

• **Preaching ministries**

1. The Goal of the 5 preaching ministries

• **Full maturity is likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ**

2. Church maturity described negatively

• **Growing out of self-centred-ness and gullibility**

• **Growing out of craftiness and scheming error**

3. Church maturity described positively

• **Speaking the truth in love**

Paul describes the ultimate goal of the preaching ministries ^{☐1}, then spells out further implications negatively ^{☐2} and positively ^{☐3}.

1. **The goal of the five preaching ministries is the full maturity of the church.** Paul's long Greek sentence goes on: *'until we get to being a full-grown person, to the measure of...'* and so on. We can make it easier by starting a new sentence. *'God gives these ministries until we become a full-grown person, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ'* ^{☐1}. The 'full-grown person' refers to the church. The church is like a person who grows from being a child to being fully developed. It is similar to Paul's well-known use of 'body' as an illustration of the worldwide church. Christ and His church make up one 'body' or (as Paul puts it here) Christ and His church make a growing person. The work of the five ministries is to bring the church to full maturity. Full maturity is likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ ('the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ') – found in the entire church. It is a dazzling vision of the church's future!

2. **Paul describes 'church maturity' negatively.** *'The purpose is that we may no longer be children tossed to and from and carried about with every wind of teaching, by human cunning, by craftiness, in the scheming of error...'* ^{☐1}.

The church goes through child-like immaturity for a time. One thinks of the early history of the church. It was often extraordinarily immature. The Reformation of the 16th century was certainly a major step forward in the story of the church, but the church still has a way to go before it is 'a full-grown person'. The preaching and teaching ministries are given so that the church 'no longer' remains in that state. Children are self-centred and gullible, and many in the church are self-centred and gullible also. The teachers of the church are responsible to do something about it, and bring the church to fuller maturity. How many strange teachings come into the modern church. They last a few years before being replaced by something else equally self-centred. How many scheming and crafty preachers there are in different parts of the world. Never (certainly in poorer parts of the world) has it been so profitable to have a money-making career in some 'ministry' propped up by money from some rich country. This is the very immaturity which preachers are to overcome: winds of teaching, accompanied by craftiness, in the scheming of error ^{☐1}.

3. **Paul describes 'church maturity' positively.** The purpose of the five ministries is that the church will no longer show childlike instability, *'but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in every way into Him, who is the head, that is, Christ'* ^{☐1}. Paul goes on to describe what this is actually like. *'From Christ the whole body, being joined and brought together by every connecting link which gives supply, makes bodily growth,*

according to the working in measure of each individual part, for the purpose of building itself up in love' ^{☐2}.

Maturity is 'speaking the truth in love'. It is the combination of boldly standing by what God has revealed plus a loving manner towards those who are not pleased with us when we obey God's truth.

☐1 4:13b
☐2 4:14
☐3 4:15-16

☐1 4:13b

☐1 4:11

☐1 4:14

☐1 4:15

☐2 4:16

• **Growing in obedience and fellowship**

Maturity is a matter of adapting speedily to what God shows us. The mature Christian is so open to the Lord Jesus Christ that in many areas of life ('in every way') he grows into Christ, that is, he moves into obedience to Christ, and fellowship with Christ.

• **Guidance and life from the Lord Jesus**

Maturity is learning to live on energy provided by Christ. From Christ 'the whole body ... makes bodily growth'. The church learns to receive guidance and life from the Lord Jesus.

• **A connected body**

Maturity is a matter of holding together in loving unity. The whole body is joined and brought together. There are connections between different parts of the body. In the human body there are parts which are connected by ligaments. One thinks of the elbow or the knee. The connections between the different parts of the body 'give supply'. That is, life and energy, blood and nervous impulses flow down the connections in the human body. So it is also in the worldwide church. There are connecting links. The five types of ministries **are** the connecting links. The different kinds of preacher keep the different parts of the church in touch with other parts. The five ministries 'give supply'. Life and energy flow from one part of the church to another, through the 'connecting links', through the preachers of five kinds. Life comes into the church through their varied kinds of preaching.

• **Growth in numbers**

The result is that, as the entire church is helped by a full range of ministries, it grows – in quantity and in quality, in numbers and in depth of spirituality. For the growth to take place there must be the 'working in measure of each individual part'. Each person in the church, roused and trained by the preachers (the connecting link through which life and energy comes), plays his or her part in the worldwide church. They do so 'in measure'. That is, they cannot do everything. They live for God and His church according to the 'measure' of what has been given to them (Paul repeats the thought of 4:7).

• **Growth in holiness and love**

So the church grows '*for the purpose of building itself up in love*' ¹. The kind of growth he has in mind is partly numerical, but it is also a growth in holiness, the greatest part of which is love.

¹ 4:16



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