

DIOCESE OF ILESA
CHURCH OF NIGERIA
(ANGLICAN COMMUNION)
CLERGY SCHOOL 2013

THEME: EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

STUDY – 2

TOPIC: TOWARDS UNITY IN THE FAITH AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

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Text: Ephesians 4:13-14

INTRODUCTION

Yesterday we looked at Ephesians 4: 11 – 12 and we discussed that Christ gave certain ministerial gifts to officers of His Church which will enable them to equip the members of the body of Christ in turn. Notably we highlighted two main divisions: One, The means of equipping the Church members. That Christ chose to give some..." And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers"(Eph. 4:11).

Then two, The purpose of the gifts, "For the perfecting (equipping) of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying (building up) of the body of Christ".

The apostle Paul, in the early Verses of this chapter (4:1-) appealed to the believers and said," I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that **ye walk worthy** of the vocation wherewith ye are called," {of the Lord: or, in the Lord}(Eph 3:1; Phil. 1:27; Col 1:10; 1Th 2:12; Phi. 1:1,9).

How? With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

(Ac 20:19; Ga 5:22-23; Col 3:12-13). Verse 3 says," Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."(Col 3:14). He went further to buttress the fact that ," There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;" (Ro 12:5; 1Co 12:4,11-13; Eph 1:18; 2:16). One Lord, one faith, one baptism," (1Co 1:13; 8:6; 12:5; 2Co 11:4; Gal. 3:27-28; Eph. 4:13; Heb 6:6; Jude 1:3). One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. This is just the main reason for Unity in the Church of God.

We must not forget that by grace we were equipped to equip others. " But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ"(Ro 12:3,6; 1Co 12:11).

Today, we want to discuss together again under two main sub-headings, 1. Attaining to the Unity of the Faith. 2.The Benefits of attaining to maturity in Christ.

We shall base our discussion on Ephesians 4: 13 & 14. Thus we read,

Verse 13, Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: {in: or, into} {stature: or, age}.1Co 14:20; Col 1:28; 2:2

Verse 14, That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;(Isa 28:9; Mt 11:7; Ro 16:18; 1Co 14:20; 2Co 2:17; Heb 13:9)

1.ATTAINING TO THE UNITY OF THE FAITH - Eph. 4:13; 1Cor. 14:20; Col. 1:28; 2:2.

Till we all come, v. 13. The gifts and offices (some of them) which have been spoken of are to continue in the church till the saints be perfected, which will not be till they all come in the unity of the faith (till all true believers meet together, by means of the same precious faith) and of the knowledge of the Son of God, by which we are to understand, not a bare speculative knowledge, or the acknowledging of Christ to be the Son of God and the great Mediator, but such as is attended with appropriation and affection, with all due honour, trust, and obedience.

Now note:

- i. *Till we all come in the unity of the faith* - expresses not just merely duration but also purpose. Unity carries the ideal of Eph.4:1-6. "Faith" refers to the Christians' common conviction about Christ and the doctrines concerning Him, as the following word make clear – the apostle's teachings in Acts 2: 42.
- ii. *And of the knowledge of the Son of God* – unity is not just a matter of loving attitude or religious feeling, but of truth and a common understanding about God's Son, Jesus Christ.
- iii. *Unto a perfect/mature man* - maturity...fullness of Christ. Not the maturity of doctrinal conviction just mentioned, nor a personal maturity that includes the ability to relate well to other people (Eph. 4:2-3), but the maturity of the perfectly balanced character of Christ.
- iv. *unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*

Q.1: Unity is not just a matter of loving attitude or religious feeling, but of truth and a common understanding about God's Son, Jesus Christ. Expatiate on this.

Q.2: Read Eph. 4:1-6 and enumerate the ideals of Christian unity that are necessary for equipping the saints in today's Christendom.

Q.3: Why is it that despite proliferation of Churches/ministries, revival meetings/crusades etc that the knowledge of many Christians in Nigeria is very shallow? Read Eph.1:17; John 669

Now we shall never come to the perfect man, till we come to the perfect world. There is fullness in Christ and a fullness to be derived from him; and a certain stature of that fullness, and a measure of that stature, are assigned in the counsel of God to every believer. And we may never come to that measure till we get to heaven.

God's children, as long as they are in this world, are growing every day. Dr Lightfoot understands the apostle as speaking here of Jews and Gentiles knit in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, so making a perfect man, and the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The Apostle Paul, further explained, in the following verses, what was God's design in his sacred institutions, and what effect they ought to have upon us. That will take us to the next sub-heading

2.THE BENEFITS OF ATTAINING TO MATURITY IN CHRIST – Eph. 4:14; Isa 28:9; Mt 11:7; Ro 16:18; 1Co 14:20; 2Co 2:17; Heb 13:9.

