

The Truth in Love

Paul has warned us that if we are not maturing in Christ we will be “tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine.” There are intentional, evil beings who attempt to destroy us at every turn. But God has given us an answer for the heresies and divisions that assail the Church. Let’s read our text for today:

Ephesians 4:15–16

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.

Throughout the Scriptures the prophets and apostles warned us of false prophets. In Matthew 7:15-20, Jesus warns of false prophets and the Apostle Paul warns the Ephesian elders of the same in Acts 20:29. The Apostles Peter and John frequently cite such warnings. In our day, we, too, hear various “winds of doctrine” blowing through the Church on issues of sexuality, financial management, marriage and divorce, gossip and slander, church fellowship, and many other issues.

The solution that the Apostle gives us is that we would “grow up.” In verses 15 and 16, the Apostle teaches us how it is we are to grow up.

I. Our growth tactic is speaking the truth in love (vs 15a).

A. Speaking the Truth

In verse 25, the Apostle speaks about how we are to live a life of truth, but in verse 15 he seems to be speaking specifically about communicating the truth of the Scriptures, especially the truth of the Gospel. When Jesus speaks of the truth in His high priestly prayer (John 17:17), He says to the Father, “Your word is truth.” Paul reminds us of this in II Timothy 3:16 where we read that the Scriptures are breathed out by God. We must be people of the truth—people who believe and know the truth and people who share the truth with each other. This is essential to our unity and growth.

B. In Love

Six times in his letter to the Ephesians, Paul uses the phrase “in love.” It is obviously a key to our existence. When we speak the truth to each other it is not to put ourselves over people, but rather to come under people that we may promote their welfare. Paul gives a good example of the truth in love in Galatians 6:1-2 where we are instructed how to correct and restore each other.

Obviously we can speak the truth in love because Jesus has done exactly that for each one of us.

II. Our growth target is Jesus Christ (vs. 15b-16)

A. In Christ (vs. 15b)

The object of our speaking the truth in love is that each of us might grow up in Christ. The growth Paul commends to us here is not one of numbers but one of qualitative growth. Christ is the goal of all our teaching.

B. Comprehensively in Christ (vs. 15b)

Notice in verse 15 that we grow up “in every way” into Christ. This growth includes our actions, our speech, and our attitudes. Nothing is left out!

C. Corporately, comprehensively, in Christ (vs. 16)

This is a very complicated sentence in Greek grammar, but we can get the primary thrust of the verse by looking at it this way: “From whom...makes the body grow...” We can see that our growth comes ultimately from Christ. Notice however, that this growth involves the whole body and each part working properly in the body. This suggests that it is not only the evangelists, pastors, and teachers who are communicating the truth in love, but every individual member. As we do this we will indeed be built up in love as the Body of Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is speaking the truth to each other essential in Church unity?
2. Why must the truth be spoken “in love”?
3. Describe an experience when someone spoke truth in love to you that changed your life for the good.
4. How would you define “growing up in Christ”?
5. Describe what it is like to participate in a church that builds itself up in love.

Going Deeper

1. Under what circumstances do you fail to speak the truth to your fellow believers?
2. Under what circumstances do you occasionally fail to speak in love?
3. What measures can you take to grow in both of these areas of your relationship to other believers?