

DIVERSITY IN THE CHURCH, PT. 4; EPH. 4:14 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

WE ARE CURRENTLY LOOKING AT EPH. 4:11-14, IN WHICH PAUL NARROWS HIS TOPIC of spiritual gifting down to talk about five groups of spiritually gifted leaders.

▶▶ So far, ~ we've examined [verses 11-13](#).

▶▶ And today, ~ we'll focus solely on [verse 14](#).

BUT BEFORE WE DO THAT LET'S SET THE CONTEXT FOR MOVING INTO VERSE 14.

▶▶ In [Eph. 4:13](#), ~ as we saw last time, ~ Paul said that Jesus "gave the apostles, ~ the prophets, ~ the evangelists, ~ the shepherds and teachers" to the church ~ to help believers achieve three goals.

▷▷ I.e., ~ Jesus gave these five groups of spiritually gifted leaders to the church, ~

↳↳ 1st, ~ to help us become grounded and united in sound doctrine, ~ especially in sound doctrine about Jesus, ~ ¶¶

→→ 2nd, ~ to help us become spiritually mature in our behavior, ~ i.e., ~ to help us live lives that are honoring, ~ glorifying, ~ and pleasing to God, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ and, ~ 3rd, ~ to help us grow more and more like Jesus.

IN VERSE 14a, ~ PAUL TELLS US THE RESULT OF HELPING BELIEVERS REACH THESE three goals.

PAUL SAYS, ~ "SO THAT WE ~ [I.E., ~ AS A RESULT OF HELPING BELIEVERS REACH THE three goals, ~ believers] ~ may no longer be children."

▶▶ The Greek word for "children" here refers to a young child, ~ infant.

▶▶ It's used figuratively, ~ as it is here in [Eph. 4:14a](#), ~ to picture a believer who is still unstable and immature in the faith.

▷▷ I.e., ~ it pictures the believer who lacks understanding, ~ who is highly impressionable, ~ gullible, ~ foolish, ~ and who is childish in biblical doctrine and behavior.

▶▶ Paul uses it this way in 2 Corinthians when he rebukes the church there for behaving so childishly and unspiritually. ¶¶ 1/9

▷▷ In 1 Cor. 3:1-3a, ~ he says, ~ "But I, ~ brothers, ~ could not address you as spiritual ~ [i.e., ~ spiritually mature] ~ people, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ but as people of the flesh ~ [i.e., ~ they were controlled by natural, ~ human impulses rather than the Holy Spirit], ~ as infants in Christ." ~¶¶

→→ I fed you with milk, ~ not solid food, ~ for you were not ready for it. ~¶¶

↳↳ And even now you are not yet ready, ~ for you are still of the flesh ~ [i.e., ~ you are still controlled by your sinful nature].

▶▶ In Heb. 5:11-6:1 (LEB), ~ the author of Hebrews used the word when he rebuked his readers for their spiritual immaturity.

▷▷ "Concerning this we have much to say and it is difficult to explain, ~ since you have become sluggish in hearing ~ [sense seems to be that they became spiritually lazy and stopped trying to understand]. ~¶¶

↳↳ For indeed, ~ although you ought to be teachers by this time ~ [i.e., ~ although you ought to be mature, ~ know, ~ & understand enough to be teachers by this time], ~ ¶¶

→→ you have need of someone to teach you again the beginning elements of the oracles of God, ~ and you have need of milk, ~ not solid food. ~¶ For everyone who partakes of milk is unacquainted with the message of righteousness, ~ because he is an infant. ~¶¶

↳↳ But solid food is for the mature, ~ who because of practice ~ have trained their faculties for the distinguishing of both good and evil. ~¶¶

↳↳ Therefore, ~ leaving behind the elementary message about Christ, ~ let us move on to maturity."

▶▶ These references paint a picture of what spiritual immaturity looks like.

▶▶ And here in Eph. 4:14a, ~ Paul says that when we are grounded and united in sound doctrine, ~ especially sound doctrine about Jesus, ~ when we are spiritually mature, ~ and when we are growing more and more Christ-like, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ we will no longer lack understanding, ~ We will not be highly impressionable, ~ gullible, ~ foolish, ~ and we will not be childish in biblical doctrine and behavior.

