

The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XC : UNITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE CONGREGATION OF BELIEVERS (4:1-16)

Ephesians 4:14 —

That we hence forth be no moare chyldren wauerynge and caryed with every wynde of doctryne by the wylynes of men and craftynes wherby they laye a wayte for vs to deceave vs. (Tyndale's New Testament, 1524)

That we henceforth be no more children, wauering and caried about with euery winde of doctrine, by the deceit of men, and with craftines, whereby they lay in wait to deceiue. (Geneva Bible, 1599)

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; (King James Version, 1769)

that we may no more be babes, tossed and borne about by every wind of the teaching, in the sleight of men, in craftiness, unto the artifice of leading astray, (Young's Literal Translation, 1898)

that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; (Revised Version, 1885)

that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; (American Standard Version, 1901)

so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles. (Revised Standard Version, 1952)

that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, (New King James Version, 1982)

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; (New American Standard Version, 1995)

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 people in their deceitful scheming. (New International Version, 2011)

so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (English Standard Version, 2011)

ἵνα μηκέτι ὦμεν νήπιοι κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι παντὶ ἀνέμῳ τῆς διδασκαλίας ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐν πανουργίᾳ πρὸς τὴν μεθοδεῖαν τῆς πλάνης (Stephanus Greek NT, 1550)

ἵνα μηκέτι ὦμεν νήπιοι, κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι παντὶ ἀνέμῳ τῆς διδασκαλίας ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἐν πανουργίᾳ πρὸς τὴν μεθοδεῖαν τῆς πλάνης, (NA28 Greek New Testament)

HAVING EXPRESSED THE ONE SINGLE GOAL POSITIVELY, PAUL NOW GIVES THE PURPOSE OF THAT GOAL: 'SO THAT ... IN ORDER THAT ...' — ἵνα [hina] —

this 'hina clause' probably indicates purpose ('in order that') or result ('so that'). It is probably dependent upon the 'giving' of v. 11: 'Christ gave gifted people to the churches not only that they may mature (v. 13) but also in order that they would not be deceived (v. 14) and would grow in Him (v. 15).' [Hoehner, 560; see also Abbott, 121; Thielman, 283; Snodgrass, 205; Hodge, 169] ***"The exalted Christ has given his gifts to the church so that by building his body immaturity and instability will increasingly be left behind. The ministry was given not only to enable the church to grow but also so that it would be able to resist any forces that might corrupt or destroy it."*** [O'Brien, 308] "The conjunction ἵνα [hina, 'so that, in order that'] both serves verse 14, giving us the negative ramifications, and also looks forward to verses 15-16 where the positive aspects are stated." [Hoehner, 559] "This is the third successive verse depending on v. 11. Unlike v. 13 it is cast negatively. The ministry was given not only to enable the church to grow but also so that it would be able to resist any forces that might



corrupt or destroy it. Ministers themselves are not the direct agents in this resistance; all believers are summoned to the task; should any fail, unity may become chaos.” [Best, 403] “Paul’s next clause provides a negative contrast to the positive picture of the church’s destiny in verse 13. The church’s goal, negatively viewed, is to move believers out of childhood, with its susceptibility to various false teachings (v. 14).” [Thielman, 283] **“Immaturity is described as being ‘tossed back and forth’ and ‘blown here and there,’ that is, being easily deceived. Paul pictures a person who does not know where to find the source for truth and life and who is repeatedly being duped by charlatans and tricksters. Several implicit contrasts are set up by the text:**

(1) *infancy versus maturity*

(2) *tossed about versus joined and held together (v. 16);*

(3) *deception versus speaking the truth (v. 15)*

(4) *of human origin versus from Christ*

(5) *crafty people serving themselves versus honest, loving people serving others.*” [Snodgrass, 205f; see also Lincoln, 257; Hoehner, 559]

TALKING ABOUT IMMATURE BELIEVERS, NOT UNBELIEVERS — μηκέτι ὄμεν [mēketi ōmen] — ***we may no more be, we henceforth be no more, we may no longer be*** — ***Paul is not here referring to the readers’ pre-conversion state but after their conversion, for prior to conversion believers are never called ‘immature children’ but rather are dead in sin and under the power of Satan (2:1-3).*** [Best, 404] ***Paul also implies that they were once so, ‘having been so once.’*** [Alford, 118] “The [adverb ‘no longer’] implies something different from the existing condition, and that existing condition, we see, is one of immaturity, assailed, wavering faith, and subjection to the distracting influence of false teachers. In his address to the elders at Miletus (Acts xx. 29) Paul had spoken of ‘grievous wolves’ that would enter the Ephesian Church after his departure.” [Salmond, 333]

