

1. *Hebrews 6:1* “let us go on unto perfection” / growing up 3rd and last part

Hello everyone, thanks again for being able to contribute and to André whose done a fine job making it possible by putting it all together like he has. I'm hoping our little dog Alfie won't photo bomb like he did last time. He's as good as gold... but you know how it is, when you have to go, you have to go.....

Anyway this is the last part of what we've been looking at regarding growing up in Christ...., the oneness that The Lord Jesus prayed to the Father for. So perhaps we could just look again at what Paul said about this in Ephesians chapter 4 but this time to use the NIV translation, which better brings out this aspect of growing up. Ephesians 4: 11-16. NIV

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow ... to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work”. (Ephesians 4: 11-16. NIV)

I won't use up the time going over what we've already looked at, other than to say.... it's through “*speaking the truth in love*”, which put another way, is being established by faith in the finished work of Christ.

Primarily through preaching and teaching, that just unveils the love of God towards us, revealed in The Lord Jesus and His finished work.

In effect when the full gospel, the Word of Truth, is being preached and taught..., faith accompanies that Word ... and through hearing and believing we grow, “*the hearing of faith*”.

It's our Father's chosen delivery system, isn't it ? Not simply head knowledge but a definite work of The Spirit within when we believe it with all our heart.

And if there's any doubt..., earlier on in this letter Paul wrote this...he says...,

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise..., (Ephesians 1:13)

So this isn't our idea He loves us and came to give us life... He wants to feed and nourish us. That's why I think it makes sense to best position ourselves to receive, so to speak..., by immersing ourselves in good preaching or reading material, so that we're hearing and hearing and hearing ..., just looking to The Lord to quicken it to us.

A bit like chicks in the nest with mouths wide open saying in effect, “put it in here!”, “put it here!”

There's that passage too in Proverbs, where like a Father to his child, who's the apple of his eye, he says, “*My son..., give attention to my words...incline your ear to my sayings.... don't let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; For they're life to those who find them and health to all their flesh. Keep (guard) your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life*”. (Proverbs 4:20-23).

Anyway Andre's put the 3 parts on the web site... and it's word for word, so if anyone is interested, or missed anything, it's all there.

And if you're new..., not to worry if you don't understand everything that's said at first. The main thing is to know that you're deeply loved...and while you may not understand the reasons for what happened at the cross, it was absolutely necessary. Like the apostle John said....

“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins”. (1 John 4:10 NIV).

2.

And this is the thing..., the cross is where we see God's great love for us in that His beloved Son Jesus was sent to die in our place for all our sins and yet that's not the half of it ...the whole point was that we should have life.... and His promise is the gift of eternal life to all who believe on Jesus.... the promise of His Spirit to all who believe.

If you recall, we looked at the account of Peter by the seashore where The Lord Jesus said to Peter, "Do you love (*agape*) me more than these? And Peter's reply of "you know I love (*phileo*) you Lord (like a brother).

The recent events having so humbled him inside... and he knew now... that it wasn't his love for the Lord that counted but The Lord's love for him that mattered and would never fail but look at the first thing The Lord said to him afterwards.... In fact let's read it .. (John 21:15 NKJV)
"So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "**Feed My lambs.**" (John 21:15)

Isn't that something ! "feed my lambs". Just think about it..., this is an insight into The Lord's heart of what's really important to Him and to our Father. The no.1 issue on His heart was....,"feed my lambs". To Peter in effect, He was saying, this is how you love me, "feed my lambs"...,"tend my sheep"...,"feed my sheep". It's all about the body of Christ.

And do you see ? "Speaking the truth in love", is what builds and feeds us....and why I'm so grateful for every ministry that the Lord has provided....and I know you folks have been blessed this way down through the years, me included. Pastors, preachers, teachers..., I pray for all of them, that they'll be really, really blessed and encouraged.

For me over the years, Joseph Prince's ministry in particular has been a consistent source of encouragement. A dear brother whose heart is simply given over to unveiling the love and grace of God in Jesus. (josephprince.org)

Anyway, all the gifts and the ministries are for our development in Christ....Paul saying that his sole purpose was to present every man perfect in Christ.... And of course that word 'perfect' if you recall., simply means finished or mature.... and it's in that context of maturity that it's used regarding us as the body of Christ.

And the church is definitely a family thing....., we're sons and daughters of The living God....and you may remember that the Melchizedek priesthood is all about the firstborn Son who was the priest for the whole family line.....

But just to say here, that The Lord Jesus is our Great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek....and since He will never die, He will always be our Great High Priest. Always carrying us on His heart before The Father and bearing us up on His shoulders.

