

Ephesians 4:1-16 - July 17th, 2022

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[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. If you have your Bibles, if you'd please turn with me to the book of Ephesians, chapter 4.

We're going to be continuing our verse-by-verse study, and we'll be beginning in verses 1 through 16 of chapter 4. This passage actually marks a turning point in this letter.

We're moving now from theology to practicality. And this is really a typical thing that we see in Paul's letters. For instance, you all know about Romans, chapter 12, verse 1.

What do we see? Therefore. So, therefore. It's a good place to begin. In this passage in Ephesians, Paul's going to be teaching us about something really special.

He's going to be teaching us about us, the church. Earlier, he explained that the church and how it's a mystery that was revealed in this time.

[1:06] Jews and Gentiles being united in this new organism called the church. Last week's passage, Paul prayed for the church.

And so, we're going to pick it up here in chapter 4, verse 1. I've got my restored Bible. Noah Agnew did a great job. And how wonderful it is to have my Bible back.

So, amen. Let's go ahead and read, starting in verse 1. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.

With all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love. Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit. Just as also you were called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all.

[2:11] Who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us, grace was given. According to the measure of Christ's gift.

Therefore, it says, when he ascended on high, he led captive a host of captives. And he gave gifts to men. Now, this expression, he ascended, what does it mean?

Except that he also had descended into the lower parts of the earth. For he who descended is himself also. He who ascended far above all the heavens.

That he might fill all things. And he gave some as apostles. And some as prophets. And some as evangelists. Some as pastors and teachers.

For the equipping of the saints. For the work of service. To the building up of the body of Christ. Until we all attain to the unity of the faith.

[3:15] 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. 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. But speaking the truth in love. We are to grow up in all aspects into him.

Who is the head. Even Christ. From whom the whole body. Even being fitted. And held together. By that which 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.

[4:12] Oh Heavenly Father. So wonderful to be here. And to have this opportunity. To delve into your holy word. And to see how these words would apply. Lord to us today.

Because Lord we are your church. We are your people. We love you. And we worship you. And it is our desire now Lord. To take this knowledge.

That Paul has so wonderfully laid out. So far in this epistle. To the Ephesians. To take these words. And apply them now. To our walks.

That it would be pleasing to you. That it would be a glorious Lord. And to build your body. Up until that very day that you come again. We ask for this.

In the name of Jesus. And God's people said. Amen. Amen. All right. Occasionally I will come across a study. Or maybe a documentary.

[5:09] On the church. How's the church doing in North America? Things like that really pique my attention. Because I you know. I ask myself. How are we doing?

How is the church doing? The very people that I know. Are being exposed to other churches. What are they hearing? If you ask most people.

As they've done in various studies. And documentaries. What makes the church successful?

People will say things like this. Those who provide entertaining experiences.

How about churches that. Having enough money. That they can provide. That they can fund projects. And they can fund events. Having a large well equipped facility.

That means a lot to people. How about having innovative programs? These are just an example of some of the things. That many people say. When they answer that question.

[6:08] What makes a church successful? There's a great documentary on YouTube. It's called the submerging church. If you ever want to look at that.

I'd encourage you to do it. The submerging church. It's a little over two hours. But I'll tell you what. It's alarming. What millions and millions of people think.

About what's the church? What is the church about? You see a church open down the street. And you know. What's it going to be like? And that's what people see.

And I'll tell you what. It seems to me that many people. End up going to church. For all the wrong reasons. When I ask this question. How would Paul answer that question?

Well he would say this. That it depends on where churches are at. With their spiritual unity. If you look with me in verse 3. Notice.

[7:04] We need to be diligent. He says. To preserve the unity of the spirit. In the bond of peace. I really think that's the key verse in this passage. How do we do that?

Well he actually lays it out here. He identifies three key things. For us to do. First of all. God wants his church. To have spiritual unity.

Look with me in verse 1. We must walk. In a manner worthy. That is. Being equal to. Or corresponding to. Our calling.

What's he talking about here? Well that word walking. Of course. We've seen that before. That's just a metaphor. For how one conducts. His or her life. And we're to do this.

In consideration of our calling. That is. Our salvation. Now we may want to ask. Well what does that look like? Well Paul names here. Three virtues.