THE PLURAL ‘INFANTS’ DESCRIBES US ALL AT ONE TIME — νήπιοι [nēpioi] — ***babes, children, infants*** — ***“Correspondingly [Paul] describes their Christian condition as immature rather than sinful; it may be for this reason that he uses the first plural and includes himself! The image of the child is used in various ways in the NT to describe recent converts or converts who have not progressed in their faith as they should (1 Cor 3.1f; 13.11; 14.20; Heb 5.13; it is used very differently in Mt 11.25; 18.3; Mk 10.13; Lk 10.21). Children tend to be volatile in their beliefs, and the readers might turn out to be unstable, foolish and incapable of understanding the truth, in contrast with the reference to knowledge in v. 13.”*** [Best, 404; see also Moule, 112; Salmond, 333f] “The term νήπιος [nēpios] refers to infants or to children up to puberty. It connotes not only physical age but childish understanding, that is, foolishness, inexperience, or lack of insight. In the LXX it is used forty-seven times (thirty times in the canonical books) meaning a child, as opposed to adults (1 Sam 15:3; 2 Kgs 8:12; Ps 8:2; Prov 23:13; Joel 2:16), but it can also denote an adult with childish understanding or, one who is simple (Ps 116:6 [LXX 114:6]; 119:130 [LXX 118:130]; Prov 1:32). In the NT it is used fifteen times, eleven times by Paul. It can be used to denote a physical child (Matt 21:16; 1 Cor 13:1; Gal 4:1; 1 Thess 2:7) or a childish understanding (Matt 11:25; Luke 10:21; Rom 2:20; 1 Cor 3:1; Gal 4:3; Heb 5:13). In the present context it has reference to a child’s gullibility, lack of understanding, or lack of perception. Paul proposes that gifts are necessary so that believers are not as children in their perception. He is going to describe further how a child reacts to those who try to persuade him to their way of thinking and how it is contrary to the way that edified believers should react.” [Hoehner, 560f]

ALTHOUGH THIS DESCRIBES ALL BELIEVERS AT ONE TIME, ‘CHRISTIAN IMMATUREITY’ IS AN UNACCEPTABLE STATE — “In the context of 4:7-16 this negative picture of v 14 is meant to underline the importance of Christ’s giving of ministers to the Church. ***Immaturity on the part of believers cannot be treated as a neutral state which will be outgrown in due course. It is a highly dangerous condition because it lays them open to manipulation by cunning people and the forces of error. But it is for precisely such a situation that pastors and teachers have been provided — to prevent believers in their immaturity from falling prey to false teaching and to lead them from the instability which ends in error to the stability of the truth.***” [Lincoln, 259] “The period of maturity is, indeed, future; but meantime, in the hope of it, and with the assistance of the Christian ministry, ***believers are to be ‘no longer children;’ ceasing to be children is meanwhile our duty.*** The ministry is instituted, and this glorious destiny is portrayed, in order that in the meantime we may be no longer children.” [Eadie, 315] “More than once the NT writers use the term ‘infants’ to denote spiritual immaturity — an immaturity which is culpable when sufficient time has passed for those so described to have grown out of infancy. Paul tells the Corinthian Christians that, for all their cultivation of ‘knowledge,’ he could not address them as spiritual men and women but as ‘infants in Christ,’ still needing to be fed with milk rather than solid food (1 Cor. 3:1-2). Similarly, the writer to the Hebrews tells his readers that ‘everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is an infant’ (Heb. 5:13). No blame is attached to the people addressed in 1 Peter for being ‘newborn babes,’ because they are recent converts; but they are urged to develop an appetite for ‘the pure spiritual milk’ and thus ‘grow up to salvation’ (1 Pet. 2:2). It may be that the people addressed in Ephesians have been ‘infants’ in this sense thus far, but they must not be content to remain at this stage.” [Bruce, 351]

SELF-CENTERED INDIVIDUALISM CONTRASTS WITH THE UNITY PAUL IS TEACHING — ***“The plural ‘children’ is probably individualistic in orientation contrasting with the togetherness that ought to exist among believers. Childish individualism drives people apart and shatters unity. Possibly behind the image of immature children lies that of rebirth; the readers have been born anew but have yet to grow up into adulthood.”*** [Best, 404] ***“Through the building up***

and bringing to completion that the gifts effect, immaturity and instability can increasingly be left behind. [Nēpioi], ‘children,’ contains a double contrast to ‘the mature person.’ Not only do silly infants contrast with the mature adult (cf. 1 Cor 2:6; 3:1; Heb 5:13, 14), but the plural of ‘children’ also contrasts with the singular of ‘the mature person,’ individualism being a sign of childishness, unity a sign of maturity.” [Lincoln, 257; see also Thielman, 283] “Infants are defenseless, unable to protect themselves; in the spiritual life they are an easy prey for false teachers and others who would like to lead them astray from the true path. Like ships at sea without adequate means of steering, they are tossed about by the waves and carried this way and that according to the prevailing wind. **Maturity brings with it the capacity to evaluate various forms of teaching, to accept what is true and reject what is false. The mature ‘have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil’ (Heb. 5:14).**” [Bruce, 351] “The contrast between ‘the mature person’ of v. 13 and the ‘children’ here is pointed. Not only do the latter’s ignorance and instability stand over against the knowledge of the mature adult (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6; 3:1; Heb. 5:13,14), but also the use of the plural ‘children’ (with its implications of individualism) stands in contrast to the one ‘mature person’ who is a corporate unity.” [O’Brien, 308] “The plural is to be noted. Maturity belongs to the unity alone. Individualism and self-assertion are the foes of this maturity. We are not to be ‘babes’, isolated individuals, stunted and imperfect.” [Robinson, 140]



