



Ephesians 4

Ephesians 4:1

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

Introduction to Ephesians 4

Three Main ideas in Eph 4: 1) Humility, 2) Unity, and 3) Diversity of Gifts. Paul moves from salvation and all God has done for our salvation, to what we do in sanctification, as God works through us. The verbs from now on will focus on be, live, and do. Paul moves from the theology of our salvation to the application of that theology.

“It is important to embrace both components (pure and applied knowledge), for the exclusion of one becomes an exercise in futility. [Think of medicine.] If only purely theoretical research takes place, the public never benefits from that knowledge. On the other hand, the practice of medicine without pure research excludes the possibility of new discoveries for cures of diseases. Thus, in theology, head knowledge alone will make little difference in individual or corporate lives, and practice without theological knowledge has the potential to lead to heretical practice. (Hoehner, p. 499)

“Behavior is thus seen in Ephesians as both response to what God has done in Christ, and as the proper accompaniment to the praise of God, the two themes present in Chps. 1-3” (O’Brien, 272)

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

As a prisoner for the Lord — I

Live a Life Worthy of Your Calling

the prisoner in the Lord; a statement of humility. He was imprisoned for the gospel, the message which brought salvation. They had benefited by his faithfulness to Christ and the gospel, a faithfulness that led to imprisonment.

I urge you — a) ask for earnestly, b) invite, c) call together to, d) encourage (Kuske). “This appeal, like other Pauline ethical ‘imperatives’, is grounded in the ‘indicatives’ of Gods’ saving work in Christ” (O’Brien, p. 274). All (Jew & Gentile) elected, enlightened, made alive, reconciled, who have had the mystery revealed to them.

Then—therefore. Drawn on basis of Chapters 1-3. All of what he has said up to this point motivates readers to hear what he says.

Eph 1:3-14 – The calling blessed us with all spiritual blessings a) the Father chose us, b) the Son redeemed us and c) the Spirit sealed us.

Eph 1:15-23 – Because of this blessing, Paul prayed that the believers might a) know God and b) the hope of their calling, c) God’s inheritance in the saints, and d) God’s power toward/in believers..

Eph 2:1-10 – Paul speaks about this calling as a) salvation of the unregenerate, b) placed in the heavenlies in Christ.

Ephesians 2:11-13:13 – This calling proceeds from the individual believer to union of Jew and Gentile in one body called the church.

Eph 3:14-21—Because of this union Paul prays for Christ love that the union would not only exist THEOLOGICALLY but EXPERIENTIALLY among Jew and Gentiles.

For the Lord—Literally: *IN* the Lord – nothing happens outside of the Lord. Lord refers to Christ, as it is consistently used in the epistle (Hoehner, p. 504). Connection is both a) causal and b) possessive. It was the cause of Christ that made Paul a prisoner, and it is the union with Christ that Paul stresses here (Hoehner, p504) Paul became a missionary among the Gentiles out of obedience to the Lord, and was imprisoned for it. He now urges the Ephesians to obey their Lord with whom they have union too.

The calling ... received — Called into blessings of salvation (1:3-14). Given hope (1:18). United with Christ & Share in his rule (1:20-22; 2:6). Reconciled to God by the death of Christ (2:13-16). God’s household members (2:15, 19,21). Free access to Father (2:18). God’s calling gives great privileges and calls for responsibilities.

Life a life worthy of—to conduct yourself worthily. Get it done, let it be done. Think of a balance scale. When there is faith in one pan of the scale, God looks for Christian conduct in the other. Faith leads to a life that is in balance with the calling. Let your life be in balance with what you are. Remember what God has made of you and live that way. Be what God made you.



Ephesians 4:2 — Virtues that Help Maintain the Unity of the Spirit

Ephesians 4:2-6

2Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Gentle = Meek

Epitome of Meekness is Christ—

Rides into Jerusalem gentle and humble on a donkey (Matt 21:4; Zech 9:9). Then he drove out the money changers from the Temple. All part of the meekness of Christ. Jesus describes himself as meek and lowly of heart (Matt 11:29). “‘Meekness’ is to characterize the lives of Christians in relation to fellow-believers who have sinned (Gal. 6:1, 2, by bearing one another’s burden they ‘fulfill the law of Christ’; 2 Tim. 2:25; cf. 1 Cor. 4:21). It is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23), standing in lists of graces as a concrete expression of Christian love (cf. 1 Tim. 6:11; 1 Pet. 3:4). This gentleness is not to be confused with weakness (as contemporary Graeco-Roman thought regarded it), but has to do with consideration for others and a willingness to waive one’s rights” (O’Brien, p. 277-278).

Meek is not Weak — “The word never connotes the idea of weakness. Rather, it implies the conscious exercise of self-control, exhibiting a conscious choice of gentleness as opposed to the use of power for the purpose of retaliation. Barclay states it well when he writes, “The man how is [meek] is the man who is always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time.” (Hoehner, p. 506)

V. 2 — ***Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.***

Be completely humble — Paul lists humility first. “There are two possible reasons for this. First, Paul has emphasized unity—pride provokes disunity whereas humility engenders unity. Second, he was aware of their past pride and wished to encourage obedience to and dependence on God. Christ is the supreme example of humility (Phil 2:6-8)” (Hoehner, p. 506).