[8:02] Or attitudes. That can help us. With our walk. Look with me here. Verse 2. We're to walk with humility. All humility. Complete humility.

Complete humility. That means to have a proper assessment. Of oneself. That King James and the RSV. Says lowliness.

To walk with lowliness. That means recognizing. That Jesus paid for our sins. With his blood. And that we didn't deserve it.

That's having a proper assessment. Of ourselves. Jesus did it all. Not us. You know the bad news. That we see in Ephesians chapter 2. 1.

Is when he said. You're dead. You are. You were dead. In your trespasses and sins. But then he goes on. With the good news. The most exalted being. In the universe.

[8:55] That he gave his life. To pay for our debt. It's interesting. That in the first century. When Paul wrote this letter. That humility. That humility. Was considered.

To be a negative thing. It was a negative trait. It was. That was expected of slaves. No pride. Is what was valued. So we're to.

But we're to walk with humility. A proper assessment of ourselves. Secondly. We're to walk. Notice verse 2. With gentleness. If you have a King James.

Or a revised standard. You're to walk with meekness. Now this doesn't mean. Timidity. Or weakness. It rather. It's talking about strength.

Under control. In other words. The ability to go through life. Without feeling like you have to retaliate. Or be bitter. About every single thing.

[9:52] Hostility. Revenge. You know. These are the things that we see a lot today. Road rage. No. We're to walk with gentleness. Third. We're to walk with patience.

He says even. To showing forbearance. With one another. This means. Staying the course. You know. Even when we're being wronged. In Paul.

He was talking. He was correcting the church in Corinth. And he was noticing. He says in verse. Six and seven. Of chapter six. He goes. Brother goes against you. Against the law.

With brother. And that before unbelievers. Actually. When it's already a defeat for you. That you have lawsuits. Against one another. He says this. Why don't you rather be wronged?

Why not be defrauded? See. That's long suffering. That's being patient. With each other. You know. And it covers a multitude. Of sins.

[10:50] Friends. These things. Were important to Paul. Notice. Back in verse one. He referred. Referred to himself. As a prisoner. Of the Lord.

You might ask. Why did he do that? What's that mean? When he says that? I think it's because. He takes these matters. So seriously. Even enough.

To suffer. Imprisonment. Over that. But it's not only important to Paul. It's important to Jesus himself. In Jesus' high priestly prayer.

And this is in John 17. Jesus actually prays for unity in the church. He says. This is in chapter 17. Verse 21. He says.

That they. Referring to us believers. May all be one. Even as thou father art in me. And I in thee. That they also may be in us.

[11:44] And notice the reason that he gives. That the world may believe. That thou didst send me. Here's another purpose of unity.

It's so that the world would believe the gospel. What a great truth that is. I want to ask you. How many times has this happened to you?

You're sharing the gospel. And then immediately the person begins to discredit the church. And the message. Because of disunity. Oh I've seen this.

I've seen that. Yeah and they discredit the church. Friends it does happen. But. And that's what makes this such a profoundly important passage for us.

Verse 3. We must be diligent. To preserve the unity of the spirit. In the bond of peace. So Paul's challenge to us.

[12:42] Is to live our lives with these things here. Gentleness.

Humility. Patience. Maybe we could just stop right here and ask. How are we doing? How are we doing with those things?

If each of us did these things. Did that. Walked in humility. Gentleness and patience. It would contribute much. To the unity of the church.

And it also. We know this. That it takes work. Doesn't it? It sure does. Unity doesn't just happen. You know. Which is why we have to work for it.

But if we do. He talks here about. Like a mortar. Holding bricks together. The bond of unity. Holding all those bricks together.

Think of that psalm. In Psalm 133. Behold how good. And how pleasant it is. For brothers to dwell together. In unity. What a great thought that is.

[13:43] Today. Did you know there's over 300 different. Mainline Protestant denominations. In North America. Over 300. Yeah. When I ask.

Are there any legitimate reasons. For there being so many churches. So many different groups. I think. Personally. I think there are. For one thing.

Consider. The different expressions of worship. Some groups are very liturgical. Now. Liturgy. That's just referring to. The customary practices. That a church group does. Some groups. Focus on God's transcendence. And so they would. They would enjoy. What's called. High liturgy. High worship. Maybe they focus mostly on hymns. Or something like that. Other groups focus on God's. Personal closeness. And so. Those songs.

