

## 091115 – Eph 4.13-14

For those in the acting business, there's something called "method acting." This is a technique, in which actors try to imagine and create within themselves the thoughts and emotions of their characters. And the purpose is, of course, to try to give authentic performances. It's from this style of acting that we get that very well known question: "So, what's my motivation?"

In the acting world, one great answer might be that "your paycheck is your motivation!" But what about for us?

As we turn to vs 13, Paul is telling the Ephesians to *grow up*. He's pressing these believers to maturity in faith. He will tell them in vs 14 to stop being children. But as he calls them to maturity, he's also giving them the reason, the ground, the basis, the purpose – the motivation – for this kind of maturity.

### **UNTIL WE ALL ATTAIN:**

In vs 13, Paul uses three epexegetical appositives – three phrases which all refer to the same thing, but with somewhat different words.

- *Until we all attain:*
  - o *to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge<sup>1</sup> of the Son of God,*
  - o *to a mature or complete man*
  - o *to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*

I understand the phrase *a mature man* or *a complete man* as the hinge on which *unity* and *the measure of the stature* turn. That is, a mature man demonstrates a:

- unity grounded in faith and the knowledge of the Son of God
- stature that is grounded in the fullness of Christ.

### **THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST:**

We have already talked about unity in vs 3. We talked about faith and knowledge in vs 4. So we concentrate only on this last phrase today: *until we all attain ... to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.*

This phrase is easier to understand than it may first appear. Imagine a child who is measured against a door on a regular basis and the parent makes little marks, perhaps against the pantry door frame or a bedroom door frame. The child is measured, in order to perceive his stature – his standing, or the appearance of his maturity. We may know the

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<sup>1</sup> Hodge suggests the meaning here as *erkennen*, rather than *kennen*.

calendar age, but we also want to see the physical development, in order to ascertain if it's commensurate with the temporal development.

It has occurred to me that most of our lives are an attempt to measure up.

- Perhaps in our employment we have objective standards against which we are measured. We have to produce so many widgets per hour, bill so many hours per year, or see so many patients per day.
- We have time deadlines: this project has to be completed by this date. We have to finish this school assignment by next week.
- Sometimes the measurements are softer in nature: customer satisfaction has to increase by 5% over the next year.
- Sometimes it's an unhealthy kind of pressure to measure up. Perhaps we're trying to measure up to the harsh and unfair standards of flawless perfection in the eyes of someone, who themselves is pretty imperfect, like a spouse or a parent.
- And maybe we're driven internally to measure up to some kind of standard, the reasons for which we don't even recognize.

For the Christian, we are also measured against certain Biblical standards – such as the unity, faith, and knowledge of the Son of God here in vs 13. From that one may determine how well the Christian is doing. And there are many such standards in Scripture.

- We can go back to the beginning of the chapter and examine one's *humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love, eagerness to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*<sup>2</sup>
- Or perhaps we look at a list like the fruit of the Spirit in Gal 5: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*
- Or what about this one: *You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect?*<sup>3</sup>

The problem with any of these standards is the risk that we might not measure up! Like the unreasonable parent or the harsh boss, it always seems that “measuring up” and “growing up” are elusive goals. And so when we read these words, that we must attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, well, that seems pretty much an abstraction – and a hopeless one, at that.

So what does this fullness of Christ mean? Fortunately, Paul has already introduced this idea in his letter to the Ephesians – twice, in fact. Let's look at both of them. First, turn to chapter 1.15.

- What is Paul's prayer in chapter 1?<sup>4</sup> It is *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him (vs 17).*

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<sup>2</sup> Eph 4.2–3

<sup>3</sup> Mat 5.48

<sup>4</sup> Eph 1.15–23

- It is his prayer in vss 18 and 19 that *having the eyes of your hearts enlightened by that same Father, so that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.*
- It is Paul's prayer to God that He might grant to them to know *what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, vss 19–20.*
- And this sovereign Christ rules over everything and is the Father's gift to his children, the church, so that we the church might be the fullness of Christ, who in turn is the fullness of everything.

