

#55 “No Longer to Be Children”

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What a joy it is to be adopted into God’s family as a child of the King! John 1:12 contains such a wonderful promise that “as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” It is indeed a most wonderful privilege to become a child of God when we receive Christ into our hearts as Savior and Lord. Yet, are we always to be children?

It is tempting to think of ourselves always as children of God, given that we will always be sons and daughters of Him, but the Bible suggests that we are no longer to be children at least in terms of our maturity. Ephesians 4:14-16 says,

“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; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love” (emphasis added).

Thus, believers are not to remain infants in Christ, but they are to grow to maturity in Christ. They are to be fully-grown, fruit-bearing, reproducing disciples of Christ. They will always be children of God in that they are His offspring through Christ, but they are to be grown children nonetheless.

There is nothing wrong with first being a child, for when we come to Christ, we are born again. Thus, we start the Christian life as a spiritual infant, needing milk, the fundamentals of the faith. We need a lot of training and instruction, and we need the basics before the more advanced things can make sense. This is a normal place to be in the process of growth, but it is not where we are to be indefinitely as Christians (1 Corinthians 3:2, Hebrews 5:13).

Paul explains in Ephesians 4:11-12 that God has gifted godly teachers and preachers to build up the body of Christ through sound instruction so that we can grow. Verse 13 explains the desired extent of our growth when it says, “Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.” In other words, we are to become imitators of Christ to a full extent. This is the summation of maturity. Of course, this will be a lifelong process of growth and change, but we must recognize that we are to keep growing. The Ephesians were a doctrinally well-taught group, and Paul delved into some heavy teaching concepts with them throughout the Book of Ephesians. The Ephesian Christians were

meat-eaters, going beyond bottle-feeding, even past bibs and booster seats, to the point where they could feed themselves and others who needed help. Thus, they had the privilege of plunging deeper into the profound mysteries of God and into the depths of the glory and wonder of the Word of God. This is a place we all should want to be.

Yet, even though the Ephesians were generally mature believers, still they needed to be taught and keep growing as we all do. Too often we as believers tend to skip over the difficult to understand passages or the ones which are more controversial. Yet we should be willing to explore them all, and may God raise up godly teachers after His own heart with the wisdom of Christ who can help us to understand such passages. We ought not to be content with a minimalist grasp of Scripture, but rather we should seek to dig deeper and deeper and deeper. We are not speaking merely of head knowledge, however. The Scripture applied to a tender heart leads to change, sanctification, and obedience. Right theology should lead to right living, if we are sensitive to our Lord. Vain and empty knowledge which goes unapplied can lead to arrogance, but true Holy Spirit-given insight to the Word moves us to obey. Then, as we grow, we are able to share what we know with others. Parents are able to teach their children God's Word and ways, pastors are able to equip their church bodies, and the church grows increasingly stable, discerning, mature, and Christlike.

If the church is all children, then some of the children need to grow up. If there are no children, we need to pray for God to open up doors of opportunity for evangelism so that we can see His blessing of conversions. We must keep growing, reproducing, and equipping others to become like Christ. There is a time for being a child, but it is a temporary time. We come to Christ as children, but we must grow to maturity in Him as His life, desires, and ways are to shine through us. May God make us more and more like Jesus to His glory as we grow up in Him and dig deeper into His Word.