Humility was not considered a virtue prior to NT times. We can understand that it’s not a virtue today either. In classical Greek [humility] would be used to show a derogatory sense of servility, weakness, or a shameful lowliness (O’Brien, p. 256f).

and gentle — Often translated as ‘meek’. Aristotle categorizes “meekness” as a moral virtue (vs. intellectual virtue) along with temperateness. “In describing this word Aristotle states that it is the mean between “excessive anger against everyone and on all occasions” and “never being angry with anything.” He states further: “Praise is not for him who is deficient in anger, nor for him who is therein excessive; but for one whose state is between the two.” (Hoehner, p. 506).

be patient — with patience, long-tempered, long-suffering. Does not quickly fly off in a rage. Puts up with a lot.

“For the believer, patience is that cautious endurance that does not abandon hope. It pertains to waiting patiently without immediate results, like the farmer who waits for his harvest and the OT prophets who waited for God’s action (Jas 5:7-11) Word is late and rare in classical literature. It’s used for a person’s endurance of grief or “the indomitable patience of the inhabitants of a city under siege who plant turnips and hope to eat the ripened result before the city’s ultimate defeat.” (Hoehner, p. 508).

Bearing with one another — bearing up, holding up. forbear, holding yourselves back from one another (Robertson, quoted by Hoehner, p. 509). “In other words, differences between believers are to be tolerated” (Hoehner, p. 509) We know it by its opposite, “putting down.”

in love (agape) — Only sphere in which this is possible. This is love of choice, rather than reason, when we talk of love for God and for others. For others, it’s because they too have been redeemed with the blood of Jesus.

“The same phrase is used in 1:4 where we concluded that αγαπη is not a possessive love but a giving love. This kind of love seeks the highest good in the one loved, and more particularly for the believer, it has the idea of seeking the will of God in the one loved. It is an unconditional love that does not seek a response in kind” (Hoehner, p. 510).

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

Make every effort — ***Be eager***, to be zealous, make every effort, diligent, spare no effort.

to keep — maintain. Hold on, guard as a precious gift. Don’t lose or destroy something already in your possession. You already have it. Hold on to it.

unity — this is the precious gift. Oneness worked by the Holy Spirit, the unity referred to previously. It’s an inner unity in face of outward division. Unity (ενοτητα) used only here and in 4:13. Rare in biblical literature.

Ephesians 4:3-6 — Make Every Effort to Keep the Unity of the Spirit

of the Spirit — This is a unity that the Holy Spirit created, “and therefore not the readers’ own achievement, yet they are exhorted urgently to maintain it.” (O’Brien, p. 279).

through the bond of peace — Peace binds us together in the church. Humility, meekness, long-suffering, and patience preserve peace. “By striving earnestly to practice these virtues they will preserve and retain the unity of the Spirit” (Stoekhard, p. 179)

Make every effort ... to keep.... This is why we are to be humble, gentle, patient, bearing with one another in love. Keep the precious unity. Satan will try to destroy unity.

Peace is a Gift established by Christ (Eph 2:13-21). The Christian does not need to create it, but protects it.

Vv. 4-5 ⁴**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.**

One body and one Spirit — “This *body* is the church, Christ’s body (1:23), which comprises Jewish and Gentile believers alike. It is the heavenly gathering, assembled around Christ, in which believers now participate. ... although the apostle is writing about the *one body* which is in heaven, all that he says applies also to each local congregation, for it is here that the unity of the body is visible. ... Believers are members of the body by virtue of the work of the Holy Spirit. And as there is only one body, so also there is only one Spirit” (O’Brien, p. 281).

You were called to one hope — Jews don’t have one hope and Gentiles another, there is one hope for all Christians. **Hope** — “the expectation of the outworking of God’s plan” (Hoehner, p. 515). The cause of the body of Christ, HOPE.

one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism — Jew and Gentile are under one Lord. The unity Christians share is based entirely on their Savior’s work, not on anything they have done. There can be no pride, only joy in the common

grace we see given us in Christ which gives us great hope.

one faith — One body of doctrine we trust in; unity of faith “referring to the substance of one’s faith (Jude 3), their common body of belief. ... there is not one faith for Jews and another for Gentiles (as Rom. 3:20 makes clear). ... *one* faith since there is only *one* Lord.” (O’Brien, p. 283f)

one Lord — “Christ is the “one Lord” who provided redemption (1:7), hope (1:12), and headship over the church (1:22-23). [Christ] brought the Jews and Gentiles into one body, both now having access to God (2:13-18; 3:6, 12).” (Hoehner, p. 516)

one baptism — Baptism is entry into Christ. “All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal 3:27).

one God and Father of all — **of all** refers to all believers (John 1:12; Gal 3:26). **All** Christians, not **all** humans. “The NT never envisions that God is in every human being but that he resides only in believers (Rom 8:9).” (Hoehner, p. 519).

Over all — God has power and authority over all aspects of the Christians’ life. God is “supreme and transcendent” [God is way beyond us]. Unity and contentment grow as we consider God rules over all for our benefit. Even in trials we find joy. God in his wisdom will care for all things. Emphasis is on God’s transcendence.

Through all — “...emphasis is on God’s immanence [God remains with us]. He accomplishes his purposes through the instruments of believers. This is in keeping with 2:10 where the believer is God’s workmanship created for good works which God prepared beforehand in order that he or she would walk in them” (Hoehner, p. 520).

