

Ephesians 4:1-16 *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—<sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. <sup>7</sup> But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. <sup>8</sup> Therefore it says,*

*“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,  
and he gave gifts to men.”*

*<sup>9</sup> (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) <sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

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## **Announcements:**

1. Book Club: 8/4 5:30 Gentle & Lowly - Whole Book
2. Membership / Parishes

## **Ephesians 4:1-16 | Unity of Spirit**

In typical fashion for one of Paul's letters, he concludes his initial section on doctrine, and only then introduces his “therefore” to join up with his exhortation for how we should then live. We have a cultural tendency of thinking right action will lead to right being. But Paul's vision of change is one from the inside out, not the outside in. His biblical anthropology understands that all we do flows from the heart (Pr 4:23).

The rest of the letter will then stand upon the shoulders of the glorious doctrines of our salvation which he put forth in chapters 1-3, and in chapters 4-6 we will see how to live those out. And central to our ability to live this out is the proper participation in and functioning of the church. The Church is the location of the miracle on earth, therefore Paul will call us to live out the unity of the church by operating in the diversity of our giftings. We'll see the unity of the church, the giver of gifts, and the diversity of gifts.

# 1. Unity

*Ephesians 4:1-2 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,*

Paul once again reminds us that he is a prisoner of the Lord, demonstrating in the position of his life the manner which he calls us to emulate. In order to understand the way we are to operate, we must understand the calling which we've received. As a Christian you have been called to this incredible glory, of union with Christ, and that demands particular action. In contemporary language we'd say that Christ has given us our true identity and then calls us to live in that reality.

A great example is the two kings first kings of Israel. Saul and David. Saul receives the calling to be king from Samuel, is anointed and proclaimed king. But then when it is time for him to step into that role at his coronation ceremony he is found hiding among the luggage. David on the other hand, is anointed as king and then faces immediate persecution. But in his persecution he rally's friends around him who begin to follow his command, he becomes leader of an army, he seeks the Lord and unites the kingdom which he was promised to lead. David acted out the identity that he had been given.

Your identity in Christ, is not a therapeutic jujitsu to pull whenever you feel bad about yourself, it is a statement which **means true authenticity is to embody Christ's way of being. Humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another.** Humility, is a new virtue on the scene, as with gentleness, and patience, and bearing with one another, this is an upside down way of navigating the world. And its purpose is united to Christ's movement on earth, his church.

*Ephesians 4:3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

Christ's calling maintains the unity of the church. It is the way that we can stay connected as a body without disintegrating into Chaos. How glorious it is when we can dwell in unity as a church, and with the church. What a testimony it is to the world of a body who is united in the calling of Christ! What a bond peace is! This unity demonstrates the ultimate unity of our faith. As Paul continues:

*Ephesians 4:4-6 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

Listen to the Trinitarian unity of our faith. All of our existence flows out of our God who is one, simple having no parts or passions, and three persons. Spirit, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father. The repetition is of oneness, but it isn't a monism. Since the pre-Socratics there has been a competition between Parmenides and Heraclitus (of Ephesus btw), the former saying there is no multiplicity only oneness, the latter saying there is no oneness only multiplicity. The former static, the latter dynamic.

Because here is the tension, this type of unity and oneness, this bond of peace, is also an exclusivity. As I've mentioned before, total inclusion is either meaningless or tyrannical, but so is total exclusion. They are both the Tower of Babel either before or after. If existence is grounded in monism, we can't say anything meaningful about it, and if it is grounded in dynamism then we likewise can't say anything meaningful about it. And what is the solution to this problem? Don't you see, it is love! Love supports a multiplicity while maintaining a real connection.

Love is why the trinitarian formula makes sense. And this is true at the level of our own community as a church or any body. We are one, united in all of the oneness that Paul describes, but that is not an enmeshed dissolved, tyrannical sameness. It is a unity of Love. This is the foundation of existence. It must be absolute on both sides. Totally inclusive in that all who come to Christ will be brought in, and totally exclusive in that we are only brought in through Christ. The one and the many. The mystery is solved in Christ. So it is to Christ we turn.

## 2. Giver

*Ephesians 4:7-8 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. <sup>8</sup> Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."*

We are given from one source in one body by one God, and we are given a multiplicity of gifts in differing measures. Do you see how the model of unity expresses itself in diversity? Without diversity there is no unity to speak of it is just sameness, a collapse of identities. But the gifts we are given by Christ are multiple, and personal, given to each one of us, as parts of his body. And we share in them in direct relation to Christ as king and victor. Paul quotes here from Psalm 68. There is a presumed difference in his quotation from the original in that the original says that when he ascended he received gifts, and here it says he gives, but you must understand our relationship to Christ which makes these equivalent.

Christ was raised up and given all authority in heaven and on earth, and as a victorious king receives the spoil from his enemies and then distributes them to those in his kingdom who share in his wealth, so too do we share in the wealth of Christ. But his

wealth is a spiritual repositioning of our very identities as his creatures, equipping us to share in his kingdom. Which is the kingdom of Heaven! Here is the dynamic of his giving.

*Ephesians 4:9-10 (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)*

This is the Christian story in 2 sentences. Christ is Lord of all, top of the pyramid. He descended to his creation, (CF. Humility Gentleness Patience Bearing one another). And ascends to glory, filling all in all. And the gifts are for the church.

### 3. Gifts

*Ephesians 4:11-12 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,*

We see now Paul gets particular in the gifts that are given. Notice these are gifts not for enjoyment, but for service and gifts of service to the body of the church to promote its action and work and building up! The apostles and prophets lay a foundation, the evangelists draw others in, and the shepherds and teachers promote and maintain unity. These particular workers in the church are to support the coherent action of the body, so that when I teach today, and you act in accordance with my teaching, you are operating as yourself, and as a part of the body. You don't regurgitate what I say, but you embody it and then act it out as you. Unity and diversity.

*Ephesians 4:13-14 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup> 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.*

There is a goal of coherence of identity as a body politic. You see as we are taught, we grow in unity, and this makes us a coherent body. Paul is using this metaphor of a body, so that the church is not an undifferentiated teenager who is goth one week, young republicans the next, social justice warrior after that. But we are a mature integrated man, who is the body of Christ.

The Church is not trailing culture as she so often is, tossed about by whatever happens to be in vogue to discuss. But is instead steadiness in the midst of it, with products of steadiness growing out from her. The winds are blowing strong. But they are just wind. Unproductive. And to chase them is to be deceived, and finally to disintegrate into an insatiable multiplicity. All is change.

*Ephesians 4:15-16 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

By speaking the truth to one another, in love. We as a body grow up into Christ. Maturity is christlikeness. Humility, gentleness, patience, bearing one another. And then the body builds itself up in love. Can you imagine. We don't absorb or ostracize. We neither lie nor abuse. This is the church given the gifts of Christ. So here you are, all of you ministers, to build one another up, into the image of Christ to shine like the sun in the world.