

(Ephesians) Growing in the Lord

by Brian Brodersen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of individual growth in Christ and the role of the pastor and teacher in equipping the saints to build up the body of Christ and to defend against false teaching.

Duration: 49:21

Scripture: Psalm 1:2, Acts 2:42, Ephesians 4:11

Topics: "Christian Fellowship", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of Christ being at the center of Christian gatherings and fellowship. He highlights the commitment and steadfastness of the early Christians in their devotion to the Apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. The speaker contrasts this with the tendency of modern Christians to prioritize other activities and interests over Christ-centered fellowship. He encourages believers to immerse themselves in the Word of God and engage in these foundational practices in order to grow in Christ.

Transcript

Let's turn this evening to verse 11 of Ephesians chapter 4. As we continue to make our way through this great epistle of Paul to the church in Ephesus, verse 11 reads, And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth and love may grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effect of working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. In our last study, we looked at verse 11 in detail, and we talked about the ministry of the apostles and prophets and the evangelist and pastors and teachers and how these are gifted men. Gifted by Christ and given to the church for the purpose of equipping the saints so the saints can carry out the work of the ministry so the body of Christ can be built up so that we would ultimately come to that mature state that the Lord is wanting to bring us to, that we would grow up in Christ.

That's really the ultimate goal. And to that end, we minister, we use the gifts that God has given us to the end that all of us collectively together might be growing up in Christ and becoming mature as a body of people, not just us here tonight or us who belong to this particular congregation. But Paul is looking at the church in its entirety, and he's envisioning a full grown Christian church, a church that is in all things like its head, like the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so in our last study, we looked at the different things that pertain to equipping and building up the body and so forth. But tonight we want to concentrate on verse 14. At least that's where we want to pick up and point out some things about.

False teaching, if we allow ourselves to be tossed to and fro. And to be carried about with every wind of doctrine. Then we condemn ourselves to perpetual immaturity.

You see, false teaching of whatever sort will prohibit a person from growing up in Christ. And one of the things that is the responsibility of the pastor, teacher, evangelist is to equip the saints to be able to avoid. Being tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.

And, you know, it's a fact that where the Bible is faithfully taught under the direction of the Holy Spirit, people generally grow up and aberrant doctrine never really has an opportunity to invade that kind of a fellowship where the word of God is given preeminence, where the exposition of the scriptures is a high priority. You don't really find winds of doctrine being able to sweep through and affect the people that are under God gifted ministries. But you do find in those places where the word is neglected or the word is set aside for experience or something like that, you do find Christians in a perpetual state of immaturity.

They're not growing up. They're not becoming the people that God wants them to be in the people that they need to be to impact their world. And so Paul tells us here in verse 14 that we should no longer be children.

And the word could literally be translated babies or infants. The word is literally those who cannot yet speak. And so it's referring to a baby or an infant that we should no longer be infants tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.

And notice by the trickery of men in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting. Now, it is a fact that there are men today and there always have been throughout the long history of the church, men whose motives are self-centered, men who are not really serving the Lord Jesus Christ, but they are imposters. Now, no one likes to hear that, and whenever you make those kinds of statements, people, you know, will accuse you of being harsh or divisive or something like that.

But the fact of the matter is there always have been and there still are presently people who are. Self-proclaimed servants of God, but they are not serving the Lord at all, they're really just serving themselves. And we've got to be aware of that, and we can't just pretend like that sort of thing doesn't happen.

It does happen, and we've got to be on our guard lest we be carried about with every wind of doctrine and come under some sort of deception. It's out there, but if we stick close to the word of God, if we're in a ministry where God's word is being faithfully expounded, then we are to a large degree immune from that danger. You know, when I was pastoring.

Calvary Chapel in Vista, California, just down the road, about 60 miles or so. The only way our congregation ever heard anything about false doctrine was when I told him about it. And I would sometimes tell him, you know, in the course of a message about various doctrines that had come through.