In all — This signifies the indwelling Spirit (see John 14:16-17; Rom 8:9; etc.), his intimate presence; God resides in the believer. God also dwells in body of believers (Eph 2:22)

Hope

Hoehner summarizes the hope this way: “The hope presented in Ephesians is the reality that all things will be headed up in Christ (1:9) and though the believers are presently seated with Christ, in the future they will be displayed in heaven as trophies of his grace (2:7). Further, they have been brought near to God, united into one body in Christ and reconciled to God (2:11-3:13). Before this they were without hope and without God in the world (2:2). Hence, there is the element of

objective hope which is laid up for the believers (cf Col 1:5; Rom 8:24), and this serves as the basis for the subjective hope. Hope for believers is not the world’s “hope so” but the absolute certainty that God will deliver what he has promised” (Hoehner, p. 515).

As Paul reminded the Colossians (3:4), when Christ who is your life appears, you also will appear with him in glory. Hope of glory when Christ is revealed — Colossians 3:4.

“As a foretaste of this grand hope the

very existence of the church, a society of pardoned rebels, a multiracial community in which Jews and Gentiles have been brought together in unity in the one body, is the means God uses to manifest his richly diverse wisdom to the principalities and powers in the heavenly realm. Thus, Paul reinforces his admonition by reminding his readers of the hope held out in their calling. A sense of expectancy, therefore, should motivate and unify their actions” (O’Brien, p. 282).

Ephesians 4:7-10 — Victorious Christ in Victory Procession Gives Gifts

Ephesians 4:7-

7But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8This is why it says:

"When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." 9(What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) 11It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13until 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.

V. 7 — ***But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.***

To each one of us — there is not a single one of us who has not been given a gift.

grace — There is an article in front of "grace" in Greek that reminds us that it is "the" grace that belongs to God. It is His grace, His gift. It is not something I say that I have but it is something the Holy Spirit has given me and others recognize in me. Christ gives gifts just as He determines.

has been given as Christ apportioned it. — Every Christian is given a gift(s) as Christ has measured it out for him or her as Christ knows best. Every member of the body of Christ is gifted, and needs to recognize the gifts in others. These gifts are used not for personal boasting, but for building up the body of Christ.

V. 8 — ***This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."***

This is why it says – proof that according to the OT the Messiah was going to give gifts to his people. Proof from God's Word. Notice how the Word of God is quoted as being authoritative. Paul takes key words of an OT passage in order to sum up entire thought of the larger context.

When he ascended on high—Paul uses picture of a conquering king who would free and give rewards to his people from the conquered treasure.

He led captives in his train — KJV: He led captivity captive. The gist of it is, this is a great victory. God's people had been taken captive. But now God has taken the captors captive. So Christ took captive the captivity that took his people captive.

And gave gifts to men — Quoting Psalm 68. Psalm 68:18 says that the LORD "received" gifts and not "gave" gifts. Is there any way to resolve this discrepancy between Paul's quotation and Psalm 68:18?

18 When you ascended on high,
you led captives in your train;
you received gifts from men,

It may be as simple as stating that Paul quotes from the Psalm, while also giving a summary of the Psalm's larger message. The Lord takes the gifts (received gifts), the 'booty' from the rebellious ones and gives the gifts to his people. See Psalm 68. That is the thrust of the Psalm. Christ fulfills it all; giving us gifts.

V. 9 — ***(What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?***

Paul is about to expound on this giving, when he interrupts the thought to give a description of WHO "HE" is, the one who "ascended on high" in verses 9 and 10.

What does "he ascended" mean — What does it mean that Christ "ascended"? It also means there was a time when he descended. He went up obviously means the he had gone down to a lower position.

Lower earthly regions — "lower parts of the earth." Does the lower parts of the earth refer to hell, as in "he descended into hell?" Then hell is defined as the lower parts of the earth. Or does "lower parts" refer to earth itself. That's Psalm 18 is talking about. Christ came to earth and then Christ ascended (v. 10). See Psalm 68:7-8, 12, 14, 17b. Picture Christ coming down to earth to engage in battle with all the kings of the earth. That's the context for these verses. "He also descended to the lower, earthly regions" would include all that Christ did, including "the descent into hell" referenced in the Apostles' Creed.

V. 10 — ***He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)***

In order to fill the whole universe — In order to fill all things. Christ ascended so that as Lord over all he might fill everything with His presence, so He would always be present to bless his people. Psalm 68 spoke of the savior who would descend to fight for his people and then ascend in triumph, receiving gifts from his conquered enemies and blessing his own people with gifts. Christ is the One! He fulfilled the Psalm. Treasure the gift(s) Christ has given you. Remember what it cost the Lord to get this gift for you. Treasure your gift(s)! It comes to you from Him who ascended in triumph and now rules over all, showering blessings on you.

Ephesians 4:11-13 — Christ Gave Gifts to the Church to Build up the Body

V 11—***It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,***

It was he — The same One who gives gifts to each one is the same One who gave gifts for the common use of the body. Christ gives people. Four categories are mentioned: Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. “These [gifts] in v. 11 are deliberately emphasizes since they provide the church with the teaching of Christ for the edification of the body (v. 12) and for the avoidance of false teaching (v. 14)” (O’Brien, p. 298)

who gave some — Public ministry is not a human invention, but a gift from Christ who gave some for this office.

apostles ... prophets—The apostles and prophets had a foundational role as the authoritative recipients and proclaimers of the mystery of Christ.

evangelists—The office of those engaged in preaching the gospel. Not everyone will be an evangelist. We are all witnesses of Christ (in word and action), but the specific office of evangelist is not held by all. That’s not to say that only called evangelists spread the Gospel, but neither can we say that every Christian will be an evangelist.

pastors and teachers — the conjunction ties pastor and teacher together into one expression, or hendiadys.

