The Church Built in the Knowledge of Christ Withstands the Storm of False Teachers.
Ephesians 4:11-16 (13-16)
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I. Historical Background.

The church is one in Christ. Yet the LORD has given **diverse spiritual gifts** to the church. What are these spiritual gifts? How do these gifts function? What is the purpose of these spiritual gifts? Ephesians 4:11-16 answers these questions. Healthy churches are growing churches. A church can be small and strong or big and weak. Church growth is not big crowds or congregations, large budgets, and huge facilities. It is Christlike. Healthy churches growing to maturity in Christ.

II. Biblical Context

Ephesians 4:11-16 is one of the most powerful passages In the Bible after the cross. We are not only to understand what God has done for the church through Christ by His saving the church but what He saved the church for. Paul the Apostle has clearly elaborated on the salvation of the church in Ephesians. God created a people to wholly love, trust and serve Him.

III. The Lesson

1. **vv. 11-12**. **Diverse Spiritual Gifts**

These verses identify some of the spiritual gifts given to the church. These are the God-given abilities enabling some Christians to function as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and others in roles as pastors and teachers and to serve. God gave certain gifts and

associated them with certain key positions in the church. Christ equipped these persons with gifts and positions to train, equip and protect the sheep. Their responsibility is the perfecting of the Saints. The aim of this ministry of Christian service is for the edifying of the body of Christ, that is to build up the church numerically and spiritually.

“Apostle” meant “sent one”. Apostles were eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, commissioned to proclaim the Gospel (the Good News) and establish the church. They were the apostles of Christ.

In the Old and New Testaments, a prophet “forth told” (declaring God’s word to a specific situation based on what God said) as well as “foretelling” (about some aspect of the future based on what God had revealed in His word regarding His divine response to obedience and disobedience). Modern prophets do not speak in the same authority as the first century prophets who brought God’s foundational word (Eph. 2:20).

Evangelists were people with an anointing to preach the Gospel in such a way that sinners repented of their sins and turned to Christ. The root meaning of “evangelist” is “to bring good tidings” or “to bring the Gospel message”, to preach the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

“Pastor/ teacher” shepherd the flock of God primarily though preaching and teaching the Word of God, having a dual function. They are to feed the sheep and teach the word of God.. 2 Timothy charges: “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.” Pastors-teachers are gifts from Christ to nurture the church to maturity by teaching God’s word.

2. **vv. 13-14**. **There is Purpose in providing the Spiritual Gifts**

Christ had a purpose in mind when He gives gifts to the church. These are gifts through which growth can come. If these instructors are not rightly living out their calling, then the church will be weak. If the pastor, for example, believes the church can grow because he is a good administrator or preacher, then he will ultimately fail. He may have a big congregation, but not God's blessing. Christians are to be childlike, not childish. Paul emphasized the immaturity and instability of children: "tossed to and fro by the waves". This is a picture of a church adrift. The storm-tossed waves drive the church from one extreme to another.

3. **vv. 15-16. The Church Grows Strong when Believers utilize their Gifts**

Verse 15 states, "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ". The body (life) of the church must be characterized by speaking the truth in love. This speaks to not only how we are to relate to one another in God's family, but also to how leaders and Saints are to deal with deceivers. We need people in our lives who will tell the truth. Another way maturity is described is the growing up into Jesus, who is the head. This defines the direction of maturity. We never grow "independent" of Jesus; we grow up into Him. As Christ units Christians with Himself, Christ also brings them into a harmonious relationship with one another. This harmonious relationship is accomplished "by that which every joint supplieth" or by every supporting ligament. Christ joins believers together and unites them by the divinely ordained ministries of Christians who possess diverse spiritual gifts. The evidence of maturity—that the leaders and Saints are all doing a great job—is this effective working. This means every part and joint provides what it can supply in a

coordinated effort. God wants us to see the church as a body where every part does its share.

IV. Conclusion

Christ builds His church through mutual edification: “joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped.” The joints, ligaments and muscles of the body hold it together and equip it to grow. So it is in the church. But each part must work properly. Every member of the body has a function. When every member is working properly, it makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. It is a sin against the body of Christ to come to church and only spectate, receive or criticize. We have work to do!