

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 4

By Charles Dailey © 2014 Revised 11/30/2023 NLT
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Previous:

1. The first chapter reviews the wonderful blessings available to the Jewish believer and shows the blessings apply equally to the Gentile believers. It concludes on the theme that Christ is the head of the church and is present in all of us — both Jews and Gentiles — through His Spirit.
2. In the first half of chapter two, we learned that both Jews and Gentiles are God's work of art, created for good works. But we are not saved **by** good works. The last half of the chapter discusses the breaking down of the wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles by Jesus' death.
3. In chapter three Paul spoke of his revelation from the Lord about Gentiles — that they are fellow heirs with the Jewish believers. The chapter ends with words of praise for Jesus as Lord of the church forever.

HOW BELIEVERS MUST RESPOND

4:1 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.

- The truths laid down before this point lead Paul to dictate the next portion of Ephesians. Beginning to read at this point and skipping the earlier part would leave the believer with out the foundation needed for what now unfolds rapidly.
- **Francis Foulkes** says:
“... in these remaining chapters he is going to write about the quality and kind of life that is demanded of

them individually and in the fellowship of Christ's Church."

- This **prisoner** reminds them of the cost of their new state and Paul begs them to live in harmony with their **calling**. **Beg** is a strong word, both in Greek and English.
- "Match your lifestyle with your **calling** by God."

(2) Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. (3) Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

- **Humility** was despised among the Greeks. For them, it described how a slave would behave. Paul in Philippians shows that Jesus **humbled** Himself:

He humbled Himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Philippians 2:8

Humility enables us to recognize the worth and value of other people. This would be a problem in the Jewish / Gentile church. It still is a problem today even where we do not have such a good excuse.

- Paul speaks of the **gentleness** of the strong whose strength is under control. It is the absence of the disposition to assert personal rights.
- **Patience** is the idea of being long-suffering toward people who aggravate us.
- **Making allowance**. The very words implies that things will be going on that we do not like. Things will not be done our way.
- **Love** helps the other person to be right. It avoids "Oh no, that's not right" or "Yes, but" or "That's so foolish."
- **Keep yourselves united in the Spirit**. The command is not passive, but active. It is our responsibility.

- There are two kinds of unity here. The unity of the **Spirit** in verse three, and the unity of the faith in verse 13. We have been *given* the unity of the **Spirit** and need to preserve it. We *work* toward attaining the unity of the faith.
- **Peace**. At times small churches self-destruct because the members cannot get along with each other. Most church issues can be handled in a **peaceful way**.

CONSIDER OUR HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

(4) For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. (5) There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) and one God and Father, who is over all and in all and living through all.

- **One body**. God does not have multiple churches.
- **One Spirit**. God does not have multiple **Spirits**.
- The **one hope** of that **calling** is eternal life with Jesus Christ.
- There is **one Lord**. Jesus has no competition. He claimed to be THE Way. Only Jesus overcame death by resurrection. He is **Lord**.
- There is **one faith**. There is only one system of belief suitable for the God that we serve.
- There is **one baptism**. The word, when not modified by anything, means **immersion in water**. This rules out the continuation of Holy Spirit **baptism**.
- There is **one God and Father**. He is everything to everybody. He is all pervasive.
- **Who is over all and in all and living through all**. We live in a God-created, God-controlled, God sustained and God-filled world.
- Note that is discussing the unity of the church, Paul speaks of seven "**ones**," The number seven is associated with completeness just as the earth was completed in its

present form in seven days. The word seven occurs over 700 times in Scripture.

GIFTS FOR TODAY'S CHURCH

(7) However, He has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ.

- **Christ** is passing out **gifts** to His church. It is not His intention that every believer be identical with every other believer. In this sense, there is unity because of our diversity.

(8) That is why the Scriptures say, "When He ascended to the heights, He led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to His people." (9) Notice that it says "He ascended." This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. (10) And the same One who descended is the One who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that He might fill the entire universe with Himself.

- The quotation is from Psalm 68:18.
- Some have understood this to mean that He recaptured those who had been taken captive. A case of this occurred in Genesis 14:14-16. From the bounties of war He gave out **gifts** to the former **captives**.

(11) Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.

- An **apostle** here means one of the 12 **apostles** of **Christ**. That office was a **gift** to the **church**. They spoke and wrote the will of Jesus. He promised:

When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own

but will tell you what He has heard. He will tell you about the future. John 16:13

- **Prophets**, when included with **apostles**, refers to that class of men who were connected to the **apostles**, but not part of them. Easy examples are Mark and Luke. As churches were established, the **apostles** left behind **prophets** for guiding the **church** until the Scriptures were written and circulated.
- **Evangelists** were, and are, men with the **gifts** of spreading the message of Christ to unconverted, unchurched people. Not so many have this **gift**. **Evangelists** today are generally tied down by internal church responsibilities.
- Unlike the **apostles** and **prophets**, they are not inspired spokesmen.
- **Pastors** – the word means shepherds. The shepherds in the **church** were the elders. It is best to use the word that way instead of calling the **evangelist** “the pastor.” This simply makes it harder to define who is responsible for what.
- **Teachers** were those who could communicate the will of God from oral or written sources to the untaught listener.

(12) Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do His work and build up the church, the body of Christ.
(13) This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

- All of the above leaders — apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers — have one goal: To **equip** the **church** for service. The leaders are not to **do** the work, but they are to **equip others** to do it. Naturally, in order

to teach others, they must have had some experience of their own.

- Ministering or service is a major purpose of the **body**. Ephesians 2:10.
- Our other goal of **unity** is **unity in our faith**. We are to develop and learn to be more like the **Son of God**.
- Maturity includes **unity** and **knowledge**. This does not mean that we settle on the lowest common denominator. A controlling principle here should be to teach the whole counsel of God over time.
- This way the **church** will be more and more like **Christ**.

