



Ephesians Week 7- Ephesians 4:1-16

October 22, 2023 - Pastor Jason Carter

A moment for Israel:

- We need to respond to all situations in a biblical way with biblical understanding
- God's ultimate desire is that all come to faith in Jesus.
- We will not support anything, a group or nation, whose mandate is the destruction of that nation or people.
- This is an ancient battle.
- Pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6), even though I do not personally believe there will ever be true peace for Israel or Jerusalem while nations exist that swear to the destruction of Israel.
- Pray for Israel's government to use wisdom and restraint against the Palestinian population.
- Pray for the salvation of all included, including Hamas. Save them or remove them.
- Pray that no other nation or groups like Hezbollah (supported by Iran) join.
- Pray that Palestinians would elect leadership other than Hamas.
- Pray for restraint on the heart of humanity.

I find this series really timely: with the conflict and clashes of Jews and Gentiles as a true-to-life parallel to our context as well.

The next 3 chapters of Ephesians are specifically related to how we live with and treat one another. Paul is now instructing us on how to live with one another as the church; it is his prayer and desire for believers to live together united under Christ.

V. 1 "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the **calling** you have received."

Called

Ch 1

- Chosen and adopted through Jesus (V 5)
- Redemption and forgiveness through the blood of Jesus (V 7)
- Have an inheritance in Christ (V 11)
- Sealed by the Holy Spirit (V 13)

Ch 2

- Made alive in Christ through grace (V 5)
- Saved by grace, not works (V 8-9)
- We are God's workmanship created for good works (V 10)
- Brought near to God through the blood of Jesus (V13)
- We have access to the Father and are members of His house (V 18-19)
- We are God's holy temple (V 21-22)

Ch 3

- Gentiles are heirs to the promises of God in Christ (V 6)
- God wants to display His wisdom through the church (V 10)
- Invited to know (experientially) God's love (V 17-19)
- Jesus will be glorified through the church and all generations forever (V20-21)

All of this is to say we have been given all these things because **we are called** to participate in the mission of God. And how we live out our faith in community and in our world is the **calling** of an ambassador, a representative of Jesus and His kingdom. It can be expressed in many different ways. This makes up our **calling**.

V. 2 "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient (longsuffering), bearing with one another in love."

Paul is instructing the Ephesians and us **how** to live out our **calling** in the midst of community.

Have you ever been presented with something too good to be true and you ask the question: What's the catch?

- Paul: Here is the catch. The love God and love people thing of the Gospel starts today
- How do we do this: Living completely humble, gentle, patient, bearing with one another

V. 3 "Make every effort to keep the **unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."**

Paul is not speaking of artificial peace or political correctness. We are not speaking of the absence of conflict. It is through the Spirit of God working in us to establish the bond of peace among us. We have to be committed to walking in peace.

Traits of the bond of peace: humble, gentle, patient, love and cemented by the supremacy of Jesus

- Because of how contentious our culture and world has become, how many of us really try for unity anymore, especially over things we disagree over?
- How many of us allow God's Spirit to guide us through and in the midst of disagreement? What does His guidance look like?

Unity is not perfect agreement or uniformity. **It is the decision** to continue together in the same direction even at the point of disagreement.

We can agree to disagree. The question is, can we agree to move forward together?

- Pastor Walt used to say to the pastors, "When we leave this room we are on the same page."

V. 4-6 "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Paul is saying that there is **one** common denominator greater than our disagreements and differences:

We are confident that this unity is found in Jesus Christ, by the Spirit of God. "We want unity in the truth of God through the Spirit of God. This let us seek after; let us live near to Christ, for this is the best way of promoting unity. Divisions in Churches never begin with those full of love to the Savior." (Spurgeon)

We care deeply about the condition of the church, people's hearts and lives. Satan desires to disrupt, create dissension, separate, and to destroy. The church is being challenged in this season. We are seeing offense more and more often in the church.

- Do you care about the condition of the Church at large?

- How do you see the enemy trying to destroy unity? How will you determine to fight against it?

Example of Jesus using the term offense: **Luke 17:1 NKJV** "Then He said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no^[a] offenses should come, but woe to *him* through whom they do come!"

Offense: (Greek) *Skandalon*: a stick for bait (of a trap), generally a snare, a stumbling block, an offense.

We will be offended in any number of ways. We live in a world that is constantly offended even where there is none. Life is not going to get easier. We are sheep among wolves. Unity has to be a priority.

In Matthew 24, Jesus provides us a picture of what can happen when we get offended and do not deal with it.

