

In the previous lessons of this conference, we have seen some realities taking shape. We have explored the nature and the role of the Holy Spirit. This may leave many of you with more questions than answers. One of the main ones is, “What is the process and what is it called?” We know we start as babes in Christ and we are expected to grow in accordance with our position in Jesus Christ.

I. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

In Ephesians 4, Paul begins with an inferential particle, therefore. This section is based on the fact of our identity and reality presented in chapters 1-3. This is the second “*oun*” in the letter to the Ephesians. The first is in 2:19; however, notice that this is still speaking of the identity of the believer. 4:1 is the first indication of what the believers are supposed to do with the information provided in the first half of this letter.

Verses 1-3 are the introductory summary for the rest of the letter. The goal of the Christian life is simple—*walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called*.

Verses 2-3 support this main admonition. *With all* is the preposition for all the manners in verse 2.

With all humility (Philippians 2) – We are to regard others as more important than ourselves and be willing to sacrifice our desires for the betterment of another.

With all *gentleness* – This word serves as a word of control. This does not mean weak or soft. Strength, power, and authority are not in question. The point is that those who have strength, power, and authority are to use them wisely and with gentleness, being under self-control.

With patience – This means not counting wrongs against others because Jesus Christ was patient with us, not counting our wrongs against Him.

While bearing with one another in love.

While *being diligent to preserve the unity* (literally oneness) *of the Spirit in the bond of peace* indicates that this unity is not accomplished in strife but in love and peace.

In verses 4-6, Paul explains what he means by the statement, “...preserve the unity of the Spirit.” Unity indicates that there is:

One body

One Spirit

One hope

One Lord

One faith

One baptism

One God and Father

In verses 7-10, Paul explains that Jesus Christ, when He ascended, dispersed gifts for the church.

Verse 11 explains what (in general) those gifts are. The gifts are not to the one holding the office, but the gift is to the body, to the church. He gave the apostles, also he gave the prophets, also he gave the evangelists, also he gave the pastors (shepherds) and teachers for...

The term evangelist is a contested word; it is only used a few times in Scripture. I am convinced that the idea of missionary is appropriate in our current culture. It is obvious that pastor/teacher is the most common office that is recognizable today. But this does not discount elders and servants (1Timothy 3:1-13). This is a different name for pastor or teacher with a different point of emphasis. Teachers are also valuable, but they work under the authority of a pastor (1Timothy 5:17; 2Timothy 2:2; Titus 2:3-5).

What are the evangelists, pastors, and teachers to use? 2Timothy 3:16-17 – Scripture is what is to be taught. Those who desire to teach must not draw from their own imagination and experience or the imagination and experience of another.

If there were apostles and prophets today, they would have priority and authority over the pastors, teachers, and evangelists (1Corinthians 12:28). What is the source of Scripture? Scripture is the accounts of or the witness of the apostles and prophets. When one teaches the Scripture properly, we are in proper order. When a teacher incorrectly interprets Scripture (allegory, out of context, etc.) or uses their own imagination/experience, they are supplanting the proper order of priority and authority.

Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, inspired apostles and prophets to write the Scripture. As teachers, we take the Scripture and use it to train the church. Also teachers are responsible for training others teachers who will carry on the work in training the church and others also.

Now we come to the desired outcome of the training of the church in Ephesians 4:12-16. This section is about the unity of the body that comprised of many individuals. The goals are expressed clearly:

1. *Equipping* the saints – this word indicates a full complete capability
 - a. *For the work of service* – This is diverse, designed to meet the needs of fellow believers for the furtherance of the gospel
 - b. *For the building up of the body of Christ* – *building up* is a noun. This can either refer to a building or metaphorically edification. This phrase does not mean the process of building but the act of reinforcement of that which was equipped.
 - c. There are two concepts here: the original equipping for work service and the reinforcement to continue in the work of service
2. Everyone arriving at the unity (oneness)
 - a. Of the faith (the doctrinal truth that is believed)
 - b. Of the knowledge of the Son of God
3. Unto a man complete
4. Unto a measure of stature of the fulness of Christ
5. With this result
 - a. No longer being infants
 - b. No longer being tossed and carried about by every wind of doctrine
 - i. In the trickery of men
 - ii. In the craftiness
 - iii. In the method of error

- c. We would be mature in all things holding the truth in love in Him
 - i. Who is the Head
 - ii. Who is the Messiah (Christ)
 - iii. Who supplies everything
 - iv. Who fits us together
 - v. Who joined us together
- d. We would make increase (perpetual function) unto edification in love

II. CONCLUSION

The first and foremost responsibility of the local church and, by extension, the universal church is unity. This is accomplished by teaching the Word of God. The Bible is the textbook; we are to learn it.

The unity involves the core doctrines of Scripture. People disagree as to what the core doctrines are, so we need to make sure they are biblical. I have eight. If you understand and are convinced that these are true, then we are unified in the faith. If, however, you do not understand these core principles or do not believe them (one or more) to be true, then we are not unified in the faith; this needs to be rectified.

For most of us here, the maturing process is complete. We understand these doctrines, we have ascertained these doctrines to be true. We are complete; we are mature; we are solid in what we believe and a fleeting wind of doctrine will not cause us to be moved.

Some are in the process of this training and are unsure if they understand what these doctrines are. Some understand these doctrines but are unsure if they are all true.

Some are babes in Christ and need saturation of God's word so that they learn quickly and become established, not falling for the schemes of Satan and this world. If they do not learn and become convinced of these core doctrines then they typically lose sight of truth and, even though saved and sanctified by God, they are totally ineffective and potentially become enemies of the cross.

Some are mature but apathetic to the priority of spiritual truth and they can suffer shipwreck in regard to their faith. Sometimes this lack of spiritual thinking causes a doubt in the truth of core doctrines. If that is the case, they may have to be "re-matured" so that they are unified in the faith.

As elders, pastors, and teachers, we have one of two goals: education to unity of the faith or edify the believer in the truth of what has been believed (doctrinal stability or encouragement in the work of service).

The Core Doctrines of the Faith

1. God exists in a tri-unity of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.
2. God created everything good in six literal days.
3. Man sinned against God giving over dominion of the world to Satan (we are all equally guilty of sin and rebellion).
4. God chose to have mercy for fallen man by providing a means of forgiveness and obtaining God's righteousness which has been planned and implemented before the foundation of the world. This was always by grace through faith.
5. God chose to carry out these promises through the nation of Israel whom He made direct promises as delineated in the Hebrew Scriptures. Certain promises are to Israel alone.
6. Jesus Christ is the provision of God for reconciliation:
 - a. Jesus is the God who has become flesh by means of virgin birth
 - b. Jesus lived a completely sin free life
 - c. Jesus died on the cross for sin, rose again on the third day, and ascended to the Father.
 - d. Jesus has promised His eternal life to anyone who believes in Him.
 - i. Jesus is the God who gives life.
 - ii. Jesus died for our sins and was resurrected.
 - iii. Jesus promises to provide His eternal life as a gift.
7. The life of the believer begins with growth to spiritual maturity by grace through faith and then that person has the opportunity to honor God and be used by Him in ministering to others in doing good and abstaining from sin.
 - a. In doing so believers will be rewarded.
 - b. If not, there is no condemnation but there is a lack of what could have been enjoyed.
8. Jesus is coming again to restore Israel and this world: first in the Millennial Reign and then in the Eternal Realm where all sin, pain, and death will be obliterated.