



THE WORD *Alive*

The Preaching Ministry of
Ashley River Baptist Church

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT EPHESIANS 4:14-16

14 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 men in their deceitful scheming.

15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

16 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.

Paul sets forth some clear signs which give evidence of the presence of spiritual maturity and its absence. The Bible assumes that every believer is interested in developing and growing in spiritual maturity. Are you?

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF SPIRITUAL IMMATUREITY

Paul describes three attributes that reflect spiritual immaturity.

CHILDISHNESS - "Then we will no longer be infants". This refers to minors, the untaught, the infantile, or stupid.

INSTABILITY - These are spiritual lives which never show any grounded or rooted quality.

Nautical metaphor - "tossed by the waves"

Meteorological metaphor - "blown by every wind" They never recognize stability when they see it.

GULLIBILITY - Ready to swallow anything bearing the name "Christian".

They are taken in by:

Deliberate Deception - duped as by those with dexterous deception who "load the dice" - i.e., misled intentionally by the "cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming" - deceptive strategy. Paul describes a world of adept spiritual deceivers.

II. THE DIRECTION OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

There is an atmosphere in which spiritual maturity flourishes - love. Believers confess the truth - not deceit - in a loving way.

Growth Defined - "grow up into Him"

Goal Defined - This is growth toward a goal - "the head, that is, Christ."

III. THE DESCRIPTION OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Mature believers are committed to the whole body of believers "the church".

Process of Harmony - "joined and held together"

Process of Vitality - "by every supporting ligament" -each individual part functioning properly.

CONCLUSION - New Testament spiritual maturity is always defined in terms of the quality of one's relationship to the whole body. Each part of the corporate whole is vitally related to each other and to the head himself - Christ. It is never merely individual or isolated. What is your level of spiritual maturity?