And yet, apart from me informing them on occasion, they had never really heard of those things. Because what happens when you have a ministry that is based in the word, it sort of builds a protective hedge around the fellowship. And that sort of thing just can't make its way in.

And that is certainly the case here as well. You know, many, many churches have suffered as a result of false teaching. Many churches that had a glorious beginning have not survived.

Many have divided and split and been torn apart over false teaching. And yet you look at a ministry like this one, for example, and you see that in the more than 30 years of the existence of this fellowship, that sort of thing has not occurred. And I attribute that to the fact that the word of God has been faithfully taught.

And as the word of God is being faithfully proclaimed and received, it builds up in a sense an immunity to false teaching. Now, when it comes to false doctrine, there are times when it's important to maybe point out various doctrines that are aberrant and maybe even at times, you know, make reference to those who are promoting them. And there are occasions when I would do something like that.

I tended to do it a lot more in the past than I do nowadays. And there is a place to do that. But, you know, the best way to really protect ourselves against that is just to have a firm foundation in the word itself.

Rather than going out and trying to, you know, understand all of the bizarre teaching out there and all of the intricacies of weird doctrinal ideas. If we just saturate ourselves in the truth. If we just immerse ourselves in the word of God, we will be immune, we'll be protected.

You know, it is a fact that when they are training a person to detect counterfeit currency, they train them by allowing them to only handle real currency. And they become so familiar with the real currency, the very instant they touch a counterfeit bill, they know it's counterfeit because they've become so familiar with the way that the true currency feels and our best defense really is a good offense. Our best way to defend against false teaching is to know the truth.

And so when you're rooted and grounded in the truth, when something that is not true comes along, you just know it. You might not even know all of the details of why, but, you know, it just doesn't have that ring of truth to it. And so part of the ministry of the evangelist and the pastors and teachers, as we pointed out in a previous study, is to take the foundational ministry of the apostles and prophets, which is our New Testament, and to communicate it to us in such a way as to equip us to do the work of the ministry and to inoculate us against the various winds of doctrine that can blow through and toss us up and down and back and forth and prohibit us from really coming to a state of maturity.

You know, this is sort of a difficult subject to even communicate to this congregation because it's something that is really foreign to us. We don't have that kind of experience. And it's almost a thing that, you know, in some sense is just unheard of.

But if you get outside of good, sound biblical teaching ministries, you find that, oh, just, you know, people have been swept up in so many different things. And there are ministries that are marked by winds of doctrine, you know, ministries have, you know, sort of a signature about them, sort of a stamp. And you

look at a certain ministry and and it's, you know, there's a certain emphasis there.

And so the ministry becomes identified with that emphasis. Well, I think, you know, when you think of the Calvary Chapel ministry and especially this one here, the emphasis, of course, has been the word of God, the exposition of the word of God. And that's what you think of in connection.

But there are other ministries that you can think of and you would find other emphasis. Some ministries you think of, oh, you know, the gifts of the spirit or some you think of, you know, an emphasis on whatever, you know, just some other particular doctrine, some baptism or something like that. But then there are ministries that have been affected by what you could say would be really every wind of doctrine and you can't really pinpoint any one thing that they stand for because they stand for something different every few months, you know, whenever something new blows into town, that's what they grab on to.

And I can think of one particular ministry that I won't mention by name that. Over its history as a ministry. Whatever new doctrine was sort of blowing through town was what they picked up and made their emphasis, and back in the early days, the emphasis was signs and wonders.

And that emphasis has remained always. But then it was sort of overlapped by the inner healing doctrine for a while. And that was the big emphasis.

And that's what everybody was talking about and experiencing. And then that sort of passed. And then there was an emphasis on prophets and everybody was wanting to prophesy and they were looking for the next prophet to get up and give a word from the Lord.

