

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Mission and Unity, Pt. 2
Ephesians 4:1-16

Keywords: gospel, God, Pastors, Teachers, Unity, Doctrine

PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb: In this second part on unity Pastor Henry reminds his congregation what their responsibility before man and God is to be. Every Christian possesses the unity of the Spirit, but the unity of the faith is something that no church will ever fully attain this side of eternity. Nonetheless, it is something that our Lord expects us to strive after with every fiber of our being. How we pursue the unity of the faith is through gifted men who build up the church so that the people can do the Church's work.

I. Introduction.

- A. Last sermon I challenged us as a church to jealously protect and preserve the presence of true unity in Ephesians 4.
- B. Two types of unity discussed here:
 - 1. The first is a unity that all Christians already are to possess. The second unity, which we will discuss today, is one that we are to strive after.
 - 2. Last message we learned two key points: How do we preserve unity of the Spirit. And what is the unity of the Spirit.
 - a. There were four things needed to preserve unity (shown in vss 1-3):
 - (1) Understanding our calling—we have been called by the Father in Heaven to be conformed into His Son's image.
 - (a) Individually.
 - (b) Corporately.
 - (2) Second, by living in humility—it is the grease.
 - (3) Third, by showing gentleness (meekness)—power under control.
 - (4) Fourth, by being patient—which results in putting up with one another, remembering what God has done for us on the Cross.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- b. We finished by seeing exactly what the unity of the Spirit was in vss 4-6:
 - (1) Three triads: The first related to the Holy Spirit.
 - (2) The second related to the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (3) The third related to the Father himself.
 - (4) The point of all of this was that word “one.” We have all come to the One Father through the One Savior and Lord by the will of the One Holy Spirit.
 - (a) We may not agree upon music, clothing tastes, worship styles, bible translations, and countless other things, but we all must be unified on these things in vss. 4-6.
 - (b) If a person comes in the name of the Lord, believing the true gospel, then we are to welcome them as a brother or sister in Christ.
- C. Notice verse 13 with me for a moment. Notice that there is a time issue here, we see this with the word “until.”
 - 1. There is a task that needs the church is to be busy doing and it is not finished doing that task until **two specific events** have occurred:
 - a. The first is that the church attain to the unity of the faith.
 - b. The second is that the church as a whole attain to the knowledge of the Son of God.
 - 2. Now these two points are the heart of verses 7-16. Everything works around this goal. And it is a huge help for us because it helps show us the direction that we are to be moving in as a church.
 - 3. So let’s look at this passage in this manner—first, let’s understand the meaning of these two goals. Second, let’s then see how we are to grow toward these two goals.

II. Grow toward The Unity of The Faith and Knowledge of Christ (7-16).

- A. What do these two goals mean?
 - 1. Unity of the Faith.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- a. The term, “the faith” is a technical phrase in the New Testament. It rarely refers to a person’s faith in God.
 - (1) Acts 6:7
 - (2) Acts 13:8
 - (3) Acts 14:22
 - (4) Acts 16:5
 - (5) 1 Tim. 4:1, 6
 - (6) 1 Tim. 5:8
 - (7) 1 Tim. 6:10, 20-21
 - b. There is a defined set of doctrines that make up what is known as “the faith.” It is our holy task to know them, wrestle with them, and grow in them. The one who disregards doctrine is simply one not preserving the unity of the Spirit.
 - c. So the each local church is called by God to grow in the unity of the faith. This means then that we are to be striving to grow in a unity of faith and doctrine as a church.
 - (1) It is not a good thing to remain separate in beliefs and have many various beliefs.
 - (2) But it is also important to remind you that as we grow toward this unity of doctrine, we are to be careful to maintain the existing unity of the Spirit.
2. Knowledge of the Son of God.
 - a. Twice Paul has mentioned in this letter about him praying that they would grow in the knowledge of Christ (1:17-19; 3:16-19).
 - b. Note the supernatural work of God that is required for us to grow in this knowledge.
 - c. It comes through a growth in sound doctrine, but it is not merely a knowledge of sound doctrine. You can know the Word and not have a sound nor deep knowledge of Christ.
 3. A key pastoral task is to train up the local church to become one mind with regard to doctrine and also to become one mind in knowing Jesus Christ.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

They are two distinct but connected tasks that should consume church leaders.

Transition

So, these are the goals of the church. And any local church such as ours should be making them goals for themselves. A simple question we can ask ourselves as a church is how does our activities, programs, and ministries promote a unity of the faith and a growth in the knowledge of our Lord?

Well, with this in mind, let us look the tools that God has given the church so that it can move in this important direction. And in doing so, we can also see the results that come as we grow in these two areas.

