

# The Head of the Church



"The church is a workshop, not a dormitory."

**ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

## REFLECTION and PREPARATION

How do you gauge *your* spiritual maturity? How do you measure *the church's* spiritual maturity? The English bishop J.C. Ryle once said, "Church greatness consists in being greatly serviceable." If serviceable is defined as "capable of being put to good use; or able to serve a purpose without elaboration..." how serviceable are you...

- To share the Gospel?
- To counsel the hurting?
- To stand in spiritual battle?
- To teach the Word of God?
- To go to the mission field?
- To help build the church?

Robert Murray McCheyne says it best when he writes, "It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus."

## LESSON AIM:

- To gain an understanding of the nature of Christ's headship (Lordship) in the church and to discover what it means for us individually and corporately.

## DISCUSSION: Is the following statement true or false? (circle one)

- Every true believer will grow spiritually. T F

### THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST

In part one of this lesson, we discovered that *Christ's headship is God's order of authority over us (1 Cor.11:3)*. In part two, we learned that *Christ's headship is God's gift of supremacy to us (Eph.1:22-23)*. Now in this lesson, we will consider how...

### 3. Christ's headship is God's desire for maturity in us.

Under the previous heading, we discovered that Christ's *present enthronement* guarantees the outcome that "*all things*" will *ultimately* and *visibly* be brought under His feet. But until that time, He has a present interest...*the maturity of His church*.

**Ephesians 4:15**—but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ

The context of Ephesians 4 helps us to understand how this maturity is arrived at.

- a. In order to help each member of His church grow, what provision was given by Christ according to Ephesians 4:7?

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- b. From the giving of (saving) grace by Christ to "*each*" member of His church, He now gives "*some*" grace gifts for the equipping of the church. What four gifts does Christ give to the church for its progress toward growth? Read Ephesians 4:11.

- A
- P
- E
- P

- c. According to verse 12, what is the **three-fold purpose** of the gifts given by Christ?
  1. **For the \_\_\_\_\_ of the saints.** The verb "*equip*" (*katartismos*) carries with it the thought of mending a net and preparing it for us. It also speaks of setting a dislocated or broken bone so that it is restored (*Matt.4:21; Gal.6:1; Heb.13:21*). These gifts of Christ should not divide the saints but rather set them *individually* and *subordinately* in a right relationship to each other.
  2. **For the works of \_\_\_\_\_.** The phrase "*works of service*" (*eis ergon diakonias*) means *with a view to do the works of a servant*—to fulfill the desire of his/her Master. Gifts are given to empower to saints to serve the Lord which is the practical outworking of God's love (*Matt.20:28; Acts 20:24*).

3. **To the \_\_\_\_\_ up of the body of Christ.** The critical issue is not *the quantity of saints*, but *the quality of saints*. To edify (*oikodome*) is to build up, but the view Paul has in mind is not just *individual edification*, but rather *corporate edification*. The Word of God has the *inherent ability* to erect a superstructure of holiness in our lives (*Acts 20:32*). Gifts are given with a view to stimulating *mutual help* and *mutual edification*.

- d. What is the inevitable result or goal for the equipping according to Ephesians 4:13-15?

**Goal #1:**

- <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith,

**What is the unity of the faith?** It is not *the act of belief*, but *the content or body of Christian truth*. The content of the faith in its most complete form is *the Gospel*.

Do you know what the Gospel is? Do you know what it is not?

Finish these statements:

The Gospel is not...

The Gospel is...

**Goal #2:**

- and of the knowledge of the Son of God,

**Knowledge** (*epignosis*) conveys the idea of an *intimate, more thorough, accurate, experiential* knowledge of Christ. It is more than just facts about Him, but without biblical truth, you cannot know Him. Theological accuracy and doctrinal substance are important. Stuart Olyott points out that when we are ignorant of the knowledge of the truth, eight things happen:

1. God is not worship or loved as He should be.
2. The Trinitarian nature of salvation is not admired.
3. Believers are unaware of their privileges.
4. Believers are confused about how to live.
5. Personal witness is impoverished.
6. The way to holiness is obscured.
7. Church life is not ordered.
8. Prayer is superficial.<sup>9</sup>

However, the goal of maturity is not just BIBLE knowledge, but *knowledge of the Son of God*.

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<sup>9</sup> Stuart Olyott, *Preaching, Pure and Simple*, [Bryntirion Press], pp.55-74

Think of it this way:

The Bible is a large box filled with *jewels*. It is a wonderful thing to pick up each individual jewel, to examine it closely and to be moved by its beauty. But why not also tell people that those gems belong to *a King who has a place for each one in His crown?* When we see how all the jewels fit together to adorn the King's head, we will never look at the individual jewels as we did before.

