

“No Longer Children ...”

“That we may be no longer children, tossed to and from and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error, but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:14f).

The comparison of children to Christians is common, used by both Jesus and Paul. And, both used children to illustrate something good and bad. Jesus warned, *“Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 18:3)*. On the other hand He said, *“But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like chlordane sitting in the marketplace, who call unto their fellows and say, we piped unto you and ye did not dance; we wailed and ye did not mourn” (Mt. 11:16f)*. They didn’t want to play any kind of game, happy or sad! In the first illustration Jesus emphasizes the humility of children; in His second, He showed that sometimes nothing satisfied children. Paul also used children to illustrate both desirable and undesirable qualities in Christians. One place he urged, *“In malice be ye babes, but in mind, be men” (1 Cor. 14:20)*. In another, he rebuked Corinthians saying, *“And I brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ” (1 Cor 3:1)*. The Corinthian comparison of Christians to children is not good. Corinthians were bickering and quarreling over foolish things, as children sometimes do. It was this latter sense in which in the Ephesian text he warns against being children.

“That ye may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine.” The gifts Christ gave when He ascended on high: apostles, etc. were given to help Ephesians, in every area of their (our) needs. They were to supply them (us) for the perfecting of the saints; to aid attain unto the unity of the faith, unto full grown men in Christ -- in short to help us become men.

Just as there are both undesirable and desirable qualities in children, so likewise there are desirable and undesirable qualities in men. While Paul urged that we be babes in malice, on the other hand he urged that in mind we be men. Urging stability in courage and dependability he wrote, *“Watch ye. Stand fast in the faith. Quit ye like men. Be strong. Let all that ye do be done in love” (1 Cor. 16:13)*. Courage does not necessarily mean “without fear.” It means one who stands despite the fears he has. One of the characteristics of children is their gullibleness, believing whatever it told them (Santa Claus; fairies, et al). As they mature, if they mature, they sadly learn that one cannot always believe what is told them (How sad that often they

learn this is true from their parents). As they grow, they learn they must take some things with a "grain of salt;" that in all things they must weigh what they are told to determine whether it "holds water or not." Gullibleness in children means they frequently change their minds. While there are times when one needs to change his mind, it should be only after he comes to know he has believed something not right.

"*Out there*" there are those "*who lie in wait to deceive*" (Eph. 4:14, KJV). "*Out there*" there is every wind of doctrine, all kinds of weird, fanciful and ridiculous positions. "*Out there*" are those who in craftiness work their sleight of hands tricks to deceive, if it were possible, even the very elect (Mt. 24:24). "*Out there*" there are those who teach things in order to profit themselves. God's people must never forget that Satan "*as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Pet. 5:8). God's people must never forget that Satan works through men to accomplish his wicked works, seeking the overthrow of God's own. Thus, we must be stable, guarding against the devil's wiles, rejecting all that is false. On the other hand, God's people must be militant: speaking truth in love, yes, but not falling to speak the truth!

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