BEING ‘CHILDLIKE’ VS. BEING ‘CHILDISH’ —

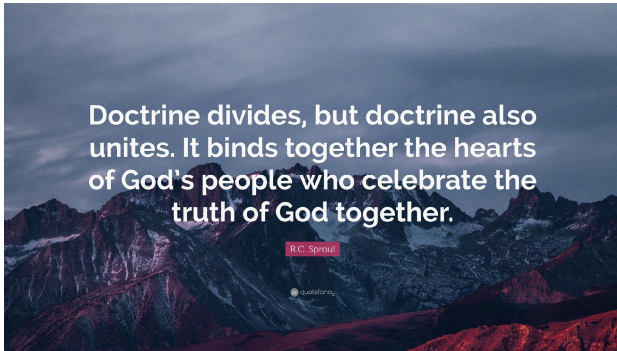
“Sometimes the term [nēpioi, ‘infants, small children’] can be free from polemical overtones (in Matt. 11:25; 21:16; Luke 10:21 [nēpioi are the ‘child-like, innocent’ ones, with whom God is pleased]. But in those passages, as here, where a value judgment is made, the term signifies those who are unstable and immature.” [O’Brien, 308] “Infancy or early childhood as a negative image implying a lack of intelligence or seriousness occurs elsewhere in Paul (1 Cor. 2.6; 3.1; 13.11) and the New Testament (e.g. Heb. 5.13f), though it can also be used positively to symbolize simplicity and innocence, unsullied by adult decadence (see 1 Pet. 2.2 and Matt. 11.25; 18.3; 19.14). And it is so used at Eph. 5.1 of children lovingly imitating their father.” [Muddiman, 205]

SEA AND STORM METAPHOR — κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι παντὶ ἀνέμῳ τῆς διδασκαλίας [kludōnizomenoi kai peripheromenoi panti amenō tēs didaskalias] — **tossed and borne about by every wind of the teaching, (YLT)** — “In this passage Paul is particularly concerned about the vulnerability of the spiritually immature to false teaching. He brings out this emphasis by suddenly switching his metaphor from the stages of human development to that of a storm at sea. Just as in Luke 8:24 Jesus calms a gale whose two components are ‘the wind and the surge of the water,’ so here the children of whom Paul speaks are ‘wave-tossed and blown around by every wind of teaching.’ It was perhaps the changeable, seemingly random, and potentially dangerous aspects of the weather that made it a metaphor of choice for doubt and false teaching in early Christianity (James 1:6; Jude 12).” [Thielman, 283] “[Paul] now changes his metaphor, introducing the sea and its storms. The dangers of sea travel were sometimes used in the OT to depict life apart from God (Ps 107.23-7; Isa 57.20f), and sea travel was widely recognised in the ancient world as dangerous. Paul himself found this to be true; he was shipwrecked at least three times in his travels (2 Cor 11.25) and Acts describes yet another shipwreck when he was on his way as a prisoner to Rome (27.1ff). Despite his vivid acquaintance with the dangers of the sea this is the only occasion (assuming he wrote Ephesians) that he used the idea metaphorically.” [Best, 404] “In the use of much the same figure the apostle, in Heb. xiii. 9, exhorts believers not ‘to be carried away with diverse and strange doctrines.’ And the apostle James compares the unstable to ‘a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed,’ chap. i. 6. One of the principal elements of the perfection spoken of in ver. 13 is stability in the truth; and, therefore, the state of imperfection, as contrasted with it, is described as one of instability and liability to be driven about by every wind of doctrine.” [Hodge, 170] “The new metaphor is drawn from the sea which the Apostle knew so well, the symbol of instability and insecurity. It suggests the jeopardy of the little boats, storm-tossed and swung round by each fresh blast, so that they cannot keep their head to the waves and are in danger of being swamped.” [Robinson, 141]