→→ Rather, ~ we will be stable and mature in the faith. ¶¶ 2/9

IN VERSE 14b PAUL NOTES ONE AREA WHERE SPIRITUAL STABILITY AND maturity will pay off.

FOR CONTEXT, ~ BEGIN AT 14a.

▶▶ "14a so that we may no longer be children, ~ 14b tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine."

▶▶ The next two phrases, ~ which we'll get to in a little bit, ~ show us that Paul is talking about false teaching here.

▶▶ Recall, ~ we discussed the fact that there is always a danger of false teachers and false prophets coming into the church.

▷▷ In 2 Pet. 2:1a, ~ Peter warns us, ~ "But false prophets also arose among the people, ~ just as there will be false teachers among you, ~ who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, ~ even denying the Master who bought them."

▷▷ And look at Paul's warning to church leaders in Acts 20:28-30

↳↳ "28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ~ ~ ¶¶

→→ 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, ~ [i.e., ~ distort the truth] ~ to draw away the disciples after them."

▶▶ And in Eph. 4:14b, ~ Paul says, ~ paraphrasing here, ~ "As a result of helping believers reach the three goals, ~ believers will be spiritually stable and mature in the faith ~ ¶¶

▷▷ and consequently will not be tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of false doctrine that comes along."

THE METAPHOR IS ABOUT A SHIP BEING TOSSED BY WAVES AND CARRIED ABOUT BY the wind on a stormy sea.

▶▶ Spiritually unstable and immature believers are as vulnerable to false teaching as a boat adrift on a stormy sea, ~ totally at the mercy of the waves and the wind, ~ throwing them into confusion and blowing them far off course.

▶▶ Spiritually unstable and immature believers, ~ like "children," ~ are easily confused in their thinking and are easily fooled and influenced by "by every wind of doctrine." ¶¶ 3/9

THE ADJECTIVE "EVERY," ~ MODIFYING "WIND," ~ INDICATES THAT THE WIND COMES from all different directions.

▶▶ This indicates a variety of false teachings ~ that are opposed to sound doctrine taught by Jesus' truly spiritually gifted people.

▶▶ This is reminiscent of John's words in 1 John.

▷▷ In 1 Jn. 2:18a, ~ John writes, ~ "Children, ~ it is the last hour, ~ and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, ~ so now many antichrists have come."

↪↪ The arrival of the antichrist, ~ singular, ~ is still future and will be on a worldwide scale.

→→ On a small scale, ~ there are many antichrists, ~ plural, ~ i.e., ~ false teachers, ~ present at all times and who constantly plague the church.

▷▷ And in 1 Jn. 4:1, ~ John warns, ~ "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world."

▶▶ John repeated this in his second epistle. ~ 2 Jn. 7a, ~ "For many deceivers have gone out into the world."

▶▶ Jesus also warned that there would be many false teachers. ~ Matt. 24:5, "For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray."

▷▷ And in Matt. 24:11, ~ "And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray."

▶▶ "many antichrists have come," ~ "many false prophets," ~ "many deceivers," ~ "many" will pretend to speak in Jesus' name. ~ Many winds of false doctrine.

▷▷ Just think of all the churches and pulpits that are being filled with teachers and preachers who claim to be true followers of Christ but are really not.

↪↪ Just think of all the books, ~ the radio and TV programs, ~ and what goes out over the internet, ~ all claiming to speak in the name of Jesus. ~ **And yet Jesus has not sent them to speak for Him**

↪↪ Jer. 14:14, ~ "And the LORD said to me: 'The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds.'" **↵ 4/9**

↳↳ They do not really speak for Jesus. ~ ~ They are "fierce wolves" distorting the truth with their many winds of false doctrine.

▷▷ When we consider all of this, ~ it should be crystal clear to us that John's command to "test the spirits" is just as relevant in our day as it was in his.

▶▶ And unfortunately, ~ false teachers gain a hearing. ~ ~ They are quite popular.