“All pastors teach (since teaching is an essential part of pastoral ministry), but not all teachers are pastors. The latter exercise their leadership role by feeding God’s flock with his word” (O’Brien, p. 300)

pastors— noun used only here in NT for ministry in church

- verb form “to shepherd” used this way (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2; cf. John 21:16)
- noun ‘flock’ used for church (Ac 20:28-29; 1 Pet. 5:2,3).
- Pastor functions like overseers (cf. Phl. 1:1) & elders (cf. Ac 20:17, 28; Ac 14:23; 1 Tm. 4:14; 5:17, 19, etc.)
- lead through nurture and care of the congregation
- manage the church (1 Thess. 5:12; Rom. 12:8)
- God shepherds people (Gn. 49:24; Ps. 23:1; 80:1; 40:11)
- Shows how God cared for and protected his people
- Image applied to leaders (good and bad) in Israel (2 Sam. 5:2; Ps. 78:71; Jer 23:2; Ezek. 34:11)
- church leaders carry on Jesus’ pastoral ministry.
- Jesus is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-18; Matt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:3-7; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 2:2; 5:4).
- Church leaders are to be ‘shepherds of God’s flock’ (1

Pt 5:2; Ac 20:28) who pattern ministry after Christ.

Teaching:

- Exposition or application of Scripture
- Explanation or reiteration of apostolic commands
- Authoritative function: faithful transmission of apostolic doctrine

v 12—***to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up***

to prepare God’s people — to prepare = equip, repair, fit together properly, mend. Used in Mt 4:21 and Mk 1:19 for fishermen repairing their nets. The verb from which this noun is derived is used for a doctor setting a bone to mend. This means repairing, equipping, to make someone adequate for a specific function.

For works of service — the service of all believers in the body, with the result that follows, “...people are prepared for some purpose. That purpose is ‘for the work of ministry’, an activity of the saints for which the leaders are to prepare and equip them. Christ has given ‘special’ ministers so that they will ‘make God’s people fully qualified’, thus enabling them to serve their Lord by serving one another” (O’Brien, 303).

so that the body of Christ may be built up — “[the Content of vv 11 &12] is directed towards the goal of building the body of Christ, so that together the ministers of v. 11 and ‘the saints’ serve this divinely appointed goal” (O’Brien, p. 304).

One of the primary purposes for which Christ gives us pastors/teachers is to train Christians to be active in serving one another by building each other up in faith.

v 13—***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.***

Tension between unity NOW and NOT YET: In 2:11-22 and 4:3, the unity (won by Christ through his blood and death on the cross) is spoken of as the unity we *now* enjoy. Eph 4:13 clearly describes it as the unity we do *not yet* enjoy, but strive to attain. There is this tension between the *now* and *not yet* of unity. “it has been proclaimed as a given fact, but is now presented as the goal of Christian endeavor, a goal which can only be reached by all collectively, and will finally occur at Christ’s coming, when he brings his people to complete maturity” (O’Brien, p. 306).

and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. — “The glorified Christ provides the standard at which his people are to aim: the corporate Christ cannot be content to fall short of the perfection of the personal Christ” (Bruce, pp. 350-351).

Ephesians 4:14-15 — Speaking the Truth in Love ... We Will ... Grow up into Him

Ephesians 4:14-16

14Then 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 men in their deceitful scheming. 15Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16From 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.

“... speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”

Eph 4:15

V 14— **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 men in their deceitful scheming.**

Verse 13 gave us an ultimate goal: complete maturity in Christ. Verse 14 gives us an immediate objective. The ministry was given to the church [Eph 4:11], not only so that it should grow, but also so that it could resist any corrupting influences. The dangers described here emphasize the importance of the ascended Christ giving ministers of the word to his people.

No longer be infants— *ignorance* and *instability* stand out in contrast to the knowledge of the mature adult (4:13). Infants *plural*, with its implication of individualism, stands out in contrast to the one mature man (Eph 4:13).

tossed back and forth by the waves— This shows those who are unstable, lacking direction, vacillating, and open to manipulation. Picture a small, rudderless boat, tossed back and forth by the waves.

and blown here and there by every wind of teaching — the immediate cause of their instability is the false instruction. The ultimate cause of this instability is the devil. Picture a small boat, tossed by the winds.

and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. — *Cunning* is used by Paul in 2 Cor 11:3 to refer to the devil deceiving Eve by his ‘cunning.’ Deceitful scheming (*methodeia*) is a well-thought-out plan to intentionally deceive; the “methodical art to lead astray” (O’Brien, footnote 154, p. 310)

V 15 — **Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.**

speaking the truth in love—Being truthful is the only means we can counteract the attacks of the devil. This truth must be spoken **in love** vs. pride or anger.

We will in all things grow into him — The Great Commission ends with “teaching them to obey/observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and surely I am with you always ...” Christ commands us to grow in all the truth that He, the Head, has given us. Rather than remaining infants our goal is to learn all there is about Christ so we grow up in Christ. This is done by our loving instruction of one another in teaching the truth in love. The growth called for is comprehensive (**in all things**). We grow in faith, knowledge, unity and in love.

Reflection: The Need to Equip & Serve Each Other

False teaching is not merely a mistake, it’s all part of the planned strategy of the devil. The devil’s ultimate method is to bring about a person’s spiritual and eternal death.

How can we equip one another so we are no longer infants, stranded on our own, but acting and growing as one?

