

## **Ephesians 4: 7-16 – The Shadow Mission**

Hello and welcome. It is so good to be back with you this week. I missed being with you all last week very much and I hear I missed a wonderful message Mark Warren gave. Well I am glad you all were able to be here and to receive the blessings God poured out upon you through Mark – God is such a wonderful God.

Well the bad news is you are back to having to listen to me this week **J** We are going to continue on with part two of our study in Ephesians chapter 4 verses 7-16. If you remember from two weeks ago, we talked about how these verses detailed that we are all given specific and unique gifts and talents by God to be used by us – personally and corporately as ministers to the body and in the body and also to be Christ's body to a hurting and lost world – do you remember how we used the Jenga game as a demonstration tool to show how when we each fail to use our talents as God gave us, when we fail to fulfill our God given mission if you will – the church, - the body of Christ, becomes weaker and weaker until it eventually collapses? Do you remember that it is a collective effort - none of us are so uniquely gifted that we can do it alone and none of us or so uniquely ungifted that are gifts, our mission is not needed to make the body whole and complete?

Today we are going to continue on in that thought – I told you two weeks ago, we were studying the why of that mission and today we are going to study the how of that mission. How do we as individuals and collectively as Christ's body here on earth go about fulfilling our individual and collective missions? How do we minister to each other so that the body grows up into corporate Christlikeness? How do we minister so that unity of faith and knowledge emerges? How do we minister so that babes become keen, perceptive, discerning saints and the world sees a Christ that is loving and kind, yes, but also Holy and Pure and able to Save them?

The answer I want to develop is found in verses 15 and 16.

### **Ephesians 4:15-16 (New International Version)**

**15** ----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.

**The New Living Translation says it this way:**

### **Ephesians 4:15-16 (New Living Translation)**

**15** ----- 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.

Let me clear up a wrong idea here that I had for years about this phrase because I ignored the context. I used to think that the phrase, "speak the truth in love," meant, "Tell it like it is, but gently." Like: if a student bombed a test or if a man loses his job, you may have to do the tough work of telling them the truth, but you do it in love to soften the blow. So the truth which is in view here, I thought, was just the hard facts of life that a person might need to hear about in love.

Well, that is no doubt part of the meaning here (especially in view of Ephesians 4:25)

### **Ephesians 4:25 (New International Version)**

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor,

Again the New Living Translation makes it even clearer although maybe a bit harsher as well J

### **Ephesians 4:25 (New Living Translation)**

25 So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth,

So yes, the content of verses 15 and 16 do include that aspect, but that is not all they include, because the context of verses 15 and 16 points also in different direction, a direction that is very crucial to see for the church to grow into Christlike maturity. The context points to doctrinal truth—truth about God and about His Son. In other words, it means speaking biblical truth, spiritual truth, truth about life as God sees it, not truth as we see it. We can get this mixed up a lot and when we do, truth suffers and the Body suffers.

We see it a lot today – we hear it all the time – truth is relative, hey who am I to tell him what truth he should believe? It may not be true for me, but it may be for someone else.

Well I am sorry to tell you, but that is a load of untruth in itself and we as a society -we as individuals give into that time and time again, because we don't want to offend anyone or hurt anyone's feelings – we want everyone to like us and so we keep our mouths shut and say 'hey it's not my place' – did you ever think that maybe, just maybe it might be your place – maybe, just maybe, the reason why you have it on your mind at all is because God is pulling at the strings of your conscience urging you to speak on His behalf – to Speak the Truth in Love?

Did you every stop to think that the whole reason it is on your mind is because God placed it there – if God did not want you to be involved, He would just keep it from your mind – how many times has that happened to any of us – things are going on all around us and we don't even see it or know about it and then when we do hear about it, we are like – Wow, never even crossed my mind? It didn't because God did not call us to be a part of that issue. Sometimes yes, we are oblivious because we are just oblivious, but more times then not, it is because God does not want us to be involved at that time and so

he takes us out of the picture – He is giving someone else the opportunity to be His voice – the question is ‘do we take that opportunity or do we succumb to our own doubts and fears, succumb to societal pressure and **say No to God?**’

Let me give you some examples of what I am talking about – some of them probably will not be ones that make you feel all warm and fuzzy inside, but they are ones that are right in our faces today.