“ That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;”

i. That we henceforth be no more children. In some respects Christians are to be like children. They are to be docile, gentle, mild, and free from ambition, pride, and haughtiness. Matt. 18:2; Matt. 18:3. But children have other characteristics besides simplicity and docility. They are often changeable, Matt. 11:17; they are credulous (too ready to believe things and therefore easily deceived), and are influenced easily by others, and led astray. In these respects, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to be no longer children, but urges them to put on the characteristics of manhood; and especially to put on the firmness in religious opinion which became maturity of life.

Q.1: Briefly analyze how some fake miracle workers and false teachers have been feeding fat on the ignorance of average church-goers and how to tackle the issue. Matt.9:36; Eze. 34:5, 12

ii. Tossed to and fro. This word is taken from waves or billows that are constantly tossed about--in all ages an image of instability of character and purpose.

iii. And carried about with every wind of doctrine. With no firmness; no settled course; no helm. The idea is that of a vessel on the restless ocean, that is tossed about with every varying wind, and that has no settled line of sailing. So many persons are in regard to religious doctrines. They have no fixed views and principles. They hold no doctrines that are settled in their minds by careful and patient examination; and the consequence is, that they yield to every new opinion, and submit to the guidance of every new teacher. The doctrine taught here is, that we should have settled religious opinions. We should carefully examine what is truth, and having found it, should adhere to it, and not yield on the coming of every new teacher. We should not, indeed, close our minds against conviction. We should be open to argument, and be willing to follow the truth wherever it will lead us. But this state of mind is not inconsistent with having settled opinions, and with being firm in holding them until we are convinced that we are wrong.

No man can be useful who has not settled principles. No one who has not such principles can inspire confidence or be happy; and the first aim of every young convert should be to acquire settled views of the truth, and to become firmly grounded in the doctrines of the gospel.

Q.2: Discuss how the priests/pastors can equip their parishioners to avoid being swayed from the true faith in Christ by the false prophets/teachers in these last days.

Q.3: The doctrine taught here is, that we should have settled religious opinions. What does that mean and do you subscribe to it?

- v. *By the sleight of men. The cunning, skill, trickery of men.* The word used here-- kubeia-is from a Greek word kubos meaning a cube, a die, and properly means a game at dice. Hence it means game, gambling; and then anything that turns out by mere chance or hap-hazardous a game at dice does. It may possibly also denote the trick or fraud that is sometimes used in such games; but it seems rather to denote a man's forming his religious opinions by the throw of a die; or, in other words, it describes a man whose opinions seem to be the result of mere chance. Anything like casting a die, or like opening the Bible at random to determine a point of duty or doctrine may come under the description of the apostle here, and would all be opposed to the true mode, that by calm examination of the Bible, and by prayer.

A man who forms his religious principles by chance, can unformed them in the same way; and he who has determined his faith by one cast of the die, will be likely to throw them into another form by another. The phrase, "the sleight of men," therefore, I would render, "by the mere chance of men, or as you may happen to find men, one holding this opinion, and the next that, and allowing yourself to be influenced by them without any settled principles."

v. *Cunning craftiness. Deceit, trick, art.* See 2Cor. 12:16; Luke 20:23; 1Cor. 3:19; 2Cor. 4:2; 2Cor. 11:3.

vi. *Whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* Literally, "Unto the method of deceit;" that is, in the usual way of deceit. Doddridge, "In every method of deceit." This is the true idea. The meaning is, that men would use plausible pretences, and would, if possible, deceive the professed friends of Christ. Against such we should be on our guard; and not by their arts should our opinions be formed, but by the word of God.

vii. *"Carried about" Jas 1:6*

CONCLUSION

These offices are given in order that all may come to a goal that is named just below. They must be continued in some form until that goal is reached.

Paul, as an apostle and a prophet, exhorts to the same end. As an apostle and prophets, he so exhorts still. Every evangelist and pastor who is under God's spirit should labour to the same end. Not only

"unity of the faith," but unity of the knowledge of the Son of God is aimed at. Full unity of the faith will be found when all alike know Christ.

The second end to be attained is a noble manhood, fully developed, after the modes of life furnished in Christ Jesus. This must be the aim of all teaching, and of all living. If we cannot attain fully to it in the flesh, we certainly can aim at it and grow more and more into Christ's likeness.

PRAYER: Extemporal