And then there was the blessing that came and they were looking for the holy laughter and those kinds of things. I'll never forget one night many years ago, we were having our Sunday evening Bible study at Calvary Chapel Vista, and I wasn't aware at the time that this new laughter movement was sweeping through the area. And, you know, I hadn't heard about it yet.

But one night a lady came into the church and she sat right in the front row. And as I began teaching, she would start laughing. And, you know, it's very rare that people laugh when I'm teaching because I'm not I'm not the most humorous guy in the world.

And she was laughing about everything. And, you know, I was, you know, I was kind of looking at her and thinking, what is she doing? You know, and I'd say something else. And she started.

And then she got to a place where she was just, you know, bending over in laughter. And finally, I just stopped. I said, what are you doing? And she looked at me and she said, the spirit's moving.

And I said, well, I'm sorry, but we don't laugh here. This is not the Holy Spirit. This is some other spirit.

Perhaps it's moving, but we're going to stop the move right now. Either you stop laughing or we'll show you the door. And that was my first encounter with holy laughter, as they called it.

And we made it clear to her afterwards that we don't laugh here. And so she never came back. And but, you know, that whole thing swept through and impacted so many people.

And that was a big emphasis. And then that sort of died down. And then not too long ago, there was the phenomena of people being sprinkled with gold dust and having their amalgam fillings turned to gold fillings.

And, you know, these kinds of things. And, you know, who knows what's happening now? I don't know. But there are ministries.

But here's the thing that, of course, there's the healing and all of that. But here's the thing, a ministry that's marked by. A change of emphasis every few months or every couple of years is a ministry that inevitably will leave people in a state of spiritual immaturity.

It prevents people from growing up, people can't grow up in the Lord under those things, because the thing that God has designated to produce growth in our lives is his word. And without the faithful exposition of the word, there isn't going to be any growth taking place. And that's a sad thing, because you find Christians that have gone after one thing or another.

And then, of course, you've got the prosperity kind of a doctrine involved in that area as well of churches. And, you know, you just see blatant immaturity in the lives of so many people. When we were living in London, a good friend of mine worked at the Royal Albert Hall and the Royal Albert Hall is a place where many things go on.

One of the things that happened there is some of the faith healers and all, you know, will pass through London and that's where they'll hold their meetings. And he was working at the Royal Albert Hall during the time that Benny Hinn came through London and had one of his healing services there. And the interesting thing was the response from the staff of Royal Albert Hall.

He was one of the employees and he would tell me how the other employees would respond. First of all, they thought it was hilarious. The antics of Benny Hinn, they thought it was absolutely ludicrous, really, that anyone would take this guy seriously.

That was their number one response. And their second response was that they were disgusted by the behavior and the rudeness of the people that came to these events. And they actually would say that the people coming to these events were more difficult to deal with than people coming to any other event.

Now, what kind of events do they have at the Royal Albert Hall? They have everything from ballet to Paul McCartney concert to whoever, you know, it's one of those venues where you could have any number of things going on. But hands down across the board, everyone agreed that the worst events, the ones that nobody wanted to work. Were the ones when the healing preachers would come through town because they couldn't handle the obnoxious attitude of the people.

So what does that tell you right there? It tells you just exactly what we're talking about, that false teaching will stunt your growth spiritually. It'll keep you from becoming a full grown person in Christ. And so thank God that we have the privilege of being brought up under the pure milk of the word.

Thank God that we have ministries that emphasize the right thing, the exposition of the scriptures. And so verse 15. He says, but speaking the truth and love now, the word speaking here.

Is something that the translators put in to try to communicate what's being expressed here in the original language, if you translated this literally, it would read but truthing in love. Now, that doesn't make any sense. That's why they didn't translate it literally.

So they said speaking and speaking, of course, is part of it, but speaking isn't a totally accurate translation here. A better translation would probably be but manifesting the truth and love because it's not just

through speaking, but it's through our lifestyle. That's what the apostle is emphasizing.

