

Reflections on the message by Tanel Lokuta on Sunday 30th May 2010

“Growing Up” (Ephesians 4:11-16)

¹¹ Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. ¹³ This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. ¹⁵ Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. ¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

This message is about both growing up as a church and about individuals maturing in Christ. How can we attain the “full measure of Christ”? In this passage, Paul is giving guidelines to the church. It is good advice, but not easy to do. It is as if we might say to a child, “Oh, do grow up”, but the child might reply, “But I am only a child! And so when it comes to “attaining to the full measure of the fullness of Christ,” we might say, “It isn't happening; it's impossible”. Or we might say, “It isn't for everyone”. **But it is possible.**

It takes time. It is a journey. We want it to happen so quickly, but the Bible doesn't show it to be that way. The journey from Egypt to the Promised Land took 40 years. It was a learning experience for Israel. The Lord had to teach them slowly to become a nation! But what about Paul and his dramatic experience on the Damascus road? It was eight years before his first missionary journey.

“I haven't got the discipline to do it”. Our lives are busy. It is not easy. Jesus said to His disciples, “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3). Teaching about humility is part of it, but it is not primarily teaching, but rather an announcement! Reading it in context (Matthew 4:23 – 5:3), do you see the significance of this statement? The fame of Jesus had spread across the river Jordan to predominantly Greek cities in the Roman Empire. People were being healed and so they wanted to hear Jesus' teaching. This is then a counter-intuitive statement. The Old Testament seemed to them to be about obeying God's laws to receive His blessing. This announcement was for those who say, “I haven't got what it takes to do this.” It says that God is with you. God is on your side.

As has been made clear to our youth through the principles of UNIT, maturing and serving God goes hand in hand.

We all mess up at times and get dirty hands, because although we are children of God, we are still in this world, and sin and Satan haven't left it. But we can come to God to confess our sins and to receive His forgiveness for them (1 John 1:8-9). Jesus has come to give us fullness of life (John 10:10) – not just being forgiven but to win over Satan and sin. We are not ignorant of Satan's tactics:-

1. **Deception.** John 8:44 tells us that Satan is a liar and the father of lies. What can we do? John 8:31-32 tells us. We need to be committed to knowing the truth.
2. **Temptation.** The drama focused on the temptations associated with youth. But we need to grow together as a body, both youth and older generations. The illustration was about the mentality associated with temptation. Satan tries to tempt us with different things but it is all an attempt to live independently from God. We have no reset button. We have to learn to be dependent upon God. Do we trust Him to take care of all our needs (Philippians 4:19)? 1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us that we all face the same temptations but that God will provide a way out of them.
3. **Accusation.** Not only does Satan try to get us to mess up, when we do he accuses us of doing so. He is the “accuser of the brethren” (Revelation 12:10). He knows he has lost the war but he tries to bring as many down as he can to destroy God's body. But we are to fight the good fight together.