

Lesson 6
Ephesians 3:20-4:16

Eph 3:20-21

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Paul ends the first segment of his letter with this great crescendo of praise! He has spent three chapters rehearsing the riches of grace that believers have in Christ Jesus. We have been chosen, adopted, sealed and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, seated with Christ in the heavenly places, and saved by grace through faith. We are God's workmanship, His masterpiece. Jew and Gentile have been united together into one body. Amazing!

4:1

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

THEREFORE. . . Since God has given us untold blessings our response should be to **walk worthy of our calling**, both individually and as the church, the body of Christ.

Worthy: Suitably, Properly; Literally "equal weight." One's calling and conduct should be in balance.
--

Not only have we been called to adoption as sons, we have been called into one body—Jew and Gentile together. As one body we are to walk together in unity. That is what Ephesians 4:1-16 is all about.

In the OT God said to the Jews, "If you obey Me, I will bless you."

In the NT God says, "I have already blessed you—now, in response to My love and grace, obey Me."
(Warren Wiersbe)

4:2-3

with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

These attributes are essential to a walk which is worthy of the great salvation we have received. All of them work together to promote unity within the body (the church).

In Greek culture **humility** was a vice to be practiced only by slaves. In our own culture we are taught to promote ourselves. Humility is the opposite of pride. Pride breeds disunity. Humility promotes unity.

Humility: Literally—Lowliness; the esteeming of ourselves small.
It is not weakness, but rather power under control (Examples: Moses & Jesus).
Greek word used for a soothing medicine, a colt that had been broken, and a soft wind.

Patience
Literally “long tempered”
Long-Suffering

The word used here for **patience** is the one used for long-suffering with people rather than circumstances. It is self-restraint that does not hastily retaliate a wrong.

Bearing with one another in love (agape)

“Lovingly putting up with all that is disagreeable in other people.” (Chuck Missler)

Agape: The love of God. Unconditional love
The love described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We do not make unity, that is the work of the Holy Spirit. However, we are to be eager (diligent, making every effort) to guard the unity that God brought about in creating the one new man. Peace requires that we lovingly tolerate each other even when we have differences.

All of these attributes describe how believers are to behave toward other people, particularly those in the church. If we were all humble, gentle, patient and tolerant toward others in the body there would be unity. That is only possible through the Spirit at work within us!

HOWEVER, we are not to sacrifice doctrinal truths for the sake of man-made “unity.” Paul goes on to specify the things which are to unify us.

4:4-6

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

These truths which should unify us all center around the unity of the three Persons of the Trinity.

We see this unity of the Godhead working in creation.

Gen 1:1 “In the beginning **God** (*elohim*-plural form of God) created the heavens and earth.”

Gen 1:2 “. . .And the **Spirit of God** was hovering over the face of the waters.”

John 1:1-3, 14 “In the beginning was **the Word**, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. . .And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

In his High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prays for believers “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. . . I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” John 17:23

That is the goal!

Seven truths which should unify all believers:

One body: The universal church. All believers (Jew and Gentile) from Pentecost to the Rapture.

One Spirit: The Holy Spirit which indwells all believers. It is the Spirit which gives the unity which we are to maintain. We are sealed in Him. He guarantees our inheritance until we acquire possession of it (Eph 1:13).

One hope: Our eternal inheritance (Eph 1:14). Our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).

One Lord: The Lord Jesus Christ who is the head of the Church.

One faith: The body of truth recognized by the apostles as basic doctrine as revealed in the NT.

Mark 1:14-15 “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel.’”

1 Cor 15:1-5 “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.”

Jude 1:3 “. . . contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”

One baptism: There is a difference of opinion as to whether this verse refers directly to spiritual baptism or to water baptism. Most evangelical commentators agree that all believers are baptized by the Spirit when they are saved. They would also agree that water baptism is the outward sign of the inward reality and that baptism symbolizes our identification with Christ. The difference lies in which one this verse is specifically referring to.

“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and were made to drink of one Spirit.” 1 Corinthians 12:13

In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, agape. Augustine

One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all: This affirms the Fatherhood of God over all believers. In Ephesians 1:5 we learned that God predestined us for adoption to Himself as sons through Christ Jesus. When we are made alive in Christ, we become part of the family!

4:7

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

BUT. . . Notice the shift from the word "all" in verse 6 to the word "each" in verse 7. Paul now moves from what believers have in common to how we each are unique members of the body.

4:8

Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high, he led a host of captives, and gave gifts to men."

This is a quotation from Psalms 68:18. "Psalm 68 is a victory hymn composed by David to celebrate God's conquest of the Jebusite city of Jerusalem and the triumphant ascent of God up to Mt. Zion. After such a triumph, the king would bring home the spoils and the prisoners. Here Paul depicts Christ returning from His battle on earth back into the glory of the heavenly city with the trophies of His great victory at Calvary." (John MacArthur)

4:9-10

(In saying "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended for above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) Note: This is just a parenthesis in Paul's discussion of gifts.