**Goal #3:**

- to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

**Mature** (*teleois*) means *complete, fully developed, brought to its end, wanting nothing necessary to completeness or good working order*. The standard that we measure our growth against is Christ Himself.

Howard Hendricks once said,

"The Bible was not written to satisfy your curiosity, but to make you conform to Christ's image. Not to make you a smarter sinner, but to make you like the Savior. Not to fill your head with a collection of biblical facts, but to transform your life."

**Goal #4:**

- <sup>14</sup> As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

This speaks of **doctrinal stability**. One of the things which characterizes a child is *a lack of stability*. The second thing is a *vulnerability* which makes them easy to be deceived. Maturity brings about *a stability* and an *ability* not to be deceived by false teachers and false teaching. Mixing the metaphor, Paul uses a nautical metaphor—to show *the danger of continuing as a child in spiritual things*.

Think of a ship being "*tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine,*" you wouldn't want a baby in the captain's chair, would you? Think of what would happen to a child in this predicament. They would become discouraged and seasick. They would lose their way. This is no place for a child! Likewise, Paul is teaching us that this dangerous world is no place for immature, thumb-sucking Christians.

**Goal #5:**

- <sup>15</sup> but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,

Speaking the truth in love is Paul's shorthand of *teaching integrity*. The idea is *speaking the truth* and *walking in a truthful way*. Someone has said, "Truth without love is brutality and love without truth is hypocrisy."

"...To grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head..." means more than we are to *grow into resemblance* to Him, or that our growth is to be according to *His example*. It means that He is the source from which the grace or power come to make growth possible. And no area ("grow up in all aspects...") of the Christian's life should go underdeveloped and undeveloped.

JESUS AS OUR HEAD not only *makes growth possible*, He is to be *the object and goal* to which our growth, at every stage, must *look to and be directed*.

Since growth is a matter of *grace plus knowledge plus obedience plus time*, we do not need to be discouraged if we find that we are not yet completely like Christ.

Some years ago, a button could be seen on the lapel of many Christians. The button read:

P B P G I N T W M Y

When you asked that person, "What do those letters stand for?" he or she would reply, "Please Be Patient, God Is Not Through With Me Yet."

This is not a statement of an *unwillingness* to change, but of a recognition that change *takes time and grace*—but *it is* taking place! Don't be discouraged if you are not experiencing overnight spiritual maturity. Remember, God takes years to grow a mighty oak tree, but He can grow a squash in three months and a radish plant in a few weeks! Which would you rather be!

**Practically applied:** There are five goals for which the grace gifts of Christ are given to the church.

- Gospel unity
- Spiritual conformity
- Spiritual maturity
- Doctrinal stability
- Faithful testimony/integrity

Since no area of the Christian's life should go underdeveloped and undeveloped...

- We should grow in KNOWLEDGE of Christ.
- We should grow in LOVE for Christ.
- We should grow in FAITH toward Christ.
- We should grow in OBEDIENCE to Christ.

Christ is the standard and the source. One of the chief tools in the devil's arsenal of discouragement is *comparison*. Don't compare yourself with others. Do what Paul did. He set his eyes on one goal and one standard—"the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil.3:13-14). Which is...likeness to Christ.



## HART-TO-HEART

*Jody Hart, Editor and Director Mountaintop Resources*

### **Growing Up!**

Have you ever noticed how disproportioned babies' bodies are? Maybe you haven't! We tend to just marvel at how cute they are. I did not ever notice this until my husband pointed it out to me with our kids. "Look! He can't even put his arms over his head! They are so short." And you know, he was right! Only as babies begin to mature physically into toddlers and then small children do they have the ability to reach both arms over their heads and touch hand to hand.

If we go with this picture when we think of Christ as the head of the body, the church, I can imagine a grand head and a very disproportioned body! We get saved and become part of this underdeveloped body. We nourish it with the Word and prayer, and slowly become part of the growing body...in physical number, yes, but more so in Christlikeness, as our Head leads us.

It's amazing to think about how connected we really are to Jesus. And aren't you thankful that one day we will be a fully matured church?! No more parts out of proportion. Fully grown up in Him...with Him...forever.

## ANSWER KEY:

### DISCUSSION

- True

### 3. Christ's headship is God's desire for maturity in us.

a. saving grace with includes grace (or spiritual) gifts

b.

- Apostles
- Prophets
- Evangelists
- Pastors

c.

1. *equipping*
2. *service*
3. *building*

d.

#### Goal #1:

The Gospel is not...

Answers will vary. Examples include: "God loves me and wants me to be happy." or "You get to heaven by doing good works or religious activity." (you may elaborate on these)

The Gospel is...

The good news of the Person and work of Jesus Christ (you may elaborate on this)

© September 24, 2018 The Church at South Mountain

Previous versions: July 28, 2018; August 10, 21, 2018

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