Who do you know at Resurrection whom you haven’t seen in worship or Bible study? Satan knows our weak-

ness, and Satan has diabolical method for dividing believers from the body, and leaving us stranded. Counter Satan’s schemes with the true Word of Christ.

“Satan’s machinations have ‘method’; his aim is to mislead the immature who are not grounded on apostolic doctrine. If this connection is in view, then behind the false teaching are not simply evil men and women who pursue their unscrupulous goals with a scheming that



produces error. There is also a supernatural, evil power who seeks to deceive them with devilish cunning; his ‘intrigues’ are to be resisted energetically with the aid of God’s armor (6:11)” (O’Brien, p. 310)

Ephesians 4:16—Grow Up in Christ in Every Way: Faith, Knowledge, Unity, Love

V. 16 — 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.

From him = out of whom. Refers to Christ (v. 15). By a linking prepositional phrase, Paul adds that Christ is the source from whom the church gets the ability to grow into Christ in all things (v. 15).

The whole body = every part of the body, all the body. Every part, every organ and cell of the body takes part. The body is a group of believers building each other up. As a group of believers “speak the truth to each other in love” (v. 15), every member of that group takes part in the spiritual growth that Christ gives.

joined ... together — The image shifts from a body to a building. Joints and beams tie a building together.

held together. Image shifts again. Image of a rope that ties a bundle of sticks together.

Paul describes this group of believers as being bound together in a close and continuing unity. This unity is essential for a group of believers to help each other grow spiritually. Internal strife and disunity hinders spiritual growth (cf 4:1-6). How this unity is maintained Paul describes next (Kuske).

by every supporting ligament — Shows that the binding is done by every ligament. Each ligament supports, and this support is LAVISH. The LAVISH supporting conveys the idea of lavish support. Draws to mind someone who puts on a lavish banquet.

Just as every ligament in the body must do its job of supporting bones if the body is not to fall apart, so every Christian in a group of believers needs to contribute to the unity of the group otherwise it will begin to fall apart and the spiritual upbuilding of the whole group will be affected in a negative way. As each Christian does his part for unity, each also grows spiritually as Paul now states.

as each part does its work — “In line with the working in measure of each single part.” **the working**—Paul is stressing the activity, in contrast with sitting idly by or working half-heartedly. **In measure** — Stresses that each part of the body has a measure or limited sphere in which it works. Paul also seems to stress that this has been assigned, or measured out by the Head and is not something that each “part” volunteers to do. One measure (part) does not need to jealously long to be a different measure or part of the body. When that jealousy arises, then measure by measure the parts stop doing their assigned function. As a result one part has to do another’s work because of those sitting idly by.

Its work — Earlier in this verse Paul emphasized how important unity is in a group of Christians for spiritual growth to take place. Now he adds another important factor for this growth to take place. Each and every Christian has been given an assigned task by Christ. It is Christ’s gift to him (cf. v. 7). Each and every Christian needs to be working energetically with his assigned gift to build up the body. When one Christian sits idly by, someone else has to take up the slack and the spiritual growth of the body suffers to that degree. Imagine what happens when 1/10 or even ½ of a group of believers is inactive with his or her gift! (Kuske)

Each of us is called to use his or her gift to contribute to the spiritual growth of the congregation!

grows and builds itself up — The main effect of the united body is that it produces growth. This growth never stops but is constant and ongoing. This growth has been described in various verses (esp. v. 13). A united body produces growth in itself.

As a group of believer is united within itself (and so is all the more firmly connected to Christ its head, v. 15) it draws from Christ (v. 16a) the ability to produce spiritual growth in itself. It produces unity of faith in and knowledge of the Son of God (v 13). This process is going on constantly and cannot stop until each of us reaches the full measure of the knowledge of Christ himself (v. 13b). (Kuske)

As the united body, with each part doing its part produces growth, this leads to the body building itself up. Paul is emphasizing BUILDING UP versus TEARING DOWN. The body is doing this building up.

in love, — all of this takes place in love (agape). That love is the love which a Christian has for Christ who first loved us and gave himself for us. This love for Christ is the natural counterpart of “faith in the knowledge of Christ” (v. 13) It grows right along with him. (Cf. Phl 1:9 knowledge and love; 1 Thess 1:2 faith and love, Eph 3:17-19, faith, love and knowledge)

RESULT—The result of all the foregoing in a group of believers is that the whole group grows spiritually. This growth is a growth of love for Christ which accompanies the growth of faith and knowledge.

SOURCE—The source of our growth in faith, knowledge and love is Christ, but each of us also plays an important part in bring about this growth as we use the gift Christ gave us as a part of the body to use for the good of all our fellow-believers.

EACH ONE FOR ALL — Each one will be concerned about each other’s faith and knowledge. Each one will contribute its part in love all flows from Christ.

Ephesians 4:17-18 — You Must No Longer Live as the Gentiles Do

Ephesians 4:17-24

17So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

20You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. 21Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

STRUCTURE of Ephesians 4:17-32

4:17-19—Show the “walk of life” followed by the old sinful nature.

4:20-32 shows the “walk of life” for the new person, the Christian.

“You were taught ...
to put on the new
self, created to be
like God in true
righteousness and
holiness”

Eph 4:22,24

V. 17 — ***So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking***

So I tell you this — Paul picks up the exhortation he began in 4:1-3. Don’t fall back into your old way of living.

and insist on it in the Lord— Literally: and I witness to it (solemn oath added) in the Lord. In the Lord gives it the full weight of the Lord’s authority. This is a very strong statement. It’s an oath that is based on the authority and name of the Lord.

you must no longer live as the Gentiles do — no longer conduct your lives. No longer “walk around.” Paul picks up the waking them again. He last mentioned it in 4:1. Paul picks up the ‘walking’ motif now to help contrast the Christian life versus that life of the unbeliever, the life of the “outsider.”