- B. How can the Church grow in this unity.
 - 1. First through gifted teachers of various types.
 - a. **Ephesians 4:7** “But to each one of us grace was given”
 - (1) Here Paul moves us away from the corporate/group unity that he spoke about in vss. 1-6 and into diversity within that unity.
 - (2) The word “but” could also be translated here as “in spite of this” or “on the other hand.”
 - (3) In the prior verses he used the word “one” to stress the unity that we all have with one another.
 - (4) Now he uses it to show that each, individual believer has been given a gift.
 - (5) This diversification of giftedness is designed to promote unity. No one has the corner on all the gifts and all are needed to promote a unity of the faith.
 - (6) The amount of giftedness varies, it is in accordance to the measure by which Christ chooses to give.
 - (a) But it is important for us all to remember that whatever our giftedness might be, it has come from the hand of our Lord Himself.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- b. Vss. 8-10 is where Paul uses Psalm 68 to refer to the descent of Christ as a man, especially His death and His ascension, starting with His resurrection, and culminating in His return back into heaven as the conquering king, having destroyed the works of Satan.

- (1) The imagery is quite fascinating.

After a king in those days would win a victory, he would return with the spoils of war. Along with the treasure and possessions won, he would bring along the prisoners. A Jewish king would bring them all through the city of Jerusalem. However, not only would the victorious king parade the prisoners of war, but he would also parade those people of his who had been taken captive by the enemy.

Now see the picture that is being painted here by Paul. He is saying that when Christ ascended into heaven, He did not go alone. Rather, He ascended with all those whom He had bought through His death with Him! All of us, Paul and Peter; Mary and Martha, Luther and Spurgeon. All of us were brought into heaven with Him.

And when He ascended, He then turned around and gave to all of them, us included gifts out of the riches He had gained. Some received large gifts, such as Paul. Others were small, but all came from their beloved King—Jesus Christ.

- (2) So we have Christ, the victorious King, now dispensing gifts to all of His people whom He has just led to freedom.
- c. Notice verse 10. There is a purpose behind all of this work, and it is so that Christ might fill all things.
 - (1) It refers to Christ exercising sovereign rule over all things.
 - (2) And this is one of those “now and not yet” concepts that we see all over the New Testament.
 - (3) Christ is now in the process of accomplishing this goal and the way He is doing it is through supplying to His people everything necessary to bring it about.
- d. Notice in verse 11 that the gifts that He has given to the church here are actually persons.
 - (1) This is different than in the other passages that talk about spiritual gifts.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- (2) Apostles.
 - (a) Had to see Jesus after the Resurrection and had to be specifically called out to this office by Jesus.
 - (b) The result is that there are no apostles for today.
 - (c) Yet they, like the Old Testament prophets, laid down the foundation and totality of divine teaching for the Church.
 - (3) Prophets.
 - (a) Ephesians 2:;20.
 - (b) (1 Corinthians 12:28) “And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers...”
 - (c) These were people given revelation by God, especially as the New Testament was being revealed to the Apostles.
 - (4) Evangelists.
 - (a) Church planters.
 - (b) Not evangelists like we see today. These men would go where no church existed and stay there until one was established to be a gospel witness.
 - (5) Pastor-teachers.
 - (a) Not two offices, but one.
 - (b) More than a teacher, but one who functioned as a teaching elder.
 - (c) 1 Timothy 5:17 et the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.
2. What was the purpose of giving the church these people? Verse 12 gives us the answer.
- a. Christ said in Matthew 16 that He would build His church. And this passage describes how it is done.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- b. The purpose of the giving of these people to the church is so that the church can be equipped to do the work they have been called to do.
 - (1) To equip means to make complete, to train to maturity.
 - (2) This is the work of any pastor. This is the first and foremost job of every pastor, to be in the business of training the people to go and do the work of the Lord.
 - (3) The church was never designed to be a place where you just let the pastor and a few staff members labor. Rather, it is a place where all believers become equipped so that they can work out their unique giftedness to serve one another.
 - (4) And as the church serves one another in love they build up the body of Christ.
 - (a) This image is one of building a building. Starting with the foundation and building it up until it is finished.
 - (b) The New Testament frequently describes the church as the Temple of God. And this is the image being presented here.
 - c. And this work of equipping the saint to minister to one another is to be done until the whole church is brought to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of Christ—in other words, it is never truly finished this side of heaven.
3. Take them now through vs 13c (mature man) to the end.
- a. There is a contrast that is being made in these verses.
 - (1) Mature man (singular) versus children (plural).
 - (2) The knowledge, wisdom and stability of an adult versus the ignorance, foolishness, and instability of childhood.
 - (3) The way to grow into this mature man is through speaking the truth in love. And as we do so we can begin to grow into the likeness of Christ.

III. Conclusion.

M i s s i o D e i F e l l o w s h i p

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

- A. Various applicatory thoughts:
 - 1. Too many churches downplay sound doctrine to retain members.
 - 2. Too many Christians resist sound doctrine out of pride or worldly pursuits.
 - 3. Denominations are not evil. They are an application of the “until” of verse 11.
 - 4. You can leave a local church without being divisive when it is over doctrine that is settled in your mind before the Lord.
 - 5. Of the two unities the first is preeminent. One must first be a true Christian before one can even begin to grow in a unity of doctrine and knowledge of Jesus Christ.
- B. Never forget that one of the core tasks of your pastors/elders is to equip you with sound doctrine. Never let your pastors/elders forget this either.