EITHER TOSSED BY WAVES OR TOSSED LIKE WAVES — κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι [kludōnizomenoi kai peripheromenoi] — **tossed and borne about (YLT)** — Paul uses two participles, the first conveying the idea of *being tossed and thrown about by waves, being thrown into confusion; figuratively, of unstable opinion, fluctuating, frequently changing the way one thinks or believe* [Friberg’s Lexicon], or *to be agitated (like the waves) mentally* [Thayer’s Lexicon]. It is only used once in the LXX, Isa 57:20, ‘But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt.’ (ESV) Thus Paul’s metaphor here is that **the spiritually immature are ‘easily confused in their thinking, easily influenced by others, not grounded, following a variety of teachings, unstable, vacillating.’** The second participle means ‘to carry about or around, to carry about from one place to another, to carry here and there’ and is used 4x in the LXX and 3x in the NT, twice in the literal sense ‘to carry about or around’ (Mark 6:55; 2 Cor 4:10) and this present verse. **Thus this metaphor would indicate ‘one who is confused, liable to be deceived and led astray, lack of direction, lacking direction, open to manipulation and error.’** “Both of these participles are passive (although the first one may be a deponent), indicating that an outside force is causing the confusion. These participles adjectively modify ‘children’ by indicating the manner in which they are exhibiting their childish lack of perception.” [Hoehner, 561; see also Best, 404f; Abbott, 121; Salmond, 334; Moule, 112; Lincoln, 257f; O’Brien, 308; Muddiman, 205] “The ideal Christian stance is to be ‘rooted and founded’ on the apostolic faith (Eph. 3.17), not blown about in a disorderly fashion.” [Muddiman, 205f] “The distressing hesitation of those who do not place absolute reliance on the word of

the Lord, is illustrated by two striking metaphors. The first is taken from small ships, exposed to the fury of the billows in the open sea, holding no fixed course, guided neither by skill nor design, but hurried along by the violence of the tempest. The next is taken from straws, or other light substances, which are carried hither and thither as the wind drives them, and often in opposite directions. Such must be the changeable and unsteady character of all who do not rest on the foundation of God's eternal truth. It is their just punishment for looking, not to God, but to men. Paul declares, on the other hand, that faith, which rests on the word of God, stands unshaken against all the attacks of Satan." [Calvin, 284f] "With no firmness; no settled course; no helm. The idea is that of a vessel on the restless ocean, that is tossed about with every varying wind, and that has no settled line of sailing. So many persons are in regard to religious doctrines. They have no fixed views and principles. They hold no doctrines that are settled in their minds by careful and patient examination; and the consequence is, that they yield to every new opinion, and submit to the guidance of every new teacher." [Barnes' NT Notes]

BY EVERY WIND — παντὶ ἀνέμῳ [panti amenō] — i.e., 'every kind and degree of wind, wind coming from all different directions.' It denotes the idea of 'changeableness, being driven by an outside force.' [see Abbott, 122; Salmond, 334; Lincoln, 258; Hoehner, 561] "God gave us his word, by which we might have placed ourselves beyond the possibility of being moved; but, giving way to the contrivances of men, we are carried about in all directions." [Calvin, 285] "The billow does not swell and fall on the same spot, but it is carried about by the wind, driven hither and thither before it — the sport of the tempest... Such wind, not from this or that direction only, but blowing from any or 'every' quarter, causes the imperfect and inexperienced to surge about in fruitless commotion. The moral phenomenon is common. Some men have just enough of Christian intelligence to unsettle them, and make them the prey of every idle suggestion, the sport of every religious novelty. How many go the round of all sects, parties, and creeds, and never receive satisfaction!" [Eadie, 315f] "[F]alse doctrine, which may be compared to wind for its lightness and emptiness, and for its swelling and puffing nature, and for the noise and bluster it makes, and for its rapidity and force, with which it sometimes comes and bears all before it, and for its infectiousness, which is the nature of some winds; and to be tossed to and fro, and carried about with it, is expressive of much ignorance and want of a discerning spirit, and implies hesitation, and doubts and scruples, and shows credulity, fickleness, and inconstancy: and which is brought on." [Gill, Commentary on Whole Bible]



Doctrine divides, but doctrine also unites. It binds together the hearts of God's people who celebrate the truth of God together.

R.C. Sproul

© 2010/2011

FALSE TEACHINGS FROM BOTH WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES — τῆς διδασκαλίας [tēs didaskalias] — of the teaching, of doctrine, — Some of the commentators debate whether Paul is referring to heresies from within the churches or from without (Jewish and pagan errors slipping into the churches). Those emphasizing the errors are from within note the definite article before the word 'teachings, doctrine' which is typically used by Paul to speak of Christian doctrines. Others balance that with Paul modifying 'the doctrine' with the word 'every kind,' thus stressing errors from without. I do not think we need to choose between these arguments; both are true. "The singular διδασκαλία [didaskalia, 'doctrine, teaching'] with the article might appear to suggest a