So here's what he's saying as we connect it all together, that Christ has given to his church, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to equip the saints to do works of service so the body of Christ can be built up so that we can become mature so that we're not carried away with every wind of doctrine so that we're not tossed to and fro and left in a state of perpetual immaturity, but rather that we can manifest the truth and love to one another and thus build one another up in the faith, building one another up in the faith. That's the emphasis of the text here, that we may grow up in all things into him who is the head Christ. You see, that's what God is wanting to work in our lives.

He's wanting us to grow up into him in all things. In other words, the ideal that God is seeking with the church is that the church would be a living demonstration of Christ. That we collectively, as the church, would be a living demonstration of Christ, that's the ideal that God longs to bring about through his church, that his church would be a picture to the world of the ongoing ministry of Christ.

You see, Jesus came to the earth. He lived here for approximately 33 years. He carried on ministry for three to four years publicly.

And then, of course, he gave his life for our sins. He died on the cross. He was resurrected and he ascended back to heaven.

But the Lord wants to carry on the ministry of Jesus and he wants to continue to manifest Jesus Christ to each successive generation through the church. That's what the church is supposed to be supposed to be an ongoing picture of Christ and his ministry in the world. Now, that's the church collectively, but of course, we realize that the church collectively is made up of individual parts.

And so the only way for the church collectively to grow up in all things in Christ is for us as individuals to be growing up in Christ. You see, if we're not growing up, then the overall witness of the church is not going to be what God wants it to be. So I have the personal responsibility as an individual Christian to make sure I'm growing, to make sure I am doing the things that promote growth and development and progress toward Christ likeness, because if I'm doing my part, then there's a greater possibility that the overall witness of the church is going to be what the Lord wants it to be.

So you see, we have got to individually give effort to make sure that we are putting ourselves in a place so that we can grow up in all things in Christ. We're talking about Christian growth and Christian growth is something that. Is a cooperative effort, God is the one who brings the increase.

But there are certain things that I must do in cooperation with God for that increase to come about. Just like with our physical. Bodies.

Our bodies are developed in such a way that they grow. There's a natural growth process that takes place, but I do have a role to play, I do have a contribution to make. I have got to nourish my body, I've got to put into my body the things that are going to help it to grow.

I've got to avoid things that are going to damage my body and prevent growth and so forth. And you know that you understand that you see that on a physical level, but it's also the case on a spiritual level. Ultimately, God is the one who is going to cause the growth, but yet he causes the growth as we cooperate with him and as we function together.

And so look again at verse 16, from whom the whole body joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effect of working by which every part does it share causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself and love. You see, it's a picture of every part, every individual part. Functioning to its capacity and then.

Ministering to the various other parts so that the whole is becoming all that it can be. And so what we have to ask ourselves tonight as individuals is, are we cooperating with God in this growth process so that we can make our contribution to the body so that the body can become all that the Lord desires it to be? Are we doing that? Are we doing all that we can to grow in the faith? Are we perhaps doing things that will stunt our growth, that will hinder growth in our lives? Are we spending more time with the things of this world and with the things of the spirit? Are we catering more to our own fleshly desires than we are to? The spirit aspect of our lives, those are things that we have to take into consideration. There is an effort that must be put forth if we're going to continue to grow.

I have to put forth some effort. I can't just sit back and think that, you know, it's just going to happen, you know, without me giving any thought to it or any action upon it. It's all just what God is going to do.

And I'm just going to go about my merry way and trust in him to get it accomplished. That's an imbalance. And we've got to come back to the understanding that it's a cooperative effort.

It's a joint effort, as Paul said in writing to the Philippians, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. That's your part, for it is God who works in you to will and to do of his good pleasure. That's his part.

So we're to work out our own salvation because God's working in us. So we've got God's part and then we've got our part. And so let's talk just for a few minutes about the things that lend themselves to.

Developing us spiritually. The things that we need to be involved in as Christians to be growing and to be becoming the people that God wants us to be, they're simple things, you know, God has made it really simple. He hasn't made it complicated.

