

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

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“Speaking The Truth In Love” Pt. I

by Brian Meade

In Ephesians 4:11-16, the Bible shows us the wisdom of God’s way the church comes to maturity in Christ. Notice the means that God actively uses (evangelists, pastors, and teachers) in verses 11-13:

11 “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 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. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,

16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”



As the church is equipped to do the work God gave it and matures after the measure of Christ, we also see the prominent need to “speak the truth in love” for “growth of the body.” Let us not miss the essential element of love in everything we do, and the power of it. The church can only be an effective influence for good, as we take the powerful gospel (Roman 1:16) and speak it lovingly to the lost who need a Savior. That’s the role of the church in the world today.

When we consider the matter of “speaking the truth in love,” there is always the danger of extremes:

(1) To Speak the Truth— Without Love.

When men have the truth that leads to eternal life, it is of the utmost importance that they convey that truth with a spirit of love. But such is not always the case. But yet, Paul emphatically explains that love must motivate everything we do as children of God. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, “*If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.*”

We cannot effectively bring the lost sinner to Jesus if we are cold, arrogant, or speak with hatred for the lost. And the question should be raised to those who try this method— “How could we ever show the love of God and of Jesus Christ, if we are unloving ourselves?” (John 13:34-35) We must be bold and loving!

(2) Speak With Love— Without Truth.

Another extreme is to try to be so “loving” that we don’t want to step on anybody’s toes and tell them they need to repent of error or any immorality. But this is a misconception of what real love does for us in these situations where it is in the best interest of the person we love to say the hard truth to them in the spirit of love. Notice what the Bible says in Proverbs 27:5, “*Better is open rebuke Than love that is concealed.*” If we truly love them, we will let them know that they can’t stay in sin and go to heaven. Truth must be expressed!

If we compromise the message of truth, we also do a disservice to those we are trying to reach with the gospel. And this is because we are no longer speaking with the full truth of God's word, but a blend of truth and error. The apostle Paul knew very well that compromising the gospel perverts it! (Galatians 1:6-9) Such a gospel does not have the power to save anyone!

I. How Do We Speak The Truth In Love?

We must first answer what it means to love someone. Paul gives a good definition of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-6, *"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;"*

Why is it that we can be long-suffering with faults (not sins) and weaknesses of others? It is because we love them! (see Proverbs 10:12; 17:9; 1 Peter 4:8)

Why is that we should be kind and show kindness in our attitude toward those deceived by the sway of sin? It is because we love them!

It is also the reason why we are not ugly toward those we love by being envious, parading ourselves, puffed up, behaving rudely toward others, seeking our own, in a provoked way, or in a way that thinks evil of others in an improper way. All such bad behaviors show a lack of love for our fellowman.

The definition of love from the Greek word *agape*: "A love founded in admiration, veneration, esteem..... to be kindly disposed to one, wish one well." (Thayer p.4, 653)

William Barclay says of love— "It is the spirit in the heart which will never seek anything but the highest good of its fellow-men." (Barclay, *Flesh and Spirit*, p.65)

If we care about people and seek the best for them, we will talk about even difficult subjects, subjects such as:

1. Sinful Behavior.

In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul gives to us several examples of sinful conduct that Christians must avoid, *"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."* (NKJB)

There are many in the world who do not ever wish to say anything about such sins as adultery and fornication in a bad light. Many have taken the politically correct approach to sin, and remain silent when they need to speak truth in love.

Why did John the baptist say *"It is not lawful for you to have her"* to Herod the tetrarch concerning his sin of taking Herodias, his brother Phillip's wife? (Matthew 14:3-4) Was it because he hated him? Was revenge the motive? Or was it because he saw this sin as putting their souls in condemnation before God? Was it the loving thing to say something to bring them to repentance and save them in the Judgment Day (2 Corinthians 5:10-11). John actually loved Herod and Herodias!

What about people today who are devoted to a lifestyle of fornication? What would we say to those of the LGBTQ lifestyle? Do we simply say that is their business and I don't have the right to be judgmental about it? Do we think that is the right way to handle the situations of life where we have friends that are lost to these sins?

If we do not speak the truth in love, will they ever see the need to repent? Or if we do say the truth in a loving way and they do repent, we have done them the best service a friend could ever do for their friend!

Or what do we say as we speak the truth in love to liars, gamblers, and thieves? What about those filled with hatred, selfish ambition, jealousy, wrath, and the drunkards of this world? Not saying anything at all is NOT the loving thing to do! If we want them to come out these sins, let us care enough to say the hard sayings in the spirit of love and concern.... because we want them to go to heaven, because Paul concluded identifying the works of the flesh by saying, *"that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."* (Galatians 5:21)

Jesus had great love for all of mankind (John 15:13), but He still rebuked sin as He spoke the truth in love (John 4:22; 8:21; 9:39). As a matter of fact, Jesus' hardest rebukes were given to the religious leaders of His day in Matthew 23!

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation." (Matthew 23:13-14) Many such rebukes are in that chapter.....

Jesus loved even the most stubborn and stiff-necked scribe and Pharisee that he met while on the earth— He loved them enough to care about the condition of their souls. Everything He said in Matthew 23 was in view of helping them to see their error and repent! Jesus concludes by saying, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"* (Matthew 23:37)

He spoke the truth in love, and so can we— as we follow our Lord's example!

News and Notes: Sick and recovering: Tim Harris Sr, Tim Harris Jr, Chad Harris, Martha Norvell (Mississippi Care), June Lawson (Lisa Busby's Mom), Debbie Keplinger, Janis Johnson, Daniel Holloway, Tammy Kilgore (Jerry's niece), Betty Hurst, Peggy Harville (cancer), Linda Harris, Hazel Corner, Clay Ford, Clois Wright, and Dan & Linda Hunt, Mollie Harris, David Taylor, Bobbi Howell (cancer), Rai Ann Pruitt, Lee Busby, And Danny Cottrell starts treatments for cancer (Dan's Dad).

Our Spring Gospel Meeting with Billy Randolph will begin Sunday, April 19th—24th. Monday the Friday (20—24) starting time is 7:00 PM Nightly.

River Bend Church of Christ's Gospel Meeting starts today (Sunday the 8th). Details in foyer.

Those Who Serve:

Sunday Morning 9:00 A.M. Service:

Opening Prayer: Russell Briggs
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon #1: "The Deity of Christ"

Auditorium Bible Class: 9:35am:

Sunday Morning 10:30 A.M. Service: Fred Johnson
The Book of Romans (Kyle Pope)
Final Lesson, Page #92, Question #1

Announcements: Sam Johnson
Opening Prayer & Scripture Reading: Doug George
Romans 12:9-10
Song Leader: Paul Busby
Lord's Supper: Fred Johnson
Assisting: Nathan Meade & Brian Meade
Preaching: Brian Meade
Sermon #2: "Preferring One Another In Honor"
Closing Prayer: Tim Harris Jr.

Wednesday Evening: 7:00 P.M.

March 11th:

Auditorium Bible Class: Russell Briggs
The Book of Psalms (Randy Blackaby)
Page #59, Question #1
Invitation: Dan Cottrell
Song Leader: Paul Busby
Closing Prayer: Paul Johnson