

This is a Great Mystery

A Study of Ephesians

Week 18 – Ephesians 4:14-19

Prayer – Dear Lord, what a blessing it is to be connected to you. As functioning parts of your body, empower and encourage us through your Word and through each other to do what you have set in order for us to do. Hold your truth always before our eyes so that we would not be led astray. Bless us as we study more of your truth today. Amen.

Introduction – Read verses 11-13 to review the line of thought leading into today’s verses.

Ephesians 4:14 – ἵνα μηκέτι ὦμεν νήπιοι, κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι παντὶ ἀνέμῳ τῆς διδασκαλίας ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἐν πανουργίᾳ πρὸς τὴν μεθοδεῖαν τῆς πλάνης,

Then we will no longer be infants, being tossed here and there by waves, and carried here and there by every wind of teaching, by the trickery of men, by craftiness with reference to deceitful schemes.

1. It might seem like Paul is throwing together a random picture of a baby trying to sail the open sea. But reading this verse in context helps us see the connection that Paul is making. When Paul brings up “infants,” to what is he contrasting that?
2. Imagine how quickly a ship piloted by infants would be sunk amid a storm on the open sea! They wouldn’t be able to hold their own against the waves and wind. The Church faces similar circumstances with all the winds, waves, and deceitful schemes that exist in the world. What are some such deceitful teachings in our world today?
 - a. What’s implied by the word “schemes”?
3. What would be the tragic result if the Church were left to itself against these things?
4. However, what words in this verse remind us that the Church is not left to itself?

Ephesians 4:15-16 – ἀληθεύοντες δὲ ἐν ἀγάπῃ αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα, ὃς ἐστὶν ἡ κεφαλὴ, Χριστός, **16** ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβαζόμενον διὰ πάσης ἀφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας κατ' ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου μέρους τὴν αὐξήσιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ.

Instead, as we [always] speak the truth in love, we would in all things grow up into him who is the head, Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being joined together and held together by every supporting ligament, produces the growth of the body for building itself up in love according to the working in (proper) measure by each individual part.

5. Here's another way to avoid being tossed about like infants on the open sea—speak the truth in love. This is another present verb, as shown by the “always.” Remember, present verbs in Greek indicate continuous action. There is never a time when we can separate truth and love in our speech. In what ways does that encourage you, especially when you are sharing God's Word with someone?
6. It's important to note that everything in verse 16 is done with the understanding that Christ is the head. If that were not the case, where might the focus be drawn?
7. We often talk about the hands, eyes, and feet of the body of Christ, but even the supporting ligaments are important. What might be some examples of real-life “ligaments” in the Church?
8. Each individual part of Christ's body works according to its “functioning capacity” (as one Greek dictionary put it for “measure”). First, put that in your own words.
 - a. Second, in what ways do we see that to be true in...
 - i. An individual congregation?
 - ii. A church body, like a synod?
 - iii. The Holy Christian Church?

What comments and questions do you have?

Ephesians 4:17-19 – Τοῦτο οὖν λέγω καὶ μαρτύρομαι ἐν κυρίῳ, μηκέτι ὑμᾶς περιπατεῖν, καθὼς καὶ τὰ ἔθνη περιπατεῖ ἐν ματαιότητι τοῦ νοῦς αὐτῶν, **18** ἐσκοτωμένοι τῇ διανοίᾳ ὄντες, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ θεοῦ διὰ τὴν ἄγνοιαν τὴν οὖσαν ἐν αὐτοῖς, διὰ τὴν πῶρωσιν τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν, **19** οἵτινες ἀπηλγυκότες ἑαυτοὺς παρέδωκαν τῇ ἀσελγείᾳ εἰς ἐργασίαν ἀκαθαρσίας πάσης ἐν πλεονεξίᾳ.

Therefore, this is what I say and testify in the Lord: you are no longer to walk as the Gentiles walk in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, having been alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart. 19 Because they have lost all sensitivity, they have handed themselves over to sensuality so as to practice every kind of immorality with greediness (for more).

9. “Therefore” – A big connecting word, indicating a shift in thought. Usually, when pastors encounter this word, to help them understand the line of thought (where it came from and where it’s going), they will ask themselves “What is the ‘therefore’ there for?” Okay, maybe that’s just a Pastor Proeber thing...But, let’s answer that question: what is the therefore there for? In other words, what did Paul say in verses 15 and 16 that compels him to say what he says in verses 17-19?
10. In verse 17, the word for “futility” can mean “purposelessness” or “emptiness.” How are these words accurate descriptions of the unbelieving way of thinking?
 - a. Paul adds to that thought with his descriptions of the Gentiles and their way of life in verse 18. Their way of thinking is dark, it results in being alienated from life in God, it is ignorant thinking, it hardens their hearts. What is Paul making clear by heaping up all these things?
 - b. Before we get too far into patting ourselves on the back, what do we have to remember about ourselves?
11. In verse 19, the word that is typically translated “lost all sensitivity” has the dictionary entry “to be so accustomed that one is not bothered by the implications of what one is doing—become callous, dead to feeling.” That’s difficult to transfer over into readable English, but it’s worth sharing. In what way does that shape our approach for witnessing to others?
12. This is not the only letter where Paul compares the way of the Gentile (or the flesh) with the way of the Spirit. Let’s dive into two of those sections to see some more detail than what we get here. There’s no real question here, but feel free to comment or ask anything after each section is read; again, this is mostly to add some specifics to what Paul is writing to the Ephesians.
 - a. Galatians 5:19-26
 - b. Colossians 3:5-11

13. Notice, too, that there is a greediness for more immorality in the unbeliever. We see that to be true in greed for money, but also in other sins of the flesh like addiction. But it can also happen with things that don't seem so bad like laziness or missing worship. When a pattern of sinful behavior is not nipped in the bud, this lust for more sin can take place in any person's heart. This is part of the reason for the Peter Plan, as you might recall from the information that has recently been shared.

This is kind of a rough place to leave it, but that's the way the Greek breaks up the sentences and, from a train-of-thought standpoint, this gives a clean break for next time.

What comments and questions do you have?

Closing Prayer Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus CW 452 v. 4

**Let us gladly live with Jesus;
Since He's risen from the dead,
Death and grave must soon release us.
Jesus, Thou art now our Head,
We are truly Thine own members;
Where Thou livest, there live we.
Take and own us constantly,
Faithful Friend, as Thy dear brethren.
Jesus, here I live to Thee,
Also there eternally. Amen.**