Let’s take the political scene right now – are we babes listening to what the candidates have to say – allowing ourselves to be blown about by the political correctness of our times and culture or are we mature and discerning, shining the light of scripture on what the candidates say? **Can you tell the difference between what the Bible truly has to say about a subject and the sometimes almost blasphemous misuse of it for political purposes?**

For example, in January President Bush sacrificed the meaning of Matthew 5:14 on the altar of national pride, when he said to the National Religious Broadcasters in defense of the Gulf war, *"I want to thank you for helping America, as Christ ordained, to be a light unto the world."*

**What that amounts to is an outrageous distortion of Jesus' meaning.**

That misuse of Scripture is designed for immature babes that are easily swayed by surface words without thought and discernment. The "light of the world" in Matthew 5:14 does not refer to Americans bombing Iraq no matter how justified the war may or may not be.

Former President Clinton refused to be outdone in this torture of Scripture when he, campaigning for his wife, exploited the precious biblical vision of the New Covenant, into a twisted political vision that stood the biblical reality right on its head. Here is his quote: 1 Corinthians 2:9, 'Our eyes have not seen, nor our ears heard nor our minds imagined what together we can build.’’

That is a total perversion of what the Truth of that verse says:

**1 Corinthians 2:9 (New Living Translation)**

That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.”

A glorious promise of what God has prepared for those who love him was prostituted into a biblically sanctioned endorsement of human effort. And we as those who make up Christ’s body here on earth – stand by without word of protest and let it happen in the name of -- not my place to say so – and when there are those of us who feel strongly enough to speak out against this blasphemy, we more often than not call them misguided and politically motivated.

But that is just the tip of the iceberg as to what we allow to occur unchallenged in the name of political correctness, in the name of not wanting to offend. And in our silence, we end up endorsing what Christ would have us stand against.

All around us we are being urged to endorse wrong and embrace error. We are sucked in with words and actions that are so sly and subtle, yet if we would give them a moment's thought and hold them up to God's Word, their real meaning, their real agenda would be seen for what it is.

For example, in the halls of Kingswood High School and in the Halls of Brewster Academy you will see official school-sponsored posters that clearly endorse homosexuality, but none that endorse living a moral life based on God's Word.

One such poster said, "One in ten people are gay, lesbian, or bisexual. They could be your brother, sister, parent, or friend."

This is tricky. First of all the 10% figure has been discredited. A University of Chicago study suggests 1%. The National Center for Health Statistics estimates 3%. William Simon with the Kinsey Institute estimates 2–3%. So first, the numbers are inflated to make the students feel overwhelmed.

Then, with no moral assessment of the behavior, the emotional appeal is made that your friend, your bother or sister, or even your parent might be homosexual. The net effect of lodging that surface truth in a teenager's mind is not to encourage careful moral reasoning based on God's standards of right and wrong. It is not even to send a message of acceptance for all – if that were the case, it would support acceptance of those who believe homosexuality is not a proper choice – no it is simply put in such a context so as to make the teenager feel overwhelmed with facts (albeit wrong facts) and gut feeling that they are unable to stand against it for fear of rejection, alienation and being seen to be intolerant in a society that places tolerance above morality.

My point here is not to pass judgment on someone who may or may not be a homosexual, my point here is that God's Word has much to say about these subjects, about how we are to live our lives individually and corporately as His body here on earth, but we allow ourselves to be intimidated both individually and corporately and the end result is that Christ is silenced in our community in or world in the name of tolerance and political correctness. And that is just not right.

When Jesse my son was in 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade, he came home from school one day and told me how it was world awareness week at school and as part of the program they brought in people from different cultures and customs to speak to the kids – a very good concept on the surface, but what occurred that week scared me to death – on one day they brought in a person from India who was a Buddhist and this person set the kids in a circle and placed a dot on their forehead and asked them to think about what type of animal they wanted to

come back as and proceeded to have them pray to come back as that animal in their next life. I am sorry – that is giving credence to something I believe is fundamentally in error and to do it in a school sponsored environment is sending a very dangerous message to a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader who has been taught by his parents to listen to and respect his teachers. But when I went to complain, I was seen as an arrogant prejudicial person who failed to understand this is a global world and our kids need to be exposed to all aspects of life. Sorry – no they don't. Can you imagine if I went in with a cross and had all the kids pray the sinner's prayer!