Matthew 24:10-12 "And then many will be **offended**, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold."

Many will be offended and will betray one another (turn on one another) and will hate one another.

There is a pattern to offense: Offense>>Opposition>>Hate

There will be people and voices that you will be drawn to because you are offended and they are saying what you want to hear, justifying how you feel. This is when offense can actually lead you to deception. Deception then leads to a cold heart. The enemy loves this trick.

- How have you seen this to be true?
- If we had a spiritual or relational x-ray, would it reveal that you have an offense with another?
- What can you do to protect your heart from being deceived by offense?
- Who needs to know the offense you are processing so they can help you stay clear of a cold heart?

Proverbs 18:19 NLT "An offended friend is harder to win back than a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with bars."

At some point, you have been or will be disappointed with a leader, family member, or friend, or offended or hurt by a person or pastor in the church.

Wherever there is a higher level of relationship and expectation there will be a greater chance of disagreement and hurt.

The church is an incredible expression of the grace of God but it is not perfect.

- If you have been hurt by the Church, Good News, or me, I ask for your forgiveness
- If you come from a church background where you have been abused, manipulated, controlled, etc-- I am sorry. That is not the way God operates.
- We also have to be honest enough to know the church is not perfect.
- Many amazing things happen in the church even if/when you may experience disappointment and hurt.

- Can you share an experience where someone in the church hurt or offended you, and you were able to forgive, extend grace, and remain rather than carry an offense that severed the relationship?

We have to have healthy expectations of other people--for family, marriage, work, church and even God.

Pete Scazzero- There are 4 primary ways expectations go wrong:

- Your expectation is **unconscious**. You didn't even know you had an expectation until it was violated.
- Your expectation is **unrealistic**. It is not reasonable given the person or circumstance.
- Your expectation is **unspoken**. You did not clearly articulate your expectation to another person.
- Your expectation is **un-agreed upon**. The other person never agreed to follow-through with your expectation.
- **Jesus experienced this all the time.**

-How have you had incomplete expectations that caused confusion and disunity in a relationship?

-How can you work to be more clear in your relational expectations?

Let's be honest, eventually someone in church will let down and you will let other people down. The Gospel will offend you. Jesus will offend you.

-How can the gospel and Jesus offend someone?

-At some point we have to determine if we actually believe and will live what Jesus intends. This is a heart position. If God calls us to turn the other cheek with those who hate us, where does that leave us with fellow Christians? What do you hear in this statement?

Immature love acts immaturely. What does immaturity act like?

My fear is that we choose to justify outrage and immaturity at the expense of what the Bible actually says to do. What do you think?

Back to Ephesians:

V. 7,8 "But to each one of us **grace has been given** as Christ apportioned it. ⁸ This is why it^{sa} says: 'When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.'"

Grace of salvation, redemption, forgiveness for each of us. Grace of God's empowerment through the Holy Spirit to use all aspects of our lives for His purposes. Grace to handle disagreement. Grace to handle disappointment. Grace to handle offense.

V. 9-12 "(What does 'he ascended' mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions^{sa}? ¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."

He is speaking about the death, resurrection and now Jesus is the head of the church for the church. You are part of the mission and are to be equipped to build up the body of Christ which is the church. Every person is called to be on mission.

Equip also has the idea of "to put right." This ancient Greek word was used to describe setting broken bones or mending nets. These ministries work together to produce strong, healthy, fit Christians.

V. 13-15 "...until we all reach **unity in the faith** and in the **knowledge of the Son** of God and **become mature, attaining** to the whole measure of the **fullness** of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, **speaking the truth in love**, we will **grow to become** in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, **as each part does its work.**"

Jesus gave the 5 fold ministry for the purpose of the church to grow in maturity- knowing and growing in the Lord, learning and applying scripture, learning to listen to and be led by the Holy Spirit and then to release each person to do their part. Part of your job is the edification and building of each other.

- What could that look like in your life?

There needs to be discussion about scripture and culture. **We can be a people who can agree to disagree and wrestle over what the Bible says YET work it out and still have a bond of peace greater than the disagreement.**

Ask Holy Spirit to bring to mind a person, group, etc that you have an offense towards and is causing your heart to grow cold. What is keeping you from unity in the body of Christ? What bondage are you in? Are you feeding it? Because of hurt or offense?

Ask for His help to release it and forgive and to help you remove hatred. Ask Him to help you mourn it, grieve it, and let it go.

You may have to ask God on repeat, over and over, to help you forgive or to help you be a bond of peace even when you disagree.