reference to Christian teaching but the qualification παντὶ [panti, 'every'] with ἀνέμῳ [amenō, 'wind'] indicates a variety of winds and therefore probably a variety of teaching. **That should not however be taken to suggest that the winds of false teaching are blowing from outside into the church; the NT shows that believers were under continual pressure from other, at least seemingly so, Christians in respect of what was true teaching; each teacher would claim what he said was true. What later came to be accepted as true teaching had not been fully and clearly formulated by the time of Ephesians. Paul of course was always sure in his own mind what was true. Variety of teaching formed a continuing threat to unity. Doctrinal novelty was normal in this initial period of the church. [Paul] probably refers then here to the variety of teaching within the church rather than false philosophies and theologies entering it from outside.**" [Best, 405] "The use of the singular of διδασκαλίας [didaskalias, 'doctrine, teaching'] and of the definite article with it, has been seen as an indication that it is the Christian teaching that is in view, though this teaching is being used for perverted ends. It is true that the singular is employed when Christian teaching is under discussion in Rom 12:7; 15:4 and becomes almost a technical term in the Pastorals, though frequently accompanied by the adjective 'sound' (cf. 1 Tim 1:10; 4:6, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1; 2 Tim 3:16; 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1, 7), whereas the plural is used of false teaching in Matt 15:9; Mark 7:7; Col 2:22; and 1 Tim 4:1. But this does not sufficiently take into consideration the influence of Col 2:22 on the wording of Eph 4:14 and ignores the force of the adjective 'every' in the phrase 'every wind of teaching,' which suggests any and all kinds of teaching in contrast to the unity of faith and knowledge of which the writer has spoken. It is better, therefore, with the majority of commentators to take this as a reference to false teaching in the guise of the various religious philosophies which threatened to assimilate, and thereby dilute or undermine, the Pauline gospel." [Lincoln, 258; see also O'Brien, 308f; Hoehner, 561f; Muddiman, 206] "No man can be useful who has not settled principles. No one who has not such principles can inspire confidence or be happy; and the first aim of every young convert should be to acquire settled views of the truth, and to become firmly grounded in the doctrines of the gospel." [Barnes' NT Notes]

WAS THIS FALSE TEACHING ETHICAL RATHER THAN DOCTRINAL? — "The remainder of the letter is devoted to ethical instruction; this suggests that the false teaching may be about behaviour. More churches have been broken up or debilitated through the lack of loving and honest conduct than by heretical teaching in the strict sense of doctrinal teaching. The failure of the church of Pergamum came through the eating of food sacrificed to idols and sexual indulgence (Rev 2.14; cf

3.20 in respect of the church at Thyatira). The errors of the Roman church (Rom 14.1-15.6) were partly ethical relating to food. When things go wrong theologians tend to look for a failure in orthodoxy rather than orthopraxis. It is true that not eating particular foods may appear a doctrinal problem but its ethical side was important. Those who belonged to trade guilds would often have been put in the position of deciding whether to eat or not; had they the moral courage to stand out from others in the guild? ***Some new Christians may have carried into their communities too much of their previous pagan environment and its culture.*** [Paul] simply warns

orthopraxis – literally, ‘correct practice.’ In the study of religion, orthopraxy is correct conduct, both ethical and liturgical, as opposed to faith or grace etc. This contrasts with orthodoxy, which emphasizes correct belief, and ritualism, the practice of rituals. Theology: the belief that right action is as important as religious faith.

against the continual danger of the perversion of true Christian action and teaching. The vagueness of his reference means that we have no idea what he had in mind, even if he was thinking of one particular perversion; the one further reference to deceptive teaching (5.6) provides no more information to assist in its identification.” [Best, 405]

DICE PLAYING METAPHOR — ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐν πανουργίᾳ πρὸς τὴν μεθοδείαν τῆς πλάνης [en tē kubeia tōn anthrōpōn en panourgia pros tēn methodeian tēs planēs] — ***in the sleight of men, in craftiness, unto the artifice of leading astray, (YLT)*** — “As in verse 12, here we have three prepositional phrases with one of the prepositions different from the other two (ἐν ... ἐν ... πρὸς) [en ... en ... pros]. Most likely, each depends on the immediately preceding prepositional phrase, building up to a climax in thought.” [Hoehner, 562] “Note the preponderance of words in verse 14 for deception: ‘cunning’ (meant negatively in the sense of trickery, actually the word for playing with dice), ‘craftiness,’ and ‘deceitful scheming.’” [Snodgrass, 205] “Children are not only unstable but easily deceived. They are an easy prey to the artful and designing.” [Hodge, 170]

FIRST PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE: *in the sleight of men, by the deceit of men, by the cunning of men, by the trickery of men,* — ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων [en tē kubeia tōn anthrōpōn] — The word variously translated ‘sleight, deceit, cunning, trickery’ is the Greek word κυβεία [kubēia]. We get our modern word ‘cube’ from this word and meant ‘dice-playing, the throw of the dice’ and thus ‘trickery, deceit, entrapping by deceit, deception, fraud, trickery that results from craftiness.’ [Abbott, 122; Alford, 119; Salmond, 334; Lincoln, 258; Moule, 112; Hodge, 170] The verb form is used to mean ‘cheating, playing at hazard.’ [Hoehner, 562] Just as today, the dice were often ‘loaded’ or otherwise manipulated by professional gamblers to their own advantage, thus the term for dice became synonymous with dishonest trickery of any sort. [MacArthur, 158] This word is not used in the LXX and only here in the NT. [Hoehner, 562] ***Hence the spiritually immature are gullible, carried away by the teaching of fakes and cheaters who are playing dishonest games with serious religious matters.*** [Thielman, 283] “In classical Greek it is used simply of the game of chance played with two or more six-sided dice thrown from a box, with bets laid on the outcome. This author may have disapproved of the associated gambling, or the not uncommon practice of loading the dice, or the addictiveness and sheer waste of time of the activity.” [Muddiman, 206f] “Though games with dice may not of themselves be dishonest, in the ancient world they were often associated with dishonesty and deception and dice playing became a synonym for trickery.” [Best, 405] “The apostle shows how the false teaching wields its peculiar power — acting like a wary and dexterous gambler, and winning by dishonesty without being suspected of it.” [Eadie, 316]