### **Our Discernment Is Tested Everywhere We Turn**

And if do we not stand up and speak the Truth in Love – Speak God's Truth wrapped in God's Love, the world will never hear it or be able to receive it.

*And please let me remind you of what I firmly believe – Jesus was loving and Jesus was kind, but Jesus was not necessarily nice and He for sure was not politically correct.*

He called the religious Rulers of that day – The Spawn of Satan

He told Peter when Peter tried to argue with Him – Get behind me Satan

He told the lady at the well – You are correct you have been married 5 times and you are currently living with a man who is not your Husband.

He physically threw the money changers out of His Father's House

And when they were going to stone the lady who had committed adultery – He challenged all of them with their own sin and said let he who is without sin cast the first stone and after they had all left after being faced with Truth – He did not tell the lady it is okay, you are safe, they are gone you can go home now – No, He told her to Go and Sin no-more.

Jesus did not shy away from the Truth – if you truly love someone, you will risk letting them be mad at you if that is what it takes for you to be truthful with them.

### **Ephesians 4:25 (New Living Translation)**

25 So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth,

**Ryan Dobson (James Dobson's son) puts it this way in his book entitled "Be Intolerant Because Some Things are Just Stupid"**

"Somebody's cheating at School? Oh well, that's his business, who am I to judge",  
"Your roommate wants an abortion, "I wouldn't do it, buy hey, it's her life"

Accepting everything means you believe in nothing. When it comes to right and wrong, sitting on the fence won't get you – or the people you love- anywhere. Passiveness is not love. Love is caring enough to get in people's faces and tell them the truth. And Jesus is that truth. Jesus didn't say I am one of the ways to get to God; He said I am the only way.

When it comes to being intolerant, Jesus is the leader of the pack. He will not let you stay on the fence.

**Rick Warren put it this way in his Book “The Purpose Driven Life”**

“Cultivating community takes honesty. You will have to care enough to lovingly speak the truth, even when you would rather gloss over a problem or ignore an issue. While it is much easier to remain silent when others around you are harming themselves or others with a sinful pattern, it is not the loving thing to do. Often we know what needs to be said or done, but our fears prevent us from saying or doing anything. Many fellowships have been sabotaged by fear: No one had the courage to speak up while a member’s life fell apart.”

**John Ortberg a highly-acclaimed writer and speaker and senior pastor at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in Menlo Park, California. calls it a "shadow mission" - in his book When the Game is Over, It All Goes Back in the Box.**

A Shadow Mission he says is “Our personal mission that parallels our God given mission with the power to divert the best laid plans. Living out our God given mission takes intentionality. Each of us was created for a purpose, but sometimes we can default into a **shadow mission**—when we allow natural temptations, selfishness and fear to take over. And, not only are individuals vulnerable to getting stuck in a shadow mission, but teams and churches are, too.”

As I call the Praise and Worship team up to end us in song and prayer, I ask you to search your hearts for any shadow mission that may be keeping you from **saying Yes to God.**

**I know I have one – it is a daily struggle for me to let go and let God and do what it takes for me to do my part here at Grace Point – my shadow mission plays at my mind telling me I am not the one God called to lead Grace Point – I would do better to just go home and sit on the couch and watch TV and complain about how it is just the New England way and they just won’t get it the way I feel God has called me to lead Grace Point – but you know what? That is exactly what John Ortberg said – it is my doubts and fears it is my Shadow Mission trying to take over and divert the best laid plans. God ordained Grace Point – God is present at Grace Point – He sits with us in these services and in our Grace Groups and guides us in our ministries – He is all around us and in us and working through us – we just need to say ‘Here I am God, use me and then get out of His way – because you know what? If we are not the right person for the job, if we are not the one He has called, he will move us out of that area and move the right person in; and so if you feel God leading you – then follow that lead. And that is what I am going to do. I am putting my shadow mission back in the box and letting God use me as He sees fit. Because as Jesus taught us that night in a garden so many years ago – Not my will, but Thine be done.**

**Praise God and Amen!!!**