There's just a few things that we need to be doing, and if we're doing those things, then we're going to be growing in the second chapter of Acts. We find there that. The early Christians continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayer.

And as you look at those things, those are really the foundational things that as Christian people, we need to be involved in, and if we're immersing ourselves in those things, then we're going to be growing up in all things in Christ. So he said, first of all, that they continued in the apostles doctrine. They were people who were in the word.

Now, on the one hand, I know that this seems like a why bother subject, we're all here tonight, we're studying the Bible, you brought your Bibles with you. Hey, we're in the word. Yes, we're in the word, but.

Are we in the word tomorrow morning? Are we in the word tomorrow night, are we in the word Monday morning, Monday night, are we delighting ourself in the law of the Lord and meditating in it day and night as the psalmist told us that we should. If we wanted to know the blessed life. You see, we've got to become people of the word to the extent that not just when I'm at a Bible study, but wherever I am, I'm meditating on the word of God.

I've got the word of God with me and I'm just waiting for those. Opportunities to ponder it, to think on it, I've hidden it in my heart and I'm mulling it over in my mind. And I think that we've lost that a little bit, you know, there was a time when all over Orange County you would find people carrying their Bibles everywhere they went.

You couldn't go to a restaurant without finding a bunch of people with Bibles there. And it was one of the marks of the revival that was taking place in this area 25 years ago, one of the features of that revival was such a commitment to the word that people just took their Bibles with them wherever they went and would frequently open the Bible and be sharing the word with one another and with anybody else that happened to come by and, you know, be curious about what was going on. And, you know, I look around today and I see that things have changed as time has passed and, you know, there are churches now today in the Orange County area, big churches, lots of people coming.

But if you brought your Bible even to church, they would look at you like a weirdo. You know, in a lot of churches today, you don't need to bring your Bible because they do it all for you. They have a large screen TV sort of a set up and they just flash the scriptures up on the screen or they give you a little handout when you come in that has the verses that the pastor is going to be talking about.

And don't bother to bring your Bible, you know, these churches, they want to make it easy as possible. They realize the Bible can be a little bit heavy to lug around. So, hey, you know, you don't even have to bring a Bible.

We'll do it for you. We'll hand you a little handout and you can just, you know, tear it up and throw it away afterward if you want to. And I think, you know, we've lost something.

We've lost that fervency for the word that once existed. That fervency for the word that was manifest by the fact that, you know, people were just they had the word with them all the time, they just were so into the word that they didn't want to be without it because at any given moment they knew that they could maybe have an opportunity to open it and share it with somebody else and that sort of thing. And I pray to God that we could.

Have a reoccurrence of that kind of an attitude and that sort of a thing happen, I think that'd be a great thing if we could see that happening and people just taking their Bibles wherever they went, not like a bunch of Pharisees, you know, walking around, you know, Bible thumping people and that sort of thing that wasn't going on back then. But just because we're committed to the word, we love the word of God. And so we just want to have it with us wherever we are.

One guy, I just I greatly admire him in so many different areas of his life is John Corson. One of the things that really blesses me every time I see John, he has his Bible with him and he carries it wherever he goes. And he's that sort of a guy who, you know, the word is just you listen to him on the radio and, you know, the guy's full of the word.

And you wonder, well, how did he get that way? I wish I was like that. Well, tell you one thing, he carries his Bible wherever he goes and he doesn't just carry it. He reads it as often as he can.

And we need to be people, if we're going to grow up in all things in Christ, we need to be people who are immersed in the word, because remember, Christ is the word. He's the living word. And if we're going to grow up to be like him, then we've got to be, you know, having the word become a part of us as well.

And there's nothing more beautiful than a person who's just immersed in the word and their whole life and conversation, it just revolves around the word. Have you met somebody like that who not in again, not in a prideful way, but just, you know, it's just who they are. But as they talk to you, they just talk scripture.