“THE DEVIL DIDN’T MAKE THEM DO IT!” — As noted by most of the commentators, Paul is not laying the blame on supernatural powers (although all the lost are under the control of Satan, John 8:34-44; Rom 6:17-23; Eph 2:1-3) but rather lays the blame directly at the feet of human beings! “The total effect of these nouns is to stress the unscrupulous nature of certain undefined people who may be leading believers astray. The deceptive trickery is not attributed here to the devil but is regarded as human; ἀνθρώπος [anthrōpos, ‘man’] is used derogatively (cf Mk 7.7; Mt 15.9; Col 2.8, 20-2); the plural is vague and again gives the impression with much else in the verse that the readers are assailed by a variety of false teachings. ***True teaching, especially that of Paul, is not of human but divine origin.***” [Best, 405f; see also Lincoln, 258; O’Brien, 309; Hoehner, 562] ***“The ‘winds of teaching’ that threaten to drive the immature from the right course proceed from no pure motives: false teaching is promoted by ‘craftiness and trickery which schemes to lead people astray.’ There may be a link here with Paul’s warning to the elders of the Ephesian church in Acts 20:30 that from their own ranks, in days to come, ‘men will arise speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.’ More generally, Paul’s severe words about ‘deceitful workmen’ who infiltrated the church of Corinth and preached ‘another Jesus’ and a ‘different gospel’ from his own provide a parallel: it was plain to him that those interlopers at Corinth were moved by the ambition to gain followers for themselves (2 Cor. 11:4, 13, 20).”*** [Bruce, 351f] ***“This deception has nothing to do with God; it is merely ‘human.’”*** [Thielman, 283]

MEN’S TEACHINGS CONTRASTED WITH DIVINE TEACHING — “But it is in the character, not of *gamesters*, but *deceivers* that the false teachers are immediately presented. ***This ‘sleight of men’ is in contrast with ‘the faith and the knowledge of Christ,’ or it may be with the pure, sure word of God by which the faith and knowledge of the Son of God came.***” [Salmond, 334] “In the ancient world dice-playing frequently had negative connotations of trickery, and the player was thought of as a wily and cunning customer. ***‘Human’ here also has negative connotations as that which is purely human and opposed to that which is in Christ.... Here human cunning can be seen as opposed to the fullness of Christ (4:13) or the truth in Jesus (4:21).***” [Lincoln, 258; see also O’Brien, 309; Muddiman, 207] “The dexterous handling of the dice and the smart cleverness of the schemer are the figures which underlie the words here used. They suggest the very opposite of the Apostle’s straightforwardness of teaching.” [Robinson, 141] “In the sleight of men,’ — of men, not the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, ver. 13.” [Ellicott, 97]

SECOND PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE: *with craftiness, cunning craftiness*, — ἐν πανουργίᾳ [en panourgia] — This word literally means ‘a readiness to do anything, capability for every work, capable of anything, to be able to work all things.’ [O’Brien, 309; Hoehner, 562; Muddiman, 207; Kittel-Bromiley TDNT; Friberg’s Lexicon] It is basically a neutral word and is determined to be positive or negative by the context, although Ernest Best notes the word had begun to carry a bad connotation describing people cunningly scheming to have their views adapted, at least in Christian circles. [Best, 406] Peter O’Brien notes that while used in a good or neutral sense in the LXX, it has negative connotations in the five times it is used in the NT (Luke 20:23; 1 Cor 3:19; 2 Cor 4:2; 11:3; Eph 4:14). [O’Brien, 309] It is used of those who knowingly falsify the Word of God (2 Cor 4:2) and Satan’s shrewd deception of Eve (2 Cor 11:3). **“The immature are susceptible to deception by those who know how to use ruthless but clever tactics.”** [Thielman, 284] **“Craftiness ... [carries] the idea of clever manipulation of error made to look like truth.”** [MacArthur, 158]

THIRD PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE: *whereby they lay in wait to deceive (Geneva, KJV), unto the artifice of leading astray (YLT), after the wiles of error (RV, ASV), by their craftiness in deceitful wiles (RSV), in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting (NKJV), by craftiness in deceitful scheming (NASV), by craftiness in deceitful schemes (ESV) —* πρὸς τὴν μεθοδεῖαν τῆς πλάνης [pros tēn methodeian tēs planēs] — “The renderings of the great Versions show how difficult it is to do justice to this sentence in English.” [Salmond, 334] But while difficult to translate, the general sense is clear. The preposition πρὸς [pros] has the sense of ‘to, towards, with’ and could indicate direction. There are several different manners in which this may be understood but Harold Hoehner believes the best understanding is ‘towards a scheme characterized by error.’ [Hoehner, 563]

by craftiness — τὴν μεθοδεῖαν [tēn methodeian] — this word is only used here and one other place in the NT:

‘Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles, schemes of the devil.’ (Eph 6:11)

While it is negative the two times it is used in the NT, this word is essentially neutral and implies ‘a deliberate and planned procedure, a method, a procedure;’ it is used by a second-century mathematical writer meaning a particular ‘method’ of mathematical calculation. So whether the method or plan is good or evil depends upon the context; in Ephesians Paul uses it negatively, ‘scheming, craftiness.’ So here, ‘those who deliberately misrepresent the truth and seek by skillful manipulation to lead believers astray.’ [Friberg’s Lexicon, BDAG Lexicon, Best, 406; Lincoln, 259; Hoehner, 563; Thielman, 284; Muddiman, 207] **“Methodia (scheming) is used later in the letter to refer to ‘the schemes of the devil’ (6:11). No doubt it has reference to planned, subtle, systematized error. Paul’s point is that neither the trickery of men nor the deceitful scheming of the devil will mislead the spiritually equipped and mature believer.”** [MacArthur, 158]

in deceitful schemes — τῆς πλάνης [tēs planēs] — this word group is based upon the sense of ‘wandering’ with forms of this word even being used for the pulsing of blood through the body and the journey of merchants. [Kittel-Bromiley TDNT] Forms of this word has the sense of ‘to go astray, to lead astray, to be deceived or misled, to mislead, wandering, seduction.’ We get our word ‘planet’ from this word, originally having the sense of ‘wandering star’ (cp Jude 13, ‘raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.’) Forms of this word is used 55x in the NT with its meaning always ‘gone astray, err, deceive, seduce, error, delusion’ and as a noun, ‘deceiver, seducing [spirits].’ [BDAG; Friberg’s Lexicon; Louw-Nida Lexicon; Liddell-Scott Lexicon] **“πλάνη [planē] when it is not used literally of movement always carries a bad sense. Because of its meaning it can be set in contrast with what is true; it forms then a suitable lead in to v. 15, and is to be understood generally and not as identifying a particular heresy.”** [Best, 406; see also Abbott, 122; Salmond, 334f; Lincoln, 259; O’Brien, 310; Hoehner, 563]

THIS IS INTENTIONAL DECEPTION — **“More lit., in cunning, with a view to the scheming of [their] deceit. R.V., ‘after the wiles of error.’ ... The Apostle here recognizes and exposes the sad fact of intentional misguidance on the part of these preachers of ‘another Gospel’ (Gal. i. 6, 7).”** [Moule, 112] **“[A]nd cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;’** or ‘unto the deceitful methods or wiles of the devil,’ as the Alexandrian copy reads; **which not only suggests that their principal end in view is to deceive, but their insidious, private, and secret way of deceiving, and their expertness in it, which they have from the devil; and now the ministration of the Gospel is the best and surest guard and antidote against such fluctuations and deceptions.”** [Gill, Commentary on Whole Bible]

WHILE PAUL RECOGNIZED THE HUMAN AGENCY IN DELIBERATE ATTEMPTS TO DECEIVE (SEE ABOVE), HE ALSO RECOGNIZES THE SPIRITUAL SIDE OF EVIL — “But, in addition to this, the apostle may have had in mind another source of that seductive ‘cunning’ which preys on human weakness, namely, the evil one himself. Paul employs the same word with reference to the serpent deceiving Eve ‘by his cunning’ (2 Cor. 11:3), while the synonym, which appears in the next phrase, denotes a ‘crafty scheming with the intent to deceive’ that describes the intrigues of the devil (Eph. 6:11). Satan’s machinations have ‘method’; his aim is to *mislead* the immature who are not grounded on apostolic doctrine. If this connection is in view, then behind the false teaching are not simply evil men and women who pursue their unscrupulous goals with a scheming that produces error. There is also a supernatural, evil power who seeks to deceive them with devilish cunning; his ‘intrigues’ are to be resisted energetically with the aid of God’s armour (6:11). **Within the context of vv. 7-16, the dangers presented here only serve to highlight the importance of the ascended Christ giving ministers of his word to his people. They are to be firmly grounded in the apostolic teaching so that they may leave behind all immaturity and instability.**” [O’Brien, 309f]

PRACTICAL SYNOPSES — I thought the following summation statements from various authors too good to not pass along.

