

**THE SOVEREIGN GOD AND**  
**THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL:**  
**A STUDY OF EPHESIANS**  
(LESSON FIFTY-SIX)  
**“TRUTHING IN LOVE”**

**EPHESIANS 4:11-16 (KING JAMES VERSION)**

*11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;*

*12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:*

*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.*

*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;*

*15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

*16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

**EPHESIANS 4:11-16 NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

*11 And he himself gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,*

*12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ,*

*13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God — a mature person, attaining to the measure of Christ’s full stature.*

*14 So we are no longer to be children, tossed back and forth by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching by the trickery of people who craftily carry out their deceitful schemes.*

*15 But practicing the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Christ, who is the head.*

*16 From him the whole body grows, fitted and held together through every supporting ligament. As each one does its part, the body builds itself up in love.*

In **Ephesians 4**, chapter **11**, the Apostle Paul identifies the ministry gifts which the Lord Jesus Christ has given to His mystical Body the Church. He writes, *“And he gave some, **apostles**; and some, **prophets**; and some, **evangelists**; and some, **pastors and teachers**.”*

In verse **12**, he informs his readers that the purpose of these ministry gifts is to *“equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ.”* The purpose of the ministry gifts, is to completely outfit the members of the Body of Christ to carry out the work of the ministry, so that the Body of Christ might be edified. It is **not** the responsibility of the ministry gifts to do the work of the ministry. Their work is to **equip** the believers to do the work of the ministry. And the instrument or tool that they are to use to do the equipping is **the Word of God**.

The statement of the great purpose of the ministry gifts, given by Christ to His Body, is followed in verse **13** by a statement of the time this provision is to last, or the point at which the great purpose in view is to be realized. Paul writes, *“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.”*

The equipping work of the ministry gifts is to continue until all the members of the Body of Christ have come to their proper unity and maturity in their Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul gives no clear indication of the specific time that this will occur, and it may be, therefore, that he has in view only the goal itself and the attainment of it at whatever time that may take effect.

In our previous **Lesson**, we stated that in summarizing verses **11-13**, we may say that the first evidence of spiritual growth is **Christlikeness**.

In verse **14**, Paul emphasizes the second evidence of spiritual growth which is **stability**. He writes, *“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.”*

The word *“that”* at the beginning of the verse, is the translation of a Greek word which means *“As a result.”* This word defines the purpose of attaining to the Christ-likeness mentioned in the previous verse. The purpose of the maturity discussed in verse **13**, is emphasized by the presentation of the contrasting picture in verse **14**, of an immature, indecisive child who is spiritually unstable, easily tricked in spiritual matters and easily led astray from the truth.

It is the responsibility of the ministry gifts to properly prepare and equip the saints for the work of the ministry, in order that the Body might be built up. Their *“Word-work”* is to continue until the time comes when, in the unity of the common faith and common knowledge of the Son of God, the Body attains real maturity. When this maturity becomes a reality, we will no longer be like children *“tossed back and forth by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching by the trickery of people who craftily carry out their deceitful schemes.”*

In verse **15** Paul writes, *“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”* The word *“But,”* at the beginning of the verse, has the force of *“but rather”* or *“but on the other hand.”* In this verse, Paul begins to describe the proper process of growth of a believer in Christ. In contrast to being misled by false teachers, believers are to speak *“the truth in love.”* Paul is contrasting *“speaking the truth in love,”* with the speech motivated by *“the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”*

False teachers set out to deceive people with their words, shaping their pernicious messages so as to receive the largest following. They speak half-truths instead of outright lies so that their deceptive schemes may go unnoticed. Truth, on the other hand, must be presented honestly. For example, we must not shy away from difficult passages in the Bible, in order to make the “comfortable passages” more enticing to our hearers.

The words “*speaking the truth*,” are the translation of the Greek word verb **alétheuó: (al-ayth-yoo'-o)**, which literally means, “truthing.” **alétheuó** describes the content of that which is true and therefore, that which is in accordance with what actually happened. It describes the reality that lies behind the appearance. In the context of this verse, it means to speak the truth of Scripture into a person’s life. The idea includes Spirit-led confrontation where it is vital to tell the truth so that others can live in God’s **reality** rather than in their personal **illusion**.

The believers, living in and around Ephesus, had been exposed to the truth of the Gospel and had been saved as a result. Now, they were being exposed to the false doctrine of crafty men whose aim was to deceive them. The Lord had given them the gift of apostles, prophets, evangelists and teaching pastors to secure them against false doctrine, and Paul is exhorting them to confess to each other the truth in which they had been instructed and to practice living in the truth. By so doing, they would grow to maturity in Christ.

Brothers and sisters, truth is the element in which we are to live, move, and have our being. But truth must be inseparably joined to love. Paul writes, “*But speaking the truth in love.*” The Greek word translated love is **agapé: (ag-ah'-pay)**, which refers to unconditional, sacrificial love. It was chosen by the writers of the New Testament as the distinctive word to be used when speaking of God as love, of the love which the Holy Spirit produces in the heart of the yielded believer, and the love with which God loves the world of unsaved humanity.

**Agapé** is a love called out of a person’s heart by an awakened sense of value in an object which causes one to prize it. It expresses a love of acceptance and esteem. It is a love that recognizes the worthiness and preciousness of the object loved, and its response to this recognition is admiring affection.

**Agapé** is a love, not merely of prizing but of preciousness; not merely of emotion, but of devotion; it is a love that has ethical qualities about it, obligations, responsibilities and commitments.