"So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You." As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"; (Hebrews 5:5-6)

But the full gospel message, is the key to everything. It's where the love of God has been revealed in Christ and all He's done for us..... and through faith, it's the means of our development in every way.

In the book of Acts (Acts 20:13-32), it tells of Paul making his way by ship, between the islands and down the coast of what is now Turkey... and he's journeying south, hoping to make it back to Israel and then on to Jerusalem in time for the feast of Pentecost....and he was in a hurry.

3.

So instead of actually going into Ephesus itself which is situated part way down the coast of present day Turkey ... he'd sent on ahead for the elders of the church to meet him at the coast nearby, close to where the ship was docked, so as not to be delayed.

And it's amazing you know..., roll on/roll off ferries, ply very similar routes to this day...and you think, ships have been trading up and down here for thousands of years... long before Paul even .

Anyway, Paul knew that this would be the last time he would ever see them, The Lord having revealed this to him in every place he'd stopped off at on the way, where various believers through the gifts of the spirit prophesied that captivity awaited him at Jerusalem. So forewarned and prepared even to die if necessary, his words to the elders on this occasion would have been carefully chosen... and his parting words were these.....

"So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to 'the word of His grace', 'which is able' to build you up AND give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified (set apart). (Acts 20:32)

Carefully weighed words and notice that he points them to the gospel, "the word of His grace", which is able. "able to build you up"..., which is exactly what we've been looking at regarding growing up in Christ.

This man, who was especially chosen and anointed by the resurrected Lord Jesus himself, to preach and teach the glorious gospel of Christ wherever The Lord led him to go and here he is once more, saying... "it's able to build you up"... and.... " it's_able to give you an inheritance" .

The whole deal from start to finish.

Of course it's the Holy Spirit who ministers life to us.....but always through faith and through the gospel.

Most of us know the story (*Acts 21*), how those prophecies were correct and he was arrested and held captive . The religious leaders so stirred up by rumour... and incensed with him for preaching about the Lord Jesus and of the forgiveness of sin through His blood, that they were intent on killing him. So still under arrest and falsely accused of many things, for his own safety he appealed to Caesar and eventually ended up in Rome....

And it's generally thought that it was from here a few years later, as a prisoner, that he wrote the letter to the Ephesian church.

Now remember, last time we looked at the importance of "beholding the glory of The Lord" in the gospel ?.... Seeing the very great love of God towards us in the gospel and how we are being changed into the same image as we do so ?

And the same thing in effect, in John 17 where The Lord prayed, " I have declared "your name" to them, that the love wherewith you loved me be in them and I in them"

Right..., just keep that on the back burner....and let's see the rest of what Paul said to the elders of The Ephesian church that were gathered there on the seashore.....,

Acts 20:28-32 NKJV

"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (Similar words that were spoken to Peter !) For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves".

Do you see there ? "speaking perverse things", therefore not speaking the truth.

(Perverse=dia-strepho: strepho=to turn away: dia=from .)

4.

*“Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, **I commend you to God and to the word of His grace**, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified”.*

Now as I was looking at this it popped into my mind to look in the book of Revelation at John’s vision concerning the churches, which makes me think it was The Lord as it came out of the blue.... But first let’s just remind ourselves of what Paul has been saying to them for years about the gospel,...about speaking the truth in love and of their place in Him,

*“But **speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ**: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto **the edifying of itself in love**.”*

Isn’t it remarkable then, that in the book of Revelation, The Lord’s words to this same church were these.....

To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, “These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands”:

“I know your works, your labour, your patience and that you cannot bear those who are evil... and you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars...and you have persevered and have patience.... and have laboured for My name's sake and have not become weary.

*“Nevertheless I have this against you, that **you have left your first love**”.* (Revelation 2:1-4)

Hard to believe isn’t it? I was so surprised at this. This of course is to the messenger of the church the Head man but look where they’d been led.

Here they were busy with the things of the Lord apparently ... and yet according to what we’ve seen, they had somehow lost sight of the love of God in all of this. Isn’t that an eye opener?

The gospel that Paul preached had somehow been corrupted or lost it’s importance.

From this one can understand that a cold or hard heart is the consequence of losing sight of the love of God in Christ somewhere along the way. (*We love Him because He first loved us. 1 John 4:19*)

I’m sure there are books that have been written concerning the history of what happened there... but from what we’ve been studying, in my opinion, it comes down in some way to the gospel, either a moving away from what Paul preached or something like that. Since the love of God in Christ, revealed in the gospel, is central to all of this.

The thing is this, we’re loved so much and the encouragement in this whole study is to simply embrace the word of truth, to believe it and see in it the glory of the Lord...., to see His heart towards us in the gospel, as John said....