[14:38] And worship. Might be more testimonial. Songs. Secondly. There's. There's also matters. Of different church order. Different churches. That have different church order.

Some churches recognize. What's called. The regulative principle. If you look that up. You'll find. That. That. That's just referring to. Whatever is in the Bible. Is what's proper. So. If it's not in the Bible. It's not. We're not to do it. So for instance. You will find. No instruments.

In the New Testament. Not revelation. Because that's a different. Dispensation. No musical instruments. In the New Testament. And so therefore. Some churches. Don't have musical instruments. How about wine. Or how about grape juice. No. They want wine. In their. In their church service. There's also differences.

[15:35] In a church's place. In history. Some churches. Are named. After their founder. Have you ever heard. Of the Lutherans. Yeah. So other churches.

Are named. For their organizational. Structure. Have you heard. Of the Presbyterians. That just means elder. Or. Some churches. Just want to emphasize. A particular doctrine. For instance. The Baptist. Baptists. They came into being. To. Emphasize. The believers. Baptism.

As opposed to. Something like. Infant baptism. So yeah. So here. Those are some of the reasons. Why. There are various groups. But I'll tell you what. Sometimes there's. Much friction. Between groups. I heard about this. Family member. Of a Baptist church. This guy died. And so the minister. Was out of town. And so the family.

[16:28] Asked the minister. Of another denomination. To conduct. The funeral service. Well. This minister said. Well. I have to check. With the local. The bishop. Of my denomination.

So he sent this letter off. And he asked this question. Can I bury. A Baptist. And the guy. The bishop. Wrote back to him. And said. Bury as many Baptists. As you can. Now even though. There are many. Different expressions. Of worship. Here's the truth. Friends. There in reality.

There's only. One. True church. Only one. You know. We may want to call that. The universal church. I'm talking about. Every believer. Since Pentecost. Regardless. Of geographic location. Regardless. Of culture. Social. Economic. Anything. That would seem. To divide us. There's only. One church.

[17:24] Which actually. Leads to the second. Thing here. God. Enlightens. His church. With truth. In verses. Four to six. We're going to see.

How Paul. Identifies. These seven. Elements. That unite. Members. Of this. Of God's. Universal. Universal. Church. These.

These are things. Which all. Believers. Must agree. With. Regardless. Of what they have. On their. Marquee. First of all. Look with me. Verse four. There's one body. Again. That's a metaphor. For the church. The universal body. Of believers. There's one spirit. This is. He's referring here. To the Holy Spirit. Who indwells. Every believer. Third. There's the one hope. Of our calling. We were talking about. This earlier today. In Sunday school. This is talking about. The believers.

[18:18] Hope. In each. Of eternal life. That we each have. Especially. The resurrection. Of our bodies. That's our hope. Friends. We all know.

That right now. Things are not the way. They're supposed to be. But there will be a time. When we will enjoy. Our Lord Jesus. And each other. Forever. In resurrected bodies. That's our hope. Friends. It's a sure thing. It's not a hope. So. It's a sure thing. If you ever meet somebody.

Who professes. To be a Christian. And they say something. Like this. I sure hope. Jesus takes his time. Coming back. Because I'm having. Such a great time. Down here.

You might want to. You know. Just check. Check that out. Because maybe that person's. In love with this world. And maybe they don't have. That hope. That he. They ought to have.

[19:14] Verse 5. One Lord. That's the Lord Jesus. Who's the head of the church. One faith. This is the faith. Of each believer.

In Christ. Paul's. Paul's already talked about faith. Four other times. In this. In this letter. You may recall. Ephesians chapter 2. Verse 8.

For by grace. You have been saved. Through. Faith. Ephesians chapter 3. Verse 12. In whom we have boldness. And access. With confidence. Through.

Faith. In him. He goes on. Number 6. One baptism. Now this is. Not water baptism. No. This is talking about.

This is referring to the fact. That all believers. Are baptized. That is. Placed in. To Jesus Christ. Into that one body. In it. And again.

[20:07] In 1st Corinthians. Chapter 12. Paul says. For by one spirit. We're all baptized. Into one body. Whether Jews or Greeks. Whether slaves or free. For we are all made to drink.