**Agapé** is a love which is commanded by God, empowered by His Spirit, and activated by the personal choice of our will. It is **not** based on our feelings toward the object of our love. Paul chose this word as the one that would adequately denote Christian love, and poured into it in **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**, its various elements. The **New Living Translation** renders the passage as follows:

*4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud*

*5 or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.*

*6 It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.*

*7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.*

*8 Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever!*

**The Passion Translation** provides this translation:

*4 Love is large and incredibly patient. Love is gentle and consistently kind to all. It refuses to be jealous when blessing comes to someone else. Love does not brag about one's achievements nor inflate its own importance.*

*5 Love does not traffic in shame and disrespect, nor selfishly seek its own honor. Love is not easily irritated or quick to take offense.*

*6 Love joyfully celebrates honesty and finds no delight in what is wrong.*

*7 Love is a safe place of shelter, for it never stops believing the best for others. Love never takes failure as defeat, for it never gives up.*

*8 Love never stops loving. It extends beyond the gift of prophecy, which eventually fades away. It is more enduring than tongues, which will one day fall silent. Love remains long after words of knowledge are forgotten.*

Brothers and sisters, love is the element in which truth is to be spoken or confessed. Paul literally says, "truthing in love!" He is urging believers to maintain truth in love in both speech and life. Growth in the Body of Christ is maximized when we **speak** the truth in love and **live** or **practice** the truth in love. The phrase "**in love**" qualifies "**speaking the truth.**" "**Speaking the truth,**" emphasizes the right doctrine. "**In love,**" emphasizes the spirit or attitude in which it must be spoken and practiced. Truth without love is brutality, and love without truth is hypocrisy. Good tidings spoken harshly are not good tidings. The charm and effectiveness of the message is destroyed by the unpleasant spirit of the messenger.

**John Phillips**, commenting on this point, made the following observation:

"We can go to two extremes. We can speak the truth but not in love, in which case we are being **ungracious**. Truth spoken in that spirit often offends and does little good because it alienates the people we are seeking to win. Or we can speak in love and suppress the truth, in which case we are being **unfaithful**. People who do not want to hurt someone's feeling may say nothing and allow a sinful situation to continue. They suffer in silence. True love, however, will always speak at the right time, with the right words, in the right spirit, and using the right approach."

*“But speaking the truth in love”* is in the present tense in the Greek. Paul is exhorting the believers to continually be *“speaking the truth in love.”* It must be our habit. It must be our lifestyle. Brothers and sisters, this is only possible if we are being continually energized and enabled by the Holy Spirit! The words are in a construction in the Greek which indicates that *“speaking the truth in love”* is a choice of our will; it is something that we must consistently **choose** to do. And we can do it. In **Philippians 2:12-13**, Paul wrote,

*12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

*13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

**The Message** translates the verses as follows:

*12-13 What I’m getting at, friends, is that you should simply keep on doing what you’ve done from the beginning. When I was living among you, you lived in responsive obedience. Now that I’m separated from you, keep it up. Better yet, redouble your efforts. Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is God’s energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure.*

Yes, brothers and sisters, God will give us both the desire and the energy to speak and practice the truth in love, for it is His good pleasure that we do so! Let us endeavour to practice the truth in love consistently! How are we to do so you ask? Paul told us earlier in verses **1-3**:

*1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,*

*2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;*

*3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

He will tell us again later in Chapter **5**, verses **1** and **2**:

*1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;*

*2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.*

Brothers and sisters, when we consistently speak and practice the truth in love, we will *“grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”*

It is critically important for us to understand that *“speaking the truth in love”* is integrally associated with growing in Christ-likeness. One individual made the following remarks concerning this truth:

*“This association of speaking the truth in love and growing up in Christ begs the question - Am I growing in Christ-likeness? Am I more like Christ today than I was last month, last year, last decade?”*

Does the fruit of the Spirit's love birthed by faith and obedience in my heart translate into loving action in my life and in so doing mimic the love of Christ? If so our lips and life are in synch, speaking and showing love and growing in grace, growing in Christ-likeness which is living a life of integrity which is defined in English dictionaries as 'an undivided or unbroken completeness or totality with nothing wanting.'"

The words "*grow up*," are the translation of a Greek word which means, "to grow or cause to grow or increase." We are to "*grow up into him in all things*." Paul is telling us here that the growth and maturity of all Christians is to be directed toward the goal of becoming like Christ.

In other words, our growth is to be according to His example. Jesus Christ is the source from which we receive the grace and power to grow. He must also be the object and goal to which our growth at every stage is directed. Jesus Christ is our head. The word "*head*" is a translation of the Greek word **kephalé**: (**kef-al-ay**'). Figuratively, as it is used in this verse, **kephalé** refers to Christ as the Head of the Church which is His mystical Body. Every believer is a member of that Body. The head is the part of the body that contains the brain. The brain rules and governs the human body. Christ as the Head is the source of growth and well-being of each member. He controls every part of His Body and He is the power that inspires, rules, guides, and sustains the Body. He is the mainspring of its activity, the center of its unity, and the seat of its life.

Brothers and sisters, can we say with the utmost sincerity that the Lord Jesus Christ Is the Head of **The Grace Workshop Ministries**? Do we look **only** to Him for guidance and provision? Genuine growth in spiritual maturity comes from holding onto Christ, the Head and drawing the supply of all our needs from His inexhaustible resources.