What does it mean "that he had also descended into the lower regions. . .?" Good question! The grammar can mean three different things, all of which are held by different evangelical scholars. (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*)

1. The earth, i.e. Jesus' Incarnation.
2. Into parts lower than the earth, i.e. Hades, between His death and resurrection (1 Peter 3:19).
3. Into the lower parts which belong to the earth, i.e. Christ's death and burial in the grave.

He ascended is a little easier.

Ephesians 1:19b-23 ". . . according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."

"After the Lord ascended, having fulfilled all prophecies and all His divinely-ordained redemptive tasks, He gained the right to rule the church and to give gifts, as He was then filling the entire universe with His divine presence, power, sovereignty, and blessing." (MacArthur)

4:11 (4:11-16 is another one of Paul's long sentences in the Greek!)

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers

This is just one of several places in Scripture where gifts are mentioned. (See also Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12; 14; 1 Peter 4:10-11. It is no coincidence that 1 Cor 13—the "love" chapter is between the two chapters on spiritual gifts!) The context of this list in Ephesians 4 is the church and how each individual should function within it and how the body as a whole should function.

Apostles and Prophets were foundational gifts to the church.

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. . .” Ephesians 2:19-20

Apostle: Literally: “One sent,” Messenger, Ambassador (as contrasted with a *disciple* who was a learner). In the NT the word is used specifically to refer to the 12 disciples (including Matthias who replaced Judas) and Paul. They had to be eyewitnesses of the risen Christ.

Prophet: A forth-teller of the Word of God. Not necessarily one who predicts the future.
Purpose: edification, encouragement, consolation.

Evangelists: Bearers of Good News. Missionaries.

Shepherd/Pastor: One who cares for the flock.

Teacher: In the NT one who teaches concerning the things of God and the responsibilities of man.

Teaching Shepherd / Pastor Teacher

These terms are often used together as one office. Since the word “the” is not repeated before “teacher” and because the Greek for “and” can mean “in particular,” many believe this describes one role with two ministries. The Shepherd should instruct his flock as well as lead and care for them.

4:12

to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ

The gifts listed in Ephesians 4 are leadership gifts given for the specific purpose of equipping the saints for ministry. The church should not hire a pastor to do the work of ministry for the body. He is called to equip the saints for the work. It is not only a few leaders who are to be involved in ministry. Every believer is gifted to serve others spiritually. (See the other passages on spiritual gifts listed above.) All believers should be working together to build up the body of Christ.

4:13-15

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, 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. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

We are to continue being equipped and equipping others for the work of ministry until the whole body is mature in knowledge and Christlikeness (the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ). When will that be? Not while we are still in these mortal bodies—but we should continue eagerly to strive to grow more and more into the image of Christ. Small children are cute, but it is heart-breaking when they cease to thrive and grow. So it is with believers.

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.” (Heb 5:12-14)

Children	Mature Believers
-Tossed to and fro & carried about by every wind of doctrine, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. (Unstable, lacking discernment)	-United in faith and knowledge of the Son of God -Christ-like -Speak the truth in love -Grow up in every way into the head which is Christ

The mature believer will speak the truth in love; literally “manifesting the truth in love.” This is SO vital to the health of the body. We must live what we speak, and we must speak truth in a loving way. Truth without love is brutal. Love without truth is not really love at all.

4:16

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.

“Held together by every joint” has the idea of being joined closely together; knit together. Only when each part is functioning properly and every part is working together as a unit, will the body grow as it should. We must love one another, encourage one another, and equip one another to grow up in every way until individually and collectively we reflect the image of Jesus.

In summary:

In Ephesians chapters 2 and 3 Paul laid out the mystery of Jews and Gentiles together in one body. In chapter 4 he goes into practical detail as to how that unity can happen and what it should look like.

We must all walk worthy of that high calling—with humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, love.

We must all be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We must all be united around certain basic truths as given in the New Testament.

Individually, we are each given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

Certain men are given gifts specifically for the equipping of the body.

Individually and as a whole we must be equipped and equip others until we all grow to maturity. . .

bearing with one another in **love** (4:2)

speaking the truth in **love** (4:15)

so that [the body] builds itself up in **love** (4:16)

May we all eagerly pursue unity and maturity in the church.

Application questions:

1. How does the fact that God is able to do far more abundantly than we could ask or think encourage you in these uncertain days?
2. Are you using your spiritual gift(s) for the good of the whole body? If not, why not?
3. What practical ways can you be diligent to preserve the unity of the body in the bond of peace?