

EPHESIANS 4:1-16

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Ephesians chapter 4 as we continue our study in this letter that Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus.

As we have seen so far in our study of this letter, Paul has spent 3 chapters showing us how much God loves us, all the blessings He has for us.

And the focus of these first three chapters is doctrine, not just information but Paul gave to us correct doctrine! There is a lot of information that is out there but many times that information is not correct. And if it is not correct, then it is not helpful, and it can be dangerous.

So Paul starts out with doctrine and now he is going to show us how we should walk because of all that God has given to us.

In other words, since you know the truths of God found in the Word of God, walk accordingly. It truly is just the application of correct doctrine!

If you remember from our study in Romans, Paul also structured his letter this way. Paul gave to us 11 chapters of doctrine and then he tells us how-to live-in accordance to that doctrine.

In Romans 12:1-2, as we begin that walk, Paul tells us, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”**

Folks, the Christian life is not just possessing all of God’s blessings but living lives that are pleasing to God, walking in Him, in His ways.

Yes, Paul showed us our identity in Christ in Ephesians chapters 1-3 and now he shows our response, how we are to live in Ephesians chapters 4-6.

And please understand that the order is significant! You see, doctrine must always precede duty because Christian living depends on Christian learning.

I