flow is not only life and vitality of the Jesus-life, but the values and beliefs of the life Jesus practiced while on the earth. He tells us that submission to one another must be at the foundation of our mission. There has to be oneness, togetherness, unity, a dependence upon one another for that mission to succeed. Each joint or part supplies to others a substance that each one needs. That substance is love, the conferring upon others value and acceptance. It is the love of God flowing through us that holds the Body of Christ together. Therefore, we must practice receiving one another in the spirit of love and dependence because we need them to assist us in accomplishing what Jesus has commissioned us to do.

We have a mission. Jesus outlined it by saying we are to take the good news of the gospel to every ethnic group, every nation, every people group, every place in our world both near and far. It will not be done by one, but must be accomplished by each of us uniting our resources and abilities for a purpose greater than ourselves.