THE REASON FOR THE GIFTS: SPIRITUAL STABILITY

(14) Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. (15) Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of His body, the church.

- Learning to be like Christ brings stability. There are some admirable traits of **children**, but unchangeableness is not one of them. They change their minds all of the time.
- **Tossed** like a ship in a storm, untaught saints follow every **wind** in the teachings they believe. First, they have gone into this, then that, then a third thing.
- There are schemers who want to **trick** the untaught to follow them, usually for their money.



- **John Stott** puts the balance to speaking the truth in love:

Thank God there are those in the contemporary church who are determined at all costs to defend and uphold God's revealed truth. But sometimes they are conspicuously lacking in love. When they think they smell heresy, their nose begins to twitch, their muscles ripple, and the light of battle enters their eye. They seem to enjoy nothing more than a fight.

Others make the opposite mistake. They are determined at all costs to maintain and exhibit brotherly love, but in order to do so are prepared even to sacrifice the central truths of revelation. Both these tendencies are unbalanced and unbiblical.

Truth becomes hard if it is not softened by love; love becomes soft if it is not strengthened by truth. The apostle calls us to hold the two together, which should not be difficult for Spirit-filled believers, since the Holy Spirit is himself 'the Spirit of truth', and his firstfruit is 'love.'

There is no other route than this to a fully mature Christian unity."

(16) He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

- Paul's traveling companion for a few years was Dr. Luke. Now he uses a metaphor drawn from Luke's profession.

- This leads to true church **growth** of the church. It goes far beyond growth in numbers.

MOVE FROM SIN TO SUCCESS

(17) With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. (18) Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against Him. (19) They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.

- We are hearing straight from the **Lord** here. Talk about **authority!**
- It is clear that learning of the **Lord** would lead to some very specific life changes. Some of these are now set forth in detail.
- Certainly not all **Gentiles** could be described this way, but the **Gentile** lifestyle had these elements and was commonly seen.
- The **Gentiles** lived based on their lack of understanding on how to live. Such conduct leads to a **hardened heart**. Numerous failures at living finally cause one to be **hardened in heart**.
- They are driven by their senses (including sexuality) and this leads to the oft-heard justification, "If it feels good, do it."
- Their sexuality become the driving force in their lives and they don't care who gets hurt. Sex is a wonderful gift from God that is capable of leaving very deep scars when it is misused.

(20) But that isn't what you learned about Christ. (21) Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from Him, (22) throw off your old

sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception.

- Being “in **Christ**” leads to a learning process. That means reading and taking classes or whatever it takes to **learn**. Christianity, unlike nearly all others, is a **learning** religion. We must **learn Christ** by study or from the example of others.
- Home study is important and church classes are important. This leads to enlightenment as compared to the Gentiles in verse 18 that had a darkened understanding. While learning about Jesus is not all facts and data, yet these cannot be ignored in favor of merely experiencing a relationship with Jesus.

(23) Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. (24) Put on your new nature, created to be like God -- truly righteous and holy.

- The **renewal** starts in our spirits. Passing laws has only limited value in correcting conduct.
- Since He is separated (for that is the definition of **holiness**) from all wickedness, He reveals only truth.
- Now Paul lists examples of relationships within the church and each has a negative prohibition followed by a positive replacement.

SPEAK THE TRUTH

(25) So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body.

- Straightforwardness is called for. But this is not an excuse to gossip or be critical, either. Sometimes these are done in the name of “honesty.”
- We have a close bond in Christ and must act that way. We are members of the **same body**. See 4:12 - 16.

CONTROL ANGER

(26) And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, (27) for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

- Being **angry** may not be entirely controllable, but it is the doorway to sin. Jesus was recorded as being **angry** in Mark 3:5, but He didn't stay that way.
- Brooding over **anger** is forbidden.
- **Anger**, retained over time, becomes wrath. Generally in the New Testament, **anger** is the first reaction to something we do not like and wrath is retaining the anger over time. God's wrath will be seen at Judgment.
- The devil likes to redirect **angry** people into malice, revenge and attitudes that are similar.



STOP STEALING

(28) If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need.

- The Greek word for **steal** is where businesses get "stock shrinkage." *klépton*. We are not discussing armed robbery but picking up little things as in the photo.
- Examples: tax evasion, copyright violations (common in music), doing poor quality work or even sleeping on the job.
- Instead of improving our net-worth by **stealing** a few things, we are to work to provide for the needy. That



person who never has enough to help the **needy** is both violating the Word of God and missing a blessing in life.

USE WORDS THAT BUILD

(29) Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. (30) And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, He has identified you as His own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

- Unwholesome words are prohibited. We are not even to quote the other person's vulgarities!
- Notice that this is not limited to swearing.
- Further, we are to say only edifying things, comments that build. Proverbs 12:18.
- Our rule: Does our conversation leave the listener built up or depressed because things are so bad.
- Anger, stealing and bad language are not just breaking God's rules, they are personally grieving the Holy Spirit.
- **God** has put His **Spirit** in us until the day of redemption.



(31) Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. (32) Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

- **Bitterness** is sour speech and a sour spirit.
- **Rage** is quarreling, shouting and related conduct.
- **Anger** was discussed in verse 26.
- **Slander** is speaking about another person, especially behind his back.



- Our rule in dealing with other Christians: **kindness.**
- We will be offended. **Forgive.**
- The example has been set: We have been **forgiven.**

Sign unearthed at Ephesus showing the way to the church meeting place. The sign was placed on the main road between the harbor and the main city.