And, you know, even in just normal conversation, something will remind them of a biblical illustration and they'll bring that into the conversation. That's beautiful. That's powerful.

And God, help us to have a restoration of that in our lives. And so they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine. They were in the word and the word was in them.

And they were growing up and becoming like Christ in that area. And then it says that they fellowshiped. They fellowship, they would come together often and commune with one another.

With Jesus Christ being. The center of their lives and conversation, that's what fellowship really is. Fellowship is to come together with other believers anywhere, doesn't matter where, and to commune with each other, with Christ being the center of your life and conversation.

And it says that they were steadfast in fellowship, it was something that they did. Frequently. It wasn't something that they left to just, you know, once a week or so, but as you get the picture of the early church, you find that it seems that the free moment that they had, that's.

What they gravitated toward. Toward that communion with the saints being together with the people of God, and that's a beautiful thing, and we grow. As we fellowship with one another, because God uses the various experiences that each of us have to touch and to encourage and to challenge and to rebuke one another.

And I can think of numerous benefits that I've derived from having fellowship with other Christians conversation, just hearing what God's doing in their life, just sometimes just a word or two, they'll say, and God will use what they said to speak to me about something. It's a beautiful thing. And then prayer, they continued in prayer.

Prayer. We need to become people of prayer today, Jesus spent much time in prayer, so if we're going to grow up in all things like the head, then we're going to be growing in prayer and getting together and praying with each other. And it seems to me I could I could be wrong on this, but it seems to me that these things that were once very much a part of.

The experience of many Christians, it seems that many of these things have sort of died down. And again, we don't have that devotedness to the word like we used to have, we, you know, make time occasionally, but there's other things that we're interested in, there's other priorities, there's, you know, this TV program that I enjoy watching and there's this, you know, this website that I really dig going to because I'm getting some great information or, you know, I'm downloading some great music and getting into a nostalgic thing and, you know, remembering my teen years and, you know, the kinds of things that we get caught up in and fellowship. It's not, you know, that we're getting together like we used to and really things are centering around Christ.

We're still getting together. But now, you know, it's centered around the barbecue and, you know. We do more eating and fellowshiping and, you know, we talk about the whatever sport is in season at the time, and of course, the big talk right now is the Super Bowl tomorrow and all of that, you know, and all of those things.

You know, I'm not saying that we can't talk about those things, but the question is, what happened to the focus upon Christ? And have we moved away from that? And when we get together with Christian friends, is there that atmosphere of the spirit and is Christ at the center of what we're doing? And then are we. Getting together and praying with each other. You know, let's get together this Friday night, what do you want to do? I don't know.

I'll pick up a video and we'll come over. What about the days when I'll come over Friday night and we'll pray together, how's that sound? You see, these are things that these lend to growth in Christ, and then let me remind you that there it says that they continued steadfastly in these things. They were committed to this lifestyle.

You see, the Church of Jesus Christ. Is not like a club. That you join and then just visit occasionally.

The Church of Jesus Christ is the greatest reality in the universe because it's the only society that's going to remain forever. Everything else is perishing, everything else is vanishing. And as I look at this passage, another thing that stands out to me is how Paul is putting the emphasis on what Christians are really to be occupied with doing is building up the church.

Building up the church because the church is the permanent society and we're to be building up the church, our relationship to the world is to be such that we're just seeking to draw people out of the world into the church. But, you know, as I looked at this passage today, I was thinking how so often Christians spend so much of their time trying to reform the world, trying to patch it up, trying to make it a better place, trying to keep it limping along for as long as possible, because it's a pretty cool place, you know, in a lot of ways and. We've got to keep it going, and yet I don't see that emphasis in Scripture when you look at the apostle Paul.