You must no longer live as the Gentiles do

- When you were dead, you used to live this way. You followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air (Eph 2:1,2)
- But now you are raised with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly realms (Eph 2:6)
- You have been saved by grace through faith [grace and faith aren’t your work; it’s a gift from God.]
- You are now part of the “new man” (Eph 2:15)
- Saved by grace through faith you are called to walk in the good works that God has prepared in advance for you (Eph 2:10)

in the futility of their thinking — futility = vanity; something that is completely empty.

futility—a rare word in the NT. In the LXX (Greek translation of OT) the word occurs 54 times; 39 times in Ecclesiastes, 14 times in Psalms, once in Proverbs. 43 times it translates (hebel), a Hebrew word meaning vanity, purposelessness, absurdity, and worthlessness. Used three times in NT here and 2 Pete 2:18, and Rom 8:20. (Hoehner, p. 583)

They have no idea of what is God-pleasing: true peace, satisfaction, life and love. The futility shows itself as idolatry and the empty attempts to find satisfaction.

“Because it lacks a true relationship with God, Gentile thinking suffers from the consequences of having lost touch with reality and is left fumbling with inane trivialities and worthless side issues.” (O’Brien, p. 320)

V. 18 — ***They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts***

Darkened in their understanding — The man of the world is one whose ability to think is snuffed out and he has an empty mind. In what sense this is true will follow. Consider Ben Stein’s 2008 Move, *Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed*.

“They are blind to the truth, and their alienation from God is *because of the ignorance that is in them*. This darkness in their thinking was not some temporary condition; as the emphatic periphrastic expression indicates, the light of their understanding has gone out so that they were now in a state of being incapable of grasping the truth of God and his gospel” (O’Brien, p. 320f)

Due to the Spirit, Christians “are able to know God better and to understand the truth of his purposes (Eph. 1:17-18)” (O’Brien, p. 321)

Ephesians 4:18-24 — You Did Not Learn Christ This Way

and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them—Explains why they were lost and darkened. They were separated from the life of God.

Life of God — “there are only a few references [in Paul] to life from God (Rom 5:17, 18; 8:6, 10; 2 Tim 1:10)... “the supernatural life belonging to God and Christ, which the believers will receive in the future, but which they also enjoy here and now.” ... By inference, then, the believer does have the life of God and must walk according to a different lifestyle.” (Hoehner, pp. 586,587)

Because of the ignorance that is in them — From the OT “To know God means to be in a close personal relationship with him. ... obedient and grateful response of the whole person, not simply intellectual assent. Likewise, ‘ignorance’ is a failure to be grateful and obedient. ... Not to know the Lord is to ignore him, to say ‘no’ to his demands.” (O’Brien, p. 321). This is the cause of their darkness and alienation from God.

In them—No excuses; they are to blame. In Christ is enlightenment, in them is ignorance.

on account of the hardening of their hearts — hardness of heart is the obstinate rejection of God’s truth. “an obstinate rejection of the truth of God is the beginning of the terrible downward path of evil” (O’Brien, p. 322)

V 19 — **Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.**

Having lost all sensitivity —The result of v. 18; lost all sensitivity. “A vivid classical term which literally could refer to skin that had become callous and no longer felt pain. Here it means to ‘lose the capacity to feel shame or embarrassment.” (O’Brien, p. 322). This results in a state of affairs where there is all loss of self-control.

they have given themselves over to sensuality — They do this fully conscious of what they are doing.

So as to indulge in every kind of impurity—Not only thinking evil, but doing what is evil, opposite of pure.

With continued lust for more—insatiable craving, greed. No article emphasizes the insatiable quality of the “working.” Always want more, never satisfied with what they have. Downward spiral of the world.

V.20—**You, however, did not come to know Christ that way.**

You did not learn Christ that way — How do you learn a person? No parallel [to date] for this in Greek literature. “Learning Christ means welcoming him as a living person and being shaped by his teaching. This involves submitting to his rule of righteousness and responding to his summons to standards and values completely different from what they have known” (O’Brien, p.

324).

V 21 — **Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.**

Two ways in which they “learned Christ” (v. 20). 1) You heard of him: Paul taught them what Christ did and what Christ taught, and 2) you were taught in him— Everything you were taught was based on Christ. The world was not a part of it, it was only in Christ that you were taught.

In accordance with the truth that is in Jesus — just as it is truth in Jesus. This explains why learning Christ is not the same as the pagans (17b-19). The truth is in Jesus. Paul contrasts the world who knows nothing of God’s will to those who knew the truth that pleases God. The Ephesians were taught something quite different from living as heathen. They learned the way that pleased God by becoming “Christlike.”

V 22 — **You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires,**

Verse 23 shows the first lesson learned by the Ephesians. The first lesson learned is the daily living of their baptism.

“The consequences for those who have been created in God’s likeness are now spelled out as Paul presents a series of specific exhortations aimed at fostering behaviour appropriate to the ‘new person’.” (P.T. O’Brien, p. 336)

Content of the lesson in verse 23: to put off your old self

With regard to your former way of life — whatever was in line with the former manner of life. The Old Man was in line with the former way of life. OLD as in worn out, not fit for use.