Of the one spirit. And then verse 6. One God. And father of all. Who is over all. And through all. And in all.

This is referring. To God's. Omnipresence. All over the world. And that's because. We see churches. Found all over the world. And yet.

We're one. We're one church. Here's the one. Universal church. These seven. Truths here. They're. What we might call. The essentials. Of the faith. This is right. Why they're written. In a. In a series. Of like. Oneness. Oneness. Oneness. It actually suggests.

[21:02] That it may have been. A creed. Or a confession. Of faith. That was used. In the early church. I think the key thing. To see here. Is that. Not every group.

That calls themselves. A church. Are not. Part of the body. Of Christ. What makes. A group. Part of the universal. Church or not. Is not based.

On their organizational. Structure. It's not based. On their activities. It's not based. On who founded them. It's not based. On their philosophy. Of ministry. It's based. On where they stand.

With the truths. That we see. In scripture. All those. Who agree. With these seven essentials. Actually possess. What we would call. An inherent.

Unity. You've probably. Experienced that. If you've met. With other Christians. You know. From around the world. Or from other groups. But wow. We see the same way.

[21:59] We agree. On many things here. We may disagree. On some things. But we agree. On the essentials. And Jesus. He helps. His church.

To understand. These truths. God. Desires his church. To have spiritual unity. God. Enlightens his church. With the truth. Here's the third point. God equips his church.

With gifts. Look with me. Verse seven here. To each one of you. Each one of us. Grace. Grace was given. Now you probably.

All suspect here. That Paul's talking about. Spiritual gifts. Right? Yeah. You would be correct. I'll tell you what. This is a fascinating. Section here.

I'd like to just look at it. Through a series of questions. Here. First one. To whom was grace given? Verse seven. Every believer. Every believer.

[22:53] Receives at least. One spiritual gift. Right? Question two. How is this determined? Verse seven. According to the measure of Christ's gift. That word there.

Measure. That's referring to a quantity. You can imagine Jesus with a bowl. You know. A measuring bowl. Pouring out. As he wills. The measure of his gift.

Question three. When did he give these gifts? Look with me. Verse eight. It's a key verse. It says. Therefore when it says. When he ascended on high.

Let's just stop right there. When Jesus ascended on high. The timing here is really important. And it really tells us that the New Testament church.

Could not have come into existence. Until Jesus ascended into heaven. The next question. Well what happened? Well it goes on.

[23:51] Verse eight continues. He, Jesus. Led captive. A host of captives. And he gave gifts. Now Paul is citing Psalm 68 here.

Which is a victory psalm. We know historically. That after winning a significant military battle. That the winner would bring the spoils of the war.

Back with him. And now these next two verses. Even though they're in parentheses. It's really helpful. Look with me. Verse nine. Now this expression. He ascended.

Kind of asks the question here. What does it mean? Except that he. That's Jesus. Had also descended into the lower parts of the earth. That just simply means that before Christ ascended back into heaven.

He first had to descend to lower parts of the earth. Now what does that mean? It's our next question. It's actually understood in three ways.

[24:52] I'm just going through this quickly. One. It's just in contrast to heaven. Jesus came down from heaven to earth. And that's a true statement. Right? Some people think that it refers to Jesus descending into Hades.

Between his death and resurrection. That is true also. I believe. Here's the third one. It's referring to the grave. The lower parts of the earth is just referring to the grave.

And I think that this is the best view. Because it was at the grave is where Jesus conquered death. The main point here is that when Jesus conquered death.

That's when he won a major victory. And here's how it fits. As the victor. Jesus took charge of people. He led captive.

And he redeemed them. And then he gave those people back to his church. As gifts. Here's probably the most important question.

[25:57] Who are these gifts? Look with me. Verse 11. He gave some as apostles. Some as prophets. Some as evangelists. Some as pastors.

And teachers. Here's the thing friends. Elsewhere. For instance. In Romans chapter 12. Or maybe in 1 Corinthians 12. Paul identifies spiritual gifts.

As we might think of them as activities. Teaching. Administration. Helps. But here in Ephesians. He's expanding it.

To include people. Now we could go through this list here. And see are there any prophets. You know. Are there any teachers. Are there any evangelists here?