▷▷ Did you notice in [Matt. 24:5](#) and [11](#) that Jesus said that many would be led astray by false teachers? ~ ~ In Peter's second epistle, ~ he notes this as well. ~ ~ He says that many will follow the depraved conduct of the false teachers.

SO, ~ WE SEE THE NEED FOR BELIEVERS TO BE SPIRITUALLY STABLE AND MATURE.

▶▶ And when believers are grounded and united in sound doctrine, ~ especially sound doctrine about Jesus, ~ when we are spiritually mature, ~ and when we are growing more and more Christ-like, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ we will no longer lack understanding, ~ ~ We will not be highly impressionable, ~ gullible, ~ and foolish. ~ ~ And we will not be childish in biblical doctrine and behavior.

↳↳ Rather, ~ we will be stable and mature in the faith.

▷▷ Furthermore, ~ we will not be confused in our thinking, ~ we will not be fooled or influenced by every false teacher and false teaching that comes along.

BEFORE MOVING ON TO VERSE 14c, ~ ¶¶

PERHAPS IT WOULD BE GOOD TO TAKE A SLIGHT DETOUR TO GIVE US A PICTURE OF false teachers and their teaching.

▶▶ E.g., ~ a false teacher proclaims a Jesus who is not the Jesus of the Bible.

▷▷ E.g., ~ they proclaim a Jesus who is not quite God and never quite saves, ~ as the cults teach; ~ ¶¶

↳↳ a Jesus who wants you healthy and wealthy, ~ as preached by many televangelists; ~ or a Jesus whom you ask into your life to make you feel good.

▶▶ In [Jude, verses 12-13](#), ~ Jude uses vivid word pictures from nature to describe the emptiness of false teachers and their teachings. ¶¶ 5/9

▷▷He calls them "waterless clouds, ~ swept along by winds." ~~ Like waterless clouds, ~ they are all show but no substance.

↳↳The false teachers & their teachings have no substance, ~ no soundness to them. ~~ Their doctrines are founded on emptiness.

▷▷They are "fruitless trees in late autumn" Jude says. ~~ He compares them to trees promising fruit but giving none.

▷▷They are, ~ Jude declares, ~ "wild waves of the sea, ~ casting up the foam of their own shame."

↳↳Is. 57:20 says, "But the wicked are like the tossing sea; ~~ for it cannot be quiet, ~ and its waters toss up mire and dirt."

→→IOW, ~ both Isaiah and Jude say that false teaching brings nothing positive.

▷▷Finally, ~ Jude calls them "wandering stars." ~~ The fixed stars in the heavens have guided sailors and navigators in travels around the globe for centuries.

↳↳"wandering stars," ~ is possibly a reference to shooting stars. ~~ Shooting stars appear bright for a moment, ~ streak across the sky, ~ and then disappear into darkness.

→→Like shooting stars, ~ false teachers offer no real guidance or lasting light; ~ and they will disappear into darkness. ~~ For them "the gloom of utter darkness."

OK, ~ LET'S GET BACK ON THE MAIN ROAD.

WHEN BELIEVERS ARE GROUNDED AND UNITED IN SOUND DOCTRINE, ~ ESPECIALLY sound doctrine about Jesus, ~ when we are spiritually mature, ~ ¶¶

▶▶and when we are growing more and more Christ-like, we will no longer lack understanding, ~~ We will not be highly impressionable, ~ gullible, ~ and foolish. ~~ And we will not be childish in biblical doctrine and behavior.

↳↳Rather, ~ we will be stable and mature in the faith.

▶▶Furthermore, ~ we will not be confused in our thinking, ~ we will not be fooled or influenced by every false teacher and false teaching that comes along.

IN VERSE 14c, ~ PAUL TELLS US HOW FALSE TEACHERS TRY TO LEAD US ASTRAY.

FOR CONTEXT, ~ BEGIN AT 14a.

▶▶^{14a} "so that we may no longer be children, ~ ^{14b} tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, ~ ^{14c} by human cunning, ~ by craftiness in deceitful schemes."