Being corrupted — which was constantly being corrupted. This shows a continuing characteristic of the “old man.” The “old man” will never improve. You can’t reform him. He must die by daily contrition and repentance.

Deceitful desires—The desires run deep in the old man, and they follow deceit, the deceit pretends to offer “freedom, happiness, sophistication, etc.” This is the devil’s deceit. What are some of those deceitful desires?

VV 23,24—**to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness**

to be made new — Second thing Christ taught us. Explains how we put off (v. 21) and how we put on (v. 24). The putting off and putting on is a constantly new attitude (hate sin and love what is right in God’s sight); a whole new attitude (2 Cor 5:14, 17). The Christian listens to God’s will. The Gentile does not listen.

To be made new. “God is the one who effects the ongoing work of renewing his people. At the same time, the implied exhortation (see above) underscores the notion of a continual challenge for the believer. ...to be renewed in their inner person” (O’Brien, p. 329)

Ephesians 4:25-28 — Old Life and New Life of Christians

Ephesians 4:25-32

25Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27and do not give the devil a foothold. 28He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.

29Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Eph 5:1-2

1Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

+++

Something to Think About

Television is an invention that permits you to be entertained in your living room by people you wouldn't have in your house. ~ David Frost

V. 25 — ***Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.***

Therefore – Paul is moving from the more general, lofty heights of learning Christ, to more specific, nitty gritty exhortation.

Put off Falsehood – destroys the unity of the body

Speak truthfully – builds/maintains the unity of the body

For we are all members of one body — Evils to be avoided all destroy human harmony (p. 334, O' Brien). "The vices mentioned are those which disrupt the unity of God's people, a crucial issue within the context of 4:1-16, while the virtues enhance the life of the community." (O' Brien, p. 336)

V. 26-27— ***"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27and do not give the devil a foothold.***

Focus on the heart

in your anger do not sin – when you are angry because of sin, and when you hate sin, and have a strong reaction to it, don't sin. Anger can exist, but don't combine it with sin.

while you are still angry -- staying stirred up by something that provokes extreme emotions; letting anger linger leads to sin.

James 1:19-20 "everyone should be . . . slow to become angry, for human anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."

"Plutarch mentions that if ever the Pythagoreans were lead by anger into recrimination, they were never to let the sun go down before they joined hands, embraced one another, and were reconciled. Similar texts appear in the Qumran literature. Sunset was regarded as a time limit for a range of activities, for example, the paying of a poor man his wages lest by failing to do so one would be guilty of sinning (Deut 24:15). In the apostle's admonition this expression with its reference to sunset is used as a warning against brooding in anger or nursing it. It is to be dealt with promptly, with reconciliation being effected as quickly as possible" (O'Brien, p. 340)

and do not give the devil a foothold. — Don't give the devil a chance to exert his influence.

"Believers have been raised with Christ and seated with him in the heavenlies (2:6). Nevertheless, they are engaged in spiritual warfare against the principalities and powers in this heavenly realm. They are to put on the full armour of God so as to stand against the devil's schemes (6:10-20, esp. v. 11). Ephesians 4:26-27 provides an example of how this spiritual warfare is fought. The struggle takes place in the moral sphere, that is, within the hearts and lives of believers.

Through uncontrolled anger Satan is able to gain a foothold in the Christian's life" (O'Brien, p. 341)

V 28— ***He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.***

It's possible that stealing was a "way of life" at a time when seasonal labors were out of work, and had no way to support themselves, other than stealing. This is the suggestion of E. Best "Thieves," as cited by O'Brien. "When they were out of work there was no welfare system to assist them, and many would be forced to steal in order to maintain themselves and their families." (O'Brien, p. 342.).

Ephesians 4:29-32; 5:1-2 — Old Life and New Life of Christians

V 29—***Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.***

That it may benefit those who listen – to give grace to those who hear. Speech can be used to share the good news of Jesus Christ, as a vehicle of grace.

“the Christian’s words should be well chosen so that they may edify others and have a beneficial effect on them. . . . The conversation of Christians should be wholesome and beneficial (v. 28) so that it edifies others, rather than harming or destroying them. We are to use our special gift of speech in this constructive way whenever the need arises (cf. v. 16). The motivating purpose of this positive exhortation is that ‘it might give grace to those who hear’. Having put on the ‘new man’, we will want to develop new standards of conversation so that our words will be a blessing, perhaps even the means by which God’s grace comes to those who hear” (O’ Brien, p. 345).

V 30—***And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.***

Isaiah 63:8-10 “He said, “Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me”; and so he became their Savior. In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit.”

Holy Spirit of God — The emphasis of the Spirit’s identity emphasizes the seriousness of causing Him distress. The Spirit is holy, and very sensitive to anything that is unholy. “Anything incompatible with the unity or purity of the church is inconsistent with the Spirit’s own nature and therefore grieves him.” (O’Brien, p. 348). “The Spirit . . . is especially grieved when unwholesome speech is uttered by members one against one another” (O’Brien, p. 345).

day of redemption – Unique to Ephesians. “refers to the final day of salvation and judgment, that is, the goal of history. Elsewhere in Paul it is called ‘the day of the Lord’ (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2; 1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14), or ‘the day of Christ’ (Phill 1:6, 10; 2:16). Believers have already experienced a present redemption which includes the forgiveness of sins (1:7); but on element of that redemption is yet to be realized” (O’Brien, p. 349).