Show of hands. Any evangelists here? You know. Nobody wants to put their hand up on that question. I think it's because they're thinking. Well. Okay.

[26:54] Now it's all on me. To go out and win souls. Anyway. However you look at it. God equips his church. With people.

And with those other spiritual gifts. You know. So. And then we can look at. What's the purpose now. Of these people. Look with me. Verse 12. It's for the equipping of the saints.

For the work of service. To the building up of the body of Christ. The purpose of all these people. And maybe you can think of them as offices here. Is to equip the saints.

So that everybody. Can do the work of service. That is what we might call ministry. We might look at. How long does this arrangement last? Verse 13. Until we all attain the unity of the faith.

And the knowledge of the son of God. The short answer here. Is collectively. Until Christ comes again. Or individually. Until Christ takes each one of us home. But the main thing to see here.

[27:55] Is that the diversity. That Paul is talking about here. Is referring to spiritual gifts. And people. That he has given the church. And friends.

I got to tell you. That is greatly misunderstood today. Did you know that there are some churches. That define their diversity.

In the way that relates to. How welcoming they are. You might see church marquees. Or maybe websites. Or banners. And it will say something like this.

We are diverse. We are. We are a multicultural gathering of people. It may say. We include the LGBTQ group.

We include straights. Singles. Married. Divorced. Those who are cohabitating. We include pro-lifers. Pro-choice. Black Lives Matter.

[28:52] Blue Lives Matter. Trump supporters. Never Trumpers. We include everybody. Friends. This is off base. And it's not biblical.

Because biblical diversity. Doesn't come from a collection of sins. Personal experiences. Or political viewpoints. Our diversity is based on how God equips.

His church. For his purposes. And what's the result? Question nine. What's the result? The result of these gifts.

Is that the church. Can grow in maturity. Look with me. Verse 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. Craftiness. Deceitful schemes. Maturity leads. To doctrinal stability.

[29:50] We become more stable. In our faith. Notice that metaphor. The body again. The measure of a man. In verse 13. It's contrasted with children.

Children. Who are easily deceived. But maturity in the faith. Enables us. Like verse 15. To speak the truth in love. As we grow up in all aspects.

In him. Who's the head. Boy. There's a lot more. That can be said here friends. If I can invite the musicians. To come up here. I want to end with the last verse here. Verse 16.

From whom the whole body. Being fitted together. By that which every joint supplies. According to the proper working. Of each individual part. Causes growth.

Of the body. For the building of itself. In love. Again. Just a simple illustration. Of a body. And we know. That when all the individual parts.

[30:49] Of a body. Are functioning well. Isn't it great? Isn't it? It's not. When you got a stomach ache. Or something like that. It's not great. But when everything is working.

You have the proper working. Of the individual parts. Verse 16. It causes growth of the body. I don't think that's necessarily numerical here.

But it's the. It's talking about the building up of itself. In love. Did you know that. In a forest. That the roots of the trees. That they actually can touch each other.

And when they do. They create a substance. That actually helps them. To share. Water. Nutrients. Even the benefits of sunlight.

Just like trees in a forest. Christians can be that to one another. Can share those roots. There's only one church. The church of Jesus Christ.

[31:43] It's his bride. And he purchased. The bride. His bride with his blood. Our view of the church. Ought to be based on God's word. And not what's popular out there.

I would say that there's no church. No one church that's perfect. We all make mistakes. But the church. Was God's idea. There's no plan B. God continues to guide us.

It's Jesus' church. He desires his church to have unity. He enlightens his church with truth. He equips his church with gifts. What a great God we have.

May we learn more and more about him. And be able to serve him. Fervently. As the Lord wills. Heavenly Father. We are so grateful. For what you have done for us.

And Lord. It is our desire. To have that unity. Among us. And a unity that people would see. And they would be drawn to it. We are so grateful Lord.

[32:44] And we ask that through the power of your spirit. That you would continue to change us. Into the very image of your son Jesus. We ask for this. In Christ's name we pray.

May God. May God. May God. May God. May God. May God. May God. May God.

May God. May God. May God. May God. May God. May God. May God. May God. May God. May God. May God. May God.

May God. May God. May God. May God. May God.