“And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him..” (1John 4:16)

There’s a similar picture to this in The Old Testament In Psalms 103:7 it says...

“He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel” and we saw in the last part of the study, that God had proclaimed and revealed His name, His character, to Moses...., only partially... but what He is really like... and that changed everything for Moses , even his face shone but he was unaware of that.

Whereas the children of Israel had it in their hearts that God really didn’t like them and was intent on destroying them. Do you see ? They had the promise of the land.... but their hardness of heart and poor opinion of God was because they didn’t know Him.

The truth is, we’re loved..., so deeply loved and the more we focus on this, the more we’ll know great peace and enter into all that’s ours in Christ by faith.

5.

Now whenever I read Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the first two chapters especially I find you're left in no doubt that this is all of God..., from start to finish.... and that everything's under control. A plan and purpose from before the world was even formed, that so pleases Himand that nothing can mess it up or stop it.

And personally, I find that in the light of this, any concerns I may have about my walk, shrink down to nothing and I realise... that it's **His** love.... and **His** grace alone that saves, restores and keeps me. The verse especially that always makes me smile, says in effect, "c'mon look! even the faith to believe is a gift". *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God".*

And then the very next verse,(verse 9) says, *"not of works, lest any man should boast"*.

Now just a few verses on from this Paul uses an illustration, this time of a building.... and this is what I'd like to finish with.....describing us as living stones, being built up into a Holy temple unto The Lord.... and there's something very special here.

*"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...., having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets..., Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone...., in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom **you also are being built together** for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit".*
(Ephesians 2:19-22 NKJV)

'built together' is one word, a compound word of two words that are stuck together...., *syn-oikodomeo* ... and it very accurately describes a building under construction. 'syn' means *together*..., *oikodomeo*, *to build*.

The Romans and Ephesians had temples of course to their gods... but Paul would probably have had Solomon's Temple in mind as the type or shadow when he wrote this.... the Temple in Jerusalem, that Solomon was tasked to build . (1 Chronicles 28:11-19) .

Now that was built exactly to the instructions that God had given to David.... and when you look, it was very exact... even down to the design and weight of the small gold and silver items that would be used. Every part perfect in itself and then assembled as one.

Which is very comforting... as scripture tells us that The Lord has placed us in the body according to His will, that we all have a unique place in Him, a place of His choosing where we fit perfectly .

"But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased..... And if they were all one member, where would the body be?"

But now indeed there are many members, yet one body". (1 Corinthians 12:18-20)

The Lord Jesus spoke of this to the Pharisees and you can understand how puzzled they must have been...., it's in John 2:18-21 ...

"So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple...., and in three days I will raise it up."

Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body".

Now maybe they were thinking of it's reconstruction...because the original temple only took 7 years to build. You'll find that in 1 Kings 6:38 *"And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished in all its details and according to all its plans. So he was seven years in building it."*

6.

There was one outstanding feature though regarding the construction of Solomon's Temple, that is so in your face if you like..... it's as though The Lord has underlined this in red ink especially for our benefit. It's that the whole affair had peace written all over it. It's everywhere ! Not literally.... But the account is so marked with peace, that it's almost like a seal or a hallmark, stamped on the whole business.

Even Solomon's name in Hebrew, is *Shelomo* meaning peace / peaceable . (You can see *shalom* in there! That's the root word of his name with just an "o" on the end, which simply alters how you pronounce it.)

Every part was prepared beforehand, so that it could be assembled relatively quickly and without the sound of hammering ..., there's Solomon the one who in name, built it and the environment in which it was built, no war, rest and peace was like a signature upon it all.

(apparently the limestone was quarried and shaped underground and this underground quarry can be viewed today, the entrance is under the north wall of the old city. It can't be proved that Solomon used stone from here but it's generally thought that he did and this 5 acre underground quarry under the old city of Jerusalem, was where the stones, in a cool, moist environment, would have been hewn out and prepared, before being exposed to the heat where they hardened off.)

1 Chronicles 22:7-10

"And David said to Solomon: "My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build a house to the name of the LORD my God but the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have made great wars; you shall not build a house for My name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in My sight. Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies all around. His name shall be Solomon, for I will give peace and quietness to Israel in his days. He shall build a house for My name, and he shall be My son, and I will be his Father and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.'

But what a picture of the Lord ! Before the cross., like David the man of war who slew the giant, crushing the serpent's head at the cross.... and now, typified by Solomon, the resurrected, glorified Lord Jesus, The Prince of Peace, seated on the throne at the Father's right hand as Lord of all, with all His enemies having been put under His feet.

And scripture tells us that having believed on him we have been "*translated out of the power of darkness into the kingdom of The Son of His love*". 'Prince of peace', implying that Peace is a realm.

Then obviously we think of the scriptures that speak of entering His 'rest'..., referring to the finished work of Christ.... and straightaway we begin to see, that peace and rest, feature strongly in our growing up.... just as it did in the type . The thing to note especially, is that it's His peace and His rest that we partake of.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us to give diligence to enter that rest, in fact let's have a look...

"For indeed the gospel was preached to us, as well as to them.... but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest...." (Hebrews 4:2-3)

And....

"There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience." (Hebrews 4:9-11)

Hebrews 4:3 "*For we who have believed do enter that rest....*" Referring to the finished work of Christ. Which in a nutshell is what we've been looking at, believing the gospel, the word of truth.

7.

Further to that... I believe it's important to understand that it's **His peace** that has been gifted to us. Something that our Father, who incidentally is The God of peace, intends for us to possess without measure. *"All your children shall be taught by the LORD, And **great** shall be the peace of your children. (Isaiah 54:13)* ,

That's not to say that when fear, worry or anxiety grips us, that we're failing in any way, it just highlights our total need of Him for everything.... but His gift of peace is ours...and for us to own.

His very best for us, being to know His peace that passes all understanding, in every situation.

*"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God and **the peace of God**, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7).* (With thanksgiving because our every need is covered in Christ).

And I remember someone pointing out once.... that in 1 Peter 5:7 where it says, ..., *"casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you"*.... that the word 'cast', (*epiripto*), is only used twice in scripture.... and that the other place was when the disciples took off their garments and 'threw' them onto the donkey's back for Jesus to ride into Jerusalem on that special day. (It's a compound word *epi*=upon + *ripto*=to throw.)

And that image has stuck... and usually comes to mind now if anything starts to weigh heavy, or I get anxious about something. Not so much handing it over, but getting shot of it like a hot potato if possible and looking to Him to sort it out.

Anyway I don't want to labour this point about peace, because it's things we already know for the most part... but you can see that peace and rest figure prominently in our being built up in Him....**His peace** gifted to us...and **His rest** that we enter by faith.

I know you see it...but I think it is important just to emphasise, that , **it's 'His peace', that's gifted to us..... and it's part of our inheritance as children of God.** To own it by faith and look for it in every situation.

We all know The Lord answers prayer and intervenes in situations that can seem so messy....but it's clear from scripture that in the midst of trouble, it's His peace..., given to us, that sustains us. Especially when the answer doesn't come immediately, or in the way we expect....

And finally we're encouraged to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We're in Christ, so already there's unity.... but again, it's peace that features strongly as we're being built up together in love. *"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace . There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling"; (Ephesians 4:1-4).*

You know..., every day, regardless of circumstances or feelings..., to positively give thanks for all that's ours in Him and if negative thoughts come in.... and they do..., To remind ourselves and each other with a word or two of encouragement.

The thing is, feelings have nothing to do with it.... **it's all about the truth**..., we 'are' greatly loved... and that in Christ as members of His body, 'we have' unbroken fellowship with our Father and The Lord Jesus. We have, "been blessed' (*past tense*), with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ..., 'we have' protection..., healing... and provision is ours. (It's all ours to own by faith).

'We are.., 'declared righteous' through faith in the blood of Jesus that has cleansed us from all our sin. 'We have'... peace with God and as His children, 'are in', the flow of The Holy Spirit... all of these things and more because we are in Him and members of his body.

The Lord Jesus is our life and lives within..., His peace ..., gifted to us.

8.

But it's those two things..., "growing up into Him in all things through **speaking the truth in love**". Ephesians 4:15
And... "**beholding as in mirror the glory of The Lord...**" (Seeing the love of God in Christ and His finished work.)

2 Corinthians 3:18

So that's it and I thought it's only right to finish with the same passage we finished with last time, since the gospel is all about our Father's great love for us and The Lord Jesus His beloved Son, sent to save us.

This time from the Panin bible translation of the new Testament..., which is a very good translation.

Ephesians 2:4-10 (Panin bible)

(it's the only bible version in my opinion that has translated verse 10 correctly, true both in word and context, summarising all that's been said before.)

"But God..., being rich in mercy..., for His great love wherewith He loved us..., even when we were dead through the trespasses, made us alive together with the Christ (by grace have you been saved)...., and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenlies..., in Christ Jesus:

That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For **by grace have you been saved through faith**, and this not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one should glory. (10) For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **upon** good works, **which God afore prepared**, that we should walk in them". Amen.