You know, Paul did not go to Rome to talk to Caesar about a lot of the legislation that had come down recently that was really sort of, you know, anti-Christian. He didn't go to the Senate in Rome and try to get them to, you know, change the laws about, you know, this, that or the other thing. And what these guys did is their approach to the world was to see it as something that was under the judgment of God.

And inevitably going to be destroyed. But a place where precious souls were held captive. And Paul's task was to see if he could bring souls out of that captivity into the kingdom of God.

And his emphasis was upon the church. And I was thinking the other day, you know, the apostle, he made an interesting statement. And again, because a lot of times I think as Christians, you know, and especially today, because we do see so much going on in our society that's wrong, we start, you know, we're preaching to them, but the problem is they're not listening.

And we're trying to get the sinners to live like saints when they're sinners, they can't live like saints. But Paul said an interesting thing. He was writing to the Corinthians and he said, I wrote you an epistle not to keep company with fornicators and embezzlers and enlisted a number of things, he said, but I wasn't referring to the people in the world, I was referring to the people who claim to be Christians who are like this.

He said, I'm telling you not to associate with them. You can associate with the people in the world like that because you want to be a light to them and you want to bring them out of darkness. But then as he was finishing up that whole thing there, he said to them, he said, don't you judge among yourselves? And then

he said this, he said, what have I to do with judging the world? God will judge the world.

But we need to judge. Among ourselves in our own midst, and as I was thinking about that, you know, I was thinking of Paul's attitude toward the world. And the point is this Paul's great concern was with the church, not with the world, he wasn't concerned to try to reform the world.

He was concerned to try to build up the church because he knew, again, that the church is the only everlasting society and that's where the emphasis should be put. But he also knew that the world would be most impacted if the church was strong. And you see, that's the key.

So the emphasis here is on us individually as believers discovering that place that we have in the body and functioning the way God intends us to function. So the overall collective body of Christ can become that strong manifestation of Jesus in the world and shine forth to attract people to come in to this everlasting society. Out from the temporal one that's perishing and under God's wrath.

And so we want to put the emphasis where the Bible puts it, and it's on the things of the spirit. And so as we. Finish things up.

Growing up in all things into him. Are you growing up in Christ, are you in the word, is the word in you? Are you immersing yourself in it, saturating in it, yourself in it, are you in fellowship, not just coming to church and listening to the word being taught, but are you connecting with other Christians and sharing the gifts that God has given you with one another? Are you praying? Are you coming together with other members of the family of God and praying? Are we seeking to reach those who don't know Christ? Are we reaching out to the lost? These are the things that we need to occupy ourselves with. And as we put forth the effort, God meets us.

Right there, and he does his part and he causes growth and he causes us to become strong and he causes us to prosper in the spirit and the body edifies itself in love. And that's what the Lord desires. So my encouragement to you is to give yourself to the things that will help you grow up in all things into him who is the head.

Give yourself to those things and refrain from the things that are going to stifle that the things that are going to. Hinder that from really coming to fruition, stay away from those things, just move away from them, not as a legalistic, you know, the pastor said, I can't do this anymore. It's not a matter of can I do this or can't I do this? It's really a matter of why should I do this? It's not a matter of how much can I live in a worldly manner and still get to heaven.

Somebody called us yesterday on the radio program and asked a question kind of like that, and Chuck's response was wrong question. It is it's the wrong question. It's not how worldly can I be and still be saved.

It's how close to Christ can I get while I'm living here on Earth? That's the question we need to be asking, and that's the goal that we need to be pursuing. And that's the desire that God has for us, that we would grow up in all things to him who is the head, even Christ. Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you. For the gifted servants of yours that you've granted to us that have helped us, Lord, to grow in you. And Lord, we know that they have their part and you, of course, have the part that you're performing on our behalf.

And then we realize, too, Lord, that we have our part to play. And so help us, Lord. To be doing those things that will bring about growth in our own lives personally.

And beyond us that will bring about growth in the body so the body can be built up in love. Working us to that end, we pray in Jesus name, amen.

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