“It is spiritual children, such as were many of the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 3:1; 14:20), who are in constant danger of falling prey to every new religious fad or novel interpretation of Scripture that comes along. Having no thorough knowledge of God’s Word, they are tossed here and there by waves of popular sentiment and are carried about by every wind of new doctrine that seems appealing. Because they are not anchored in God’s truth, they are subject to every sort of counterfeit truth — humanistic, cultic, pagan, demonic, or whatever. The New Testament is replete with warnings against this danger (see Acts 20:30-31; Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Cor. 11:3-4; Gal. 1:6-7; 3:1; Col. 2:4-8; 1 Tim. 4:1, 6-7; 2 Tim. 2:15-18; 3:6-9; 4:3; Heb. 13:9; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 1 John 2:19, 26). *The immature Christian is gullible; and in the history of the church no group of believers has fallen into more foolishness in the name of Christianity than has much of the church today. Despite our unprecedented education, sophistication, freedom, and access to God’s Word and sound Christian teaching, it seems that every religious huckster (cf. 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; 11:13-15) can find a ready hearing and financial support from among God’s people. The number of foolish, misdirected, corrupt, and even heretical leaders to whom many church members willingly give their money and allegiance is astounding and heartbreaking. The cause of this spiritual plight is not hard to find. A great many evangelists have presented an easy-believism gospel and a great many pastors have taught an almost contentless message. In many places the Body of Christ has not been built up in sound doctrine or in faithful obedience. Consequently there is little doctrinal solidarity (‘unity of faith’) and little spiritual maturity (‘knowledge of the Son of God . . . to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ’). Just as many families today are dominated by their children, so are many churches. It is tragic when the church’s children-spiritually immature believers (cf. 1 John 2:13-14) who change their views with every wind of doctrine and continually fall prey to men’s trickery and Satan’s craftiness and deceitful scheming—are found among its most influential teachers and leaders.*” [MacArthur, 158f]

“In conclusion, the passage conveys the idea that childish understanding is easily confused by all sorts of doctrines which are devised by the trickery of people. These people use deceitfulness for their own ends (plan) which are characterized by error (cf. 5:6). It suggests that error is propagated with the intent of luring others to embrace the error (cf. Rom 1:32). This is obvious in the machinations of present-day cults. They have a scheme of error they want to propagate. By trickery and deceit, especially in the use of Scripture, they confuse the immature believer who lacks a proper understanding of God and his Word. For the most part the cults do not really bother those who are well acquainted with the Scripture and the God of Scripture. Consequently, it is of utmost importance for believers to follow God’s plan for edification of the body through the gifted people provided for this purpose.” [Hoehner, 564]

“In sum, Paul tells his readers that when the church’s gifted teachers use their gifts to equip all believers for the work of ministry, the church progresses toward maturity. It also moves steadily away from immaturity with its fragmentation and susceptibility to deception by cunning theological cheats.” [Thielman, 284]

“There are two things in this connection which can hardly escape notice. The one is the high estimate the apostle places on truth; and the other is the evil of error. *Holiness without the knowledge and belief of the truth, is impossible*; perfect holiness implies, as v. 13 teaches, perfect knowledge. Error, therefore, is evil. Religious error springs from moral evil and produces it. ‘False teachers’ are in Scripture always spoken of as bad, as selfish, malignant, or deceitful. This principle furnishes incidentally one of the surest of the criteria of truth. Those doctrines which the good hold, which are dear to the spiritual, to the humble and the holy, and true. This is the only real authority which belongs to tradition. In this passage the apostle attributes departure from the truth to the cunning and deceit which are characteristic of error, or of false teachers. In Rom. 16, 17, 18; 2 Cor. 2, 17; 11, 13; Gal. 2, 4; Col. 2, 8, 18, the same character is given of those who seduce men from the faith. *Error, therefore, can never be harmless, nor false teachers innocent.* Two considerations however should secure moderation and meekness in applying these principles. The one is, that though error implies sin, orthodoxy does not always imply holiness. It is possible ‘to hold the truth in unrighteousness;’ to have speculative faith without love. The character most offensive to God and man is that of a malignant zealot for the truth. The other consideration is, that men are often much better than their creed. That is, the doctrines on which they live are much nearer the truth, than those which they profess. They deceive themselves by attaching wrong meaning to words, and seem to reject truth when in fact they only reject their own misconceptions. It is a common remark that men’s prayers are more orthodox than their creeds.” [Hodge, 170f]

“There will always be impostors, who make insidious attacks upon our faith; but, if we are fortified by the truth of God, their efforts will be unavailing. Both parts of this statement deserve our careful attention. When new sects, or wicked tenets, spring up, many persons become alarmed. But the attempts of Satan to darken, by his falsehoods, the pure doctrine of Christ, are at no time interrupted; and it is the will of God that these struggles should be the trial of our faith. When we are informed, on the other hand, that the best and readiest defense against every kind of error is to bring forward that doctrine which we have learned from Christ and his apostles, this surely is no ordinary consolation. With what awful wickedness, then, are Papists chargeable, who take away from the word of God everything like certainty, and maintain that there is no steadiness of faith, but what depends on the authority of men! If a man entertain any doubt, it is in vain to bid him consult the word of God: he must abide by their decrees. But we have embraced the law, the prophets, and the gospel. Let us therefore confidently expect that we shall reap the advantage which is here promised, — that all the impostures of men will do us no harm. They will attack us, indeed, but they will not prevail. We are entitled, I acknowledge, to look for the dispensation of sound doctrine from the church, for God has committed it to her charge; but when Papists avail themselves of the disguise of the church for burying doctrine, they give sufficient proof that they have a diabolical synagogue.” [Calvin, 285]