▶▶ The idea here seems to be that the false teachers try to deceive us with lies so clever they sound like the truth.

▷▷ They come up with clever strategies to lead us astray. ~~ They use cleverness and tricks to camouflage the true nature of their teaching.

↳↳ They wrap it in some truth to fool people into following heresy. ~~ And they try anything possible to make people think their teaching is good.

▶▶ Stable and mature believers will see right through false teachers' camouflage, ~ strategies, ~ and tricks. ~~ And they will not be led astray by them.

IN ADDITION TO EPH. 4:14c HERE, ~ ELSEWHERE THE NT GIVES US MUCH INSIGHT into the strategies of false teachers.

▶▶ E.g., ~ In 2 Pet. 2:1a, ~ Peter writes, ~ "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, ~ who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, ~ even denying the Master who bought them."

▷▷ They introduce their false teaching covertly, ~ so that immature believers will not note what these teachers are actually bringing in.

↳↳ They introduce their heresy carefully, ~ first bringing it alongside the truth, ~ and giving the impression that they believe the fundamentals of the faith.

→→ They introduce it little by little in conjunction with the truth. ~~ Then before long, ~ remove true & leave false in its place ~ and reveal their true colors.

▶▶ Jude weighs in on the strategies of false teachers as well.

▷▷ In Jude, ~ verse 4, ~ "For certain people have crept in unnoticed."

↳↳ The word translated "have crept in unnoticed" means "to slip in alongside of secretly."

→→ False teachers do not announce themselves. ~~ They sneak in. ~~ They come into the church under false claims. 🚫 7/9

▷▷ In Jude, ~ verse 12, ~ Jude warns that false teachers "are hidden reefs at your love feasts, ~ as they feast with you without fear."

↳↳ In the early church, ~ believers would eat a full meal before celebrating The Lord's Supper. ~ This is what "love feasts" refers to.

↳↳ Jude compares the false teachers to "hidden reefs" that will suddenly destroy ships that come too near.

→→ False teachers constitute concealed dangers, ~ because they participate in the "love feasts," ~ thus appearing as if they're believers.

▶▶ In 2 Cor. 11:14-15a, ~ Paul reinforces what Peter and Jude say and gives us more insight into this subject of false teachers sneaking into the church & secretly introducing

▷▷ Paul says, ~ "And no wonder, ~ for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ~ So it is no surprise if his servants, ~ also, ~ disguise themselves as servants of righteousness."

↳↳ False teachers deceive people by appearing to represent the truth. ~ Many unsuspecting people follow smooth-talking, ~ Scripture-quoting leaders right into cults.

▶▶ And Jesus strengthens this truth of Satan's servants disguising themselves as servants of righteousness and secretly slipping in alongside believers.

▷▷ He says in Matthew 7:15, ~ "Beware of false prophets, ~ who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."

↳↳ False prophets will come in among believers like wolves clothed in sheep skins, ~ pretending to be sheep, ~ hoping to go unnoticed as they do their damage.

SO, ~ AGAIN, ~ WE SEE THE NEED FOR BELIEVERS TO BE SPIRITUALLY STABLE AND mature. ↴↴ 8/9

CONCLUSION.

IN CLOSING, ~ LET'S SUMMARIZE VERSE 14 AND OUR MESSAGE TODAY.

▶▶ As a result of spiritually gifted leaders helping believers become grounded and united in sound doctrine, ~ esp. sound doctrine about Jesus, ~ helping us become spiritually mature in our behavior, ~ and helping us grow more and more Christ-like, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ we will be spiritually stable and mature in the faith, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ i.e., ~ we will not lack understanding, ~ we will not be highly impressionable, ~ gullible, ~ and foolish. ~~ We will not be childish in biblical doctrine & behavior. ~~ ¶¶

→→ And we will not be confused, ~ fooled, ~ or influenced by any false teachers that come along, ~ no matter how clever their strategies are.

▶▶ Let us thank our awesome Savior for giving us "the apostles, ~ the prophets, ~ the evangelists, ~ the shepherds and teachers, ~ so that we could be stable and mature in the faith.

LET'S PRAY ~ 9/9