V 31—***Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.*** Paul gives a climactic progression from attitudes that start inside and work out with ever-increasing intensity.

bitterness—sharp, intense resentment or hate. Aristotle described it as “the attitude that creates a lasting wrath, hard to reconcile, and sustaining anger for a long time” (Ethica Nicomachea 4.5.1126A; quoted by Barth, 521) [footnote 330, p. 350 O’Brien]

rage and anger—two synonymous terms, if any distinction “rage” denotes an indignant outburst of anger while “anger” refers to a steady festering or seething anger (O’Brien, p. 350).

brawling — unrestrained anger that turns into shouting back and forth.

slander—blasphemy; profane or abusive speech; defamation, vilifying, either by lies, misrepresentation or gossip.

V32—***Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.***

In contrast to the preceding 5 vices, Paul lists 3 graces.

Kind -- “As a response to his merciful kindness those who have put on the new man are to be kind to others in the Christian community. This does not come naturally and cannot be produced from one’s innate resources; it is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).” (O’Brien, p. 351)

compassionate – Deep seated emotion and will, in response to the needs of others that leads to helpful action. Compassion in the New Testament most often refers to the Father or Christ showing compassion for sinners (Matt 9:36; 14:14; 18:27; Luke 1:78; 7:13; 10:33; 15:20). “The Ephesians are to be tenderhearted, which will mean being sympathetic to the needs of their brothers and sisters in Christ” (O’Brien, p. 351).

Eph 5:1-2 1Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Therefore—Paul is drawing on the 4:32b “***As God in Christ has forgiven you.***” Based on that fact, be imitators of God.

Be imitators of God— Be what your new man already is as created in line with God. Eph. 4:24. Obey the word and will of the Lord. See Eph 4:24 “***and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.***” Imitation in the NT is predominantly use in the “sense of discipleship, i.e., of obedience to the word and will of the LORD either directly or by way of the apostles.” (95-96, Little Kittel)

As dearly loved (agape) ***children***—The motivation: you are beloved children. You are not loved for what you are but loved because God chose to love us. ***Children***— emphasis on one’s own, endearment, a person with whom there is a special relationship of endearment and association.

Reflections on Themes in Ephesians 4

Speaking the Truth in Love

“People today who are civil, Marty observed, often don’t have very strong convictions. And people who have strong convictions often are not very civil. What we need, he said, is convicted civility.”

(“An Open-Handed Gospel,” *Christianity Today*, p. 46 April 2008)

“My burden is to say artfully and articulately what I have to say and leave the results, if any, to God” (Philip Yancey, quoted in “The Healing Pen,” *Christianity Today*, p. 34, April 2008)

We Are All Members of One Body

Disillusionment with one’s church, then, is not a reason to leave but a reason to stay and see what God will create in one’s life and in the pokey local church. What I perceive to be my needs—“I need a church with a more biblical preacher who uses specific examples from real life”—may not correspond to my true spiritual needs. Often, in fact, I am not attuned to my true spiritual needs.

Thinking that I know my true spiritual needs is arrogant, narcissistic, and so American. Staying put as a life practice allows God’s grace to work on the unsanded surfaces of my inner life. Seventeenth-century French Catholic mystic Francois Fenelon wrote, “Slowly you will learn that all the troubles in your life—your job, your health, your inward failings—are really cures to the poison of your old nature.” Dave Goetz, “Suburban Spirituality,” *Christianity Today* (July 2003), p. 33

Reflection Must Avoid Narcissism

“It is an odd phenomenon to observe followers of Jesus, suddenly obsessed with their wonderfully saved souls, setting about busily cultivating their own spiritualities. Self-spirituality has become the hallmark of our age. The spirituality of Me. A spirituality of self-centering, self-sufficiency, and self-development. All over the



world at the present time we have people who have found themselves redefined by the revelation of God in Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection, going off and cultivating the divine within and abandoning spouses, children, friends, and congregations.” (Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*, p. 243)

“But holy living, resurrection living, is not a self-project. We are a people of God and cannot live holy lives, resurrection lives, as individuals. We are not a self-defined community; we are a God-defined community. The love that God pours out for and in us creates a community in which that love is reproduced in our love for one another.” (Ibid, p. 244)

Put off Falsehood and Speak Truthfully

Leaders, especially those who are elected through a democratic process, usually reflect the spiritual and moral character of a nation. Those who obtain power through deception often come from cultures built on lies. The same holds true for materialistic or violent leaders.

Other times, God puts people in power to carry out his judgment. God referred to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar as “my deputy” (Jeremiah 25:9; 27:6) and “my servant” (43:10), whom he used to punish the people of Judah for their disobedience. Habakkuk acknowledged the same reality.

When the Ottoman Empire threatened Europe, Martin Luther declared, “The Turk is the rod of God’s anger against the apostate church, so opposition to it must begin with repentance, prayer, and preaching God’s Word.” If a political leader’s behavior or stance on issues contradicts what we believe the Bible teaches, we need to step back humbly and ask, “Is God showing us something about our spiritual state?”—and then repent of any sin he reveals. [Paul Borthwick, “Praying for the Powers that Be,” *Discipleship Journal* (November/December 2005)]

Reflecting on God’s Plan — Ephesians 4

1. What gift from God do we strive to preserve?
2. Will everyone be an evangelist (Eph 4:11)? What gifts have you been given?
3. How can and do you serve the other members of the body to build up the body?
4. How important is it for all to contribute to the growing unity of a congregation and the larger body of Christ?
5. Put off the old man—what are we called to put off?
6. Put On—what virtues are we called to put on?