MESSAGE OUTLINE



Spiritual Plasticity

Ephesians 4:14–16 (NKJV)

14 that we should 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, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

INTRODUCTION

Paul began with: "walk worthy of the calling with which you were called." **Ephesians 4:1**

Every believer has a divine calling, and Paul did too. In **Ephesians 3:8** he says he was called: to preach to the gentiles the boundless riches of Christ.

So what about us? What about you? Like Paul, our calling is also divine. It is a calling from God. And such a magnitude of a calling requires us to walk worthy of it.

What comes to mind of the stature of a person who walks worthy? One who is mature in their growth.

The blueprint of maturity, in **Ephesians 4:13**, *"...till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."*

The picture is of a person we should strive to be, a perfect person, and that person is **Jesus Christ.**

The calling is for all, "till we ***all*** come to the unity of faith and knowledge of" Jesus Christ.

Paul says clearly what God's intent is, that "the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places..." **Ephesians 3:10**

The Church is the *embassy* to let the world know that the King, the Lord Jesus Christ is coming.

That is our job. ***We are ambassadors of Jesus Christ.***

PICTURE OF IMMATURITY: A CHILD

A child is reactive and cannot withstand external pressure. What is this external pressure in Ephesus?

"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." **Acts 20:28-30**

The external, he calls them wolves. They seek to shake them of their foundation of faith.

The internal threat: well intended, but they had the wrong view of being holy and sanctified.

1 Timothy 6:3-5: *"If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words... he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth who suppose that godliness is a means of gain."*

As I urged you... remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine... **1 Timothy 1:3**

The bad doctrine is "useless wranglings" meaning divisions.

When the Bible is taught as abstract speculation, or through reasonable logic—it becomes destitute of the truth and structurally weak and creates immaturity or spiritual childishness rooted in pride or tradition.

Spiritual childishness gullible and naive is a mindset. Logic takes over, it does not live by faith.

So here is the first question for application: is your trust in Jesus, *by faith alone?*

What saved you? What keeps you saved? *Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?* **Galatians 3:3**

By faith you are: chosen, forgiven, redeemed, adopted, justified, free from the law, possessing every spiritual blessing, delivered from the power of darkness, belong to God, reconciled, a child of God, a citizen of the Kingdom of God, marked with a seal—the Spirit of God, who now lives within you. And you now possess eternal life, which means you can enjoy and should have joy, right now and forever and ever.

Believer, this is you, and **need to have that up here (head) and in here (heart) at all times.**

RE-ORDER: SPIRITUAL PLASTICITY
Several times, Paul tells struggling believers who they are in Christ, despite their shortcomings. These are churches with members who are spiritually childish.

In Colossians, Paul corrects believers who were being distracted by legalism and "useless wranglings."

He lists their former sins, and then says they still have sin: *"in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth."* **Colossians 3:7–8**

This is called the "indicative-imperative" tension in the NT:
Paul writes to Christians (the indicative) to start acting like Christians (the imperative).

Their struggle is an identity crisis—acting like *locals*, already made *ambassadors*.

The Great Commission: Go and make disciples, teaching them to obey. A disciple before obedience.

In v.15 notice Christ is the head, but the child, the body is still young and immature.

This kind of growth is naturally backwards. Biologically, the brain matures last. This is called neuroplasticity.

But in Christ, the Head is the part that is already mature. Spiritual maturity for the body of Christ is the process of the uncoordinated body in its parts, catching up to the Christ mind.

Maturity = Spiritual Plasticity: responding to the "Head" leading to Christlikeness through **truth and love.**

Doctrine = how we should act. It is the truth that will lead us to maturity, distinct from the gospel.

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. **Ephesians 4:23-24**

You can change! That is the power of the gospel! What must come first? *Put off... "the old."* Ephesians 4:22.

INDICATIVE: **you are a KINGDOM AMBASSADOR**. *IMPERATIVE*: **START ACTING LIKE IT.**

Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. **Philippians 2:4-7 NASB**

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. **2 Corinthians 4:16**

God is renewing us day after day. Our job: keep the faith and keep moving forward.

MOVEMENT: THE FIRST COMING

v.16 is the formula for growth. The formula for church growth. And the formula for how TBC will grow.

Around 11-12 years old a child begins to have its first existential crisis. They ask, "Why am I here?"

Churches also have them: they get off kilter prioritizing ministries, programs, and entertainment.

Paul is man who is *called*, telling the *called*, to fulfill their *calling*.

"...but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." **Philippians 3:13–14**

Paul is saying these things so that we embrace them and live them out in our lives, just like he does.

The church has new life in Christ. The point of our existence is not ministries, concerts, fellowships, classes, prayer meetings, retreats, buildings, study, SGs, or even services.

Here is the goal: *"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."* **1 Corinthians 11:1**

Imitating Christ's happens when His body is so full of His love, that we become like Christ preaching the truth in love before the people of this world are *gone with the wind.*

It means as a church TBC, we see nothing more important than the Great Commission.

Ephesians 3:9-10: Jewish believers and Gentiles love each other and reach people for Jesus Christ.

And do you know what this means? We need to start helping each other.

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. **Ephesians 5:1-2 NKJV**

It is time for TBC to start acting like a church and for each of us to do their share.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. **2 Corinthians 5:20**

Here is the full application: Know your identity, act like it, and follow Him in love.

INVITATION

Jesus said, *'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.*

Don't you want that? This is the offer: to know Him.

Believing in Christ, something extraordinary happens. You come into Him, and He into you. (John 17:23)

A new birth with a new body... that won't get tired, and won't get sick, and will never die.

Luke 20:36 NKJV - *they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.*

So that forever and ever, there will be the fullness of joy. **(Psalm 16:11)** Joy begins today with Jesus.

Just believe.

Jesse Cesario
Tokyo Baptist Church
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