Now turn to chapter 3.14.<sup>5</sup>

- Paul bows his knees *before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened ... (14–16).*
- In vs 19, he's praying these things *that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

That's the strange thing, isn't it? God does it for us! Look at 3.20 and following:

*Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.<sup>6</sup>*

### **MEANING OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST:**

#### **Our weakness is His strength demonstrated:**

We are being called to grow up, that's true. But the call is not that we should be more of this or do more of that. The call is to fully recognize the value and power of the Father's love, the richness of the Son's redemption, and the Spirit's power. It is to grow up into a unified faith, a unified knowledge of the Son of God.

The Father has done the work through Christ's atonement, now act like it. The Holy Spirit has been given to you as a down payment on your inheritance, now act like it. My maturity is an act of God's grace, accomplished through His power – in spite of (or maybe because of) my weakness! That's exactly what Paul means when he says to the Corinthians:

*I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses,*

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<sup>5</sup> Eph 3.14–19

<sup>6</sup> Eph 3.20–4.1

*insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*<sup>7</sup>

**Our need is His grace manifested:**

That's exactly the message behind Eph 2.4 and following, that the more you know Christ and the power of his love, the more you'll act like it.

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*<sup>8</sup>

The fullness of Christ is this: that by the sovereign pleasure and will of God we have been filled up and filled to overflowing with the facts and the effects of our salvation. He has done it, we receive it. It is accomplished, it is finished, and we are called the sons of God, no longer the enemies of God.

The fullness of Christ is that we, as “the body of believers,” are “filled with the presence, power, agency, riches of God and of Christ ... a body wholly filled and flooded by God.”<sup>9</sup> The fullness of Christ is that we have, by faith, embraced this grace – and even the faith in the grace is a gift.

**IMPLICATIONS / APPLICATIONS:**

The fullness of Christ is that which God does for and to us, not that which we do for Him. As the old hymn says: “Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe.”

The truth of these things ought to propel us to obedience. But Christians are too much like children, who don't fully understand the world around them. I am handed a bag full of gold coins, but I consider them pretty stones to skip across the pond. I am handed a will, written by God himself, a will that details my inheritance, and I think it's quite suitable for making paper airplanes!

*May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.*<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 2Co 12.9–10

<sup>8</sup> Eph 2.4–10

<sup>9</sup> See Thayer, (4282) πλήρωμα, para 1.

<sup>10</sup> Eph 1.17–19

## **Family Ethics – Grow Up ... Into What?**

Ephesians 4.13

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

1. Summary of Ephesians 4
  - 1.1. Vs 1, “walk in a worthy manner, according to the calling with which they have been called,” a calling detailed in 1.3-14.
  - 1.2. Vs 2, this calling has characteristics attached to it: humility, gentleness, patience, and tolerance.
  - 1.3. Vs 3, this character of a called Christian summed up by saying that it is diligent to preserve unity through peace.
  - 1.4. Vss 4-6, doctrine of the Trinity as the basis for unity in diversity.
  - 1.5. Vss 7-10, the source of godly diversity is that Christ bestows grace on each of us as He wills.
  - 1.6. Vs 11, He gives pastoral leadership to develop unity and diversity under Christ’s authority.
  - 1.7. Vs 12, he gives us the purpose for leadership; that the church be equipped, in order to serve, in order to further build up the body of Christ.
  - 1.8. Vss 13-14, all call for godly maturity – the stature of the fullness of Christ.
2. Uses of the theme “the fullness of Christ”
  - 2.1. Eph 1.15–23
  - 2.2. Eph 3.14–19
3. Meaning of the phrase “the fullness of Christ”
  - 3.1. Our weakness is His strength demonstrated
  - 3.2. Our need is His grace manifested

### **How Deep The Father's Love For Us**

*Stuart Townend*

How deep the Father's love for us,  
How vast beyond all measure,  
That He should give His only Son,  
To make a wretch His treasure.

How great the pain of searing loss,  
The Father turns His face away,  
As wounds which mar the chosen One,  
Bring many sons to glory.

Behold the Man upon His cross,  
My sin upon His shoulders.  
Ashamed I hear my mocking voice,  
Call out among the scoffers.

It was my sin that held Him there  
Until it was accomplished.  
His dying breath has brought me life.  
I know that it is finished.

I will not boast in anything;  
No gifts, no power, no wisdom.  
But I will boast in Jesus Christ,  
His death and resurrection.

Why should I gain from His reward?  
I cannot give an answer.  
But this I know with all my heart:  
His wounds have paid my ransom.