

Ephesians: Good News of the Church

Ephesians 4:1-16

"A Body Working Together"—October 16, 2022



Introduction

When a parent wants to assess a child's development, they may have a doctor look at different criteria to check the health and development of that child. What are the criteria to assess spiritual growth? If you were asked, "How are you doing spiritually; are you growing?" You may share that you read your Bible daily and pray. While that is good, it is not enough. You may know the Bible, but are you obeying God's command to love your neighbor?

What about the church? How does one assess how a church is doing? What if there is more to it than just what is preached or taught? A church may be a Bible teaching church, but are its members growing in love and unity? In chapter 1 - 3 of Ephesians, Paul has taught and prayed. Now beginning chapter 4, he begins to exhort the church. How can we grow together as a church?

Sermon Outline

1. Walk together. Vs. 1 - 6
2. Grow together. Vs. 7-16

Read & Discuss

1) Read vs. 1-6

Paul begins this second half of Ephesians with a call to walk in a manner worthy of the calling. "Worthy" here means living in a way that is fitting with the call. The call to the Ephesians (and to us) was to display the manifold wisdom of God to the world. It is one thing for Paul to teach about this. It is another thing to BE that church.

It starts with having godly character that begins with humility. Is it not true that every conflict begins with pride? Humility is essential to unity. It is the trait that enables us to see others as more important than ourselves.

Look into the mirror of verse 2. How are you doing? Would the people who know you best describe you as having these qualities? Our identity is in God's love and grace, but sin has led us to comparison with others. A performance based value system has made the qualities from verse 2 impossible. Do you find yourself comparing yourself to others? Does that leave you confident or insecure?

We gather to remember the truths that we forget or doubt. We build on those glorious truths to rely on God and rest in His help. Do you find it difficult to love and bear up with others? Do you grow impatient? How can we be impatient with someone who is aggravating to us when God has been patient with us (who have sinned against God)?

Paul doesn't say that we have to create unity. He says that we maintain it. If we look at the church the way that God sees it, Christ's death and resurrection has broken down the dividing wall of hostility. God has made us fellow citizens and members of the same family. Jesus' job was to create unity. Our job is to maintain it and display it. We need to trust God for what He has already done.

There is ONE body. Seven times in two verses, Paul repeats "ONE." He is saying that we are ONE. There are many different calls to unity in the world today. Unity to whom? Unity based on what? Unity made possible how? Christianity is based on, built on, shaped by the truth of God's word. Paul calls us in verse 3 to be eager to maintain unity. Are you eager to maintain the unity of the church that was purchased by Christ?

Additional reading: James 4:1-6; Matthew 11:28-30; 1 Corinthians 1

2) Read vs. 7 – 16

We are in a spiritual battle. The world, the flesh and the Devil do not want God's plan for the church to work. Knowing this, how are we going to win the battle? Paul quotes from Psalm 68. He views this psalm in light of what Christ has done. Jesus laid aside His glory to come to earth. He died, rose again and ascended into

heaven. What did Jesus do after His victory? He gave gifts. This is how He will bring about victory. The victorious King has the authority to give these gifts. He distributes them as He sees fit. They are not for the “elite, superstar” Christians. These gifts are given to each one in the church.

There is unity in the body, but there is a diversity of gifts. We are a family; we do things together. In 1 Corinthians 12:7, Paul defines spiritual gifts as a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. We must pray for help. Let the Spirit of God strengthen and empower you to serve. That is the point of spiritual gifts.

The gifts mentioned here are “word-based” gifts. The church needs to be built on the Word. Pastors equip the saints through the word (2 Timothy 3:16-17) for the work of the ministry. We are all ministers. We are all called to be involved in the work of the ministry. The goal of equipping every member is to build up the body of Christ. That is spiritual maturity. We labor to present every member complete or mature in Christ. Christ is the standard that we are seeking to attain to. We may not reach this on this side of heaven, but we still strive.

Paul is exhorting us to walk, but what if we want to ride? What is the danger of spiritual laziness? (Vs. 14) Being content with spiritual immaturity may get you out of the hard work, but it leaves you an easy target of the enemy. You could become a spiritual shipwreck. Satan masquerades as an angel of light, using schemes to distract you. It may start with a legitimate concern. Tunnel vision on a legitimate problem can lead us to overlook the legitimate means of grace - the thing that would make you grow spiritually. What are the things that tend to grab your attention? How much time do you spend thinking about, researching and reading about, and/or talking about those things?

Satan can and will use these things to divide us, but we need each other. We walk together so that we can grow together. Speaking the truth of God's word in love to each other rests at the heart of the work of the ministry. This is discipling or helping each other follow Jesus. There are many different ways to do this. Can you brainstorm some ways that you can reach out to fellow believers this week?

Do you see the church as a bus or an orchestra? In the bus, the driver is doing the work and the passengers enjoy the ride. This isn't the biblical picture of the church. The church is more like an orchestra - everyone has an instrument (gift) that they play together from the same score guided by a conductor (pastor) who helps make the music sound as the Composer (God) intended. How do you see the church?

Additional Reading: Psalm 68; Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 1; 1 Peter 4

Prayer of Response

1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to *confess*? From what do I need to *repent*?

2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand*, *believe*, *desire*, or *do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to com. If you missed the sermon on Sunday or would like to listen again, visit our website at <https://fbcum.org/sermons-new/>

Next week's sermon text: we turn to <u>Ephesians 4:17-23</u> “Putting Off...Putting On”
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