Opening Words

Understanding and knowing God is the only thing in life worth boasting about and knowing God means that we know his ways – what he likes, what he doesn't like and that we delight in the things he delights in.

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Christ has given us a glorious vision of our future. It is this vision that motivates us to give our all to him and to use our spiritual gifts to bring healing, mending, and equipping to the Body of Christ. We are to use our gifts to build up the Body of Christ, and we do this until something happens that Paul describes for us in Ephesians 4:13.

Let's look at verse 13 again in Ephesians 4 which tells us how long we are to use our gifts to build up the Body. We are to do this:

> 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 our previous broadcast, we talked about the first phrase – the unity of the faith – and discovered that Paul is talking about a lot more than churches getting along with one another or people in churches getting along with one another. The phrase, the unity of the faith, refers to the reuniting of all the brokenness in the world under the headship of Jesus Christ. We are looking forward to the renewal of all things in the universe where sin has been judged and only righteousness exists. And as we build one another up and bring mending and healing to one another's lives we serve as a foretaste of the healing of the world through Jesus Christ.

Here is the second phrase that Paul uses – the knowledge of the Son of God. We are to use our gifts to build up the Church until we attain to the knowledge of the Son of God. When Paul speaks of this knowledge he is not just talking about facts about Jesus the Son of God. Instead, he is talking about knowing him. We want to know him as he knows us. There are many verses throughout Scripture that emphasize this type of knowing.

This is how Jeremiah 9:23-24 expressed it:

> "Thus says the Lord, "Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; 24 but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things," declares the Lord.

Understanding and knowing God is the only thing in life worth boasting about and knowing God means that we know his ways – what he likes, what he doesn't like and that we delight in the things he delights in. I have a friend who has been married for about six months. He is happily married and marvels at how in only these few months his wife knows him so well and can read his emotions and

his face and his body language. That is knowing. God wants us to know him in that way too – where we are intimately aware of his heart and goals and desires.

In John 17:3 we find Jesus describing eternal life in this way: "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." Eternal life is not just longevity. Eternal life is intimately knowing God.

In Philippians 3:10 Paul says that his goal is "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being conformed to his death." "That's what I want more than anything else," Paul says, "and I count everything else to be but rubbish compared to the surpassing value of knowing him."

These are lofty ideals about knowing God, and they are ideals we should all strive for, but we also must realize that we strive for them in a fallen world and in our fallen bodies. And so, in 1 Corinthians 13 Paul said, "now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known."

In this life, we cannot see Christ and know Christ as fully as he sees us or knows us, but a day is coming when we will see him face to face. A day is coming when our partial knowledge will give way to a full knowledge. Paul describes this in 1 Corinthians 13:10 as the coming of that which is Perfect and I believe he is referring to the same thing we saw in Ephesians 1:10 and Colossians 1:19-20 – the restoration of all things, the restoration of paradise, the restoration of Perfection when Christ returns.

This is what Paul is describing in Ephesians 4:11-13. We are to use our gifts to mend and heal one another, thus building up the Body of Christ, and we do this until the Church attains to the full knowledge of the Son of God. Now we have only partial knowledge of His glory, but one day we will have full knowledge of His glory when the Church sees Him face to face. What a day that will be.

I remember when my children were small and I enjoyed them very much. I knew them well, and I knew them a whole lot better than they knew me. But now that they are adults, they know me much better. They have gone from seeing me through a mirror dimly, to use Paul's phrase, to seeing me face to face – from one adult to another adult. It will be the same with us – now we are children of God, John says in 1 John 3:2 and we don't know fully what we shall become but we do know that we shall be like him because we shall see him just as he is. In other words, we will have put off our childhood and entered adulthood and we will know him face to face, adult to adult, so to speak.

This leads to the third expression Paul uses in Ephesians 4:13 – "a mature man." We are to build up the Body of Christ with our gifts until the Church becomes "a mature man." Paul has hinted at this theme already in his epistle. Let's go back to chapter 1 again. In 1:5 he says that God has predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself.

The adoption he has in mind is not like when we adopt and bring a little child into our family. It is more of the idea of adopting and bringing someone in to be our legal heir and looking to the time when that legal heir will enter fully into the inheritance. Paul referred to the same thing in 1:4 when he said that those who are in Christ have been chosen to be holy and blameless before God. This

verse has a future look to it. Paul is thinking of that coming day when we will stand before God completely holy and completely blameless. This will be the same day as when we realize fully our adoption as his heir.

In 1:11 he said that we have received an inheritance. This does not mean that we experience the inheritance, but it means that we are the heirs. It's like receiving notice that we have been written into a will and that one day in the future, we will receive everything that the will expresses.

And then in 1:14 Paul says that the Holy Spirit is given as a pledge of our inheritance that we will receive at the same time we receive our new bodies. It's all future looking. This will be the time of spiritual adulthood. This will be the time when little boys enter full manhood and can accept the full responsibility of the inheritance. This will be the time when we reign with Christ. And with our new bodies and with our new world and with our maturity, we will have the ability and the wisdom and the power to reign with Christ and to be creative and to bring glory to God forever and ever in ways that are too far beyond our little, childlike minds to comprehend now. This is what Paul has in mind when he says that we use our gifts to build up the church until we become a mature man. And, by the way, Paul has already called the Church a man in Ephesians 2:15. He does it again here to point us to our destiny.

Finally, Paul says we are to use our gifts until we attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Now there's a phrase. What does he have in mind? Well, first what does he mean by the fullness of Christ? Paul talked about this in the context of our passage when he said in Ephesians 4:10 that he ascended far above all the heavens that he might fill all things. The physical and spiritual world is filled with all sorts of ungodly things right now but a day is coming when the only spirit that will fill the universe is the spirit of Christ. He will fill all things. This is the first idea of fullness. The second idea is the mind-buster for in Ephesians 1:23 he says that the Church is the fullness of Christ! And here in 4:13 he says that we are to grow up into this measure, into this stature of fullness!

Here's my favorite way of explaining it. God has created two sets of clothes. They are glorious clothes and they must be worn to fulfill his plans to show his glory fully in the universe. One set of clothes has already been claimed. They have been claimed and are now worn by the resurrected, glorified Christ at the right hand of God. But for God's purpose to be fully done, the second set of clothes must be claimed – and guess who they are for? They are for the Church! But the problem is that they are still too big for the Church. We don't fit into these garments yet because we have not yet grown up enough to wear them. We are still children. We still don't know Christ as he knows us. We are still broken and are not perfectly united. But Christ has given gifts to his church that those gifts might be used to grow the church up so that it will fit into the clothes. We are to use our gifts and serve one another until the Church measures up and fits into the clothes that God has destined it to wear for eternity!

Paul goes on to say, "As a result," or, "with this in mind," let's no longer act like children. And we are going to consider this more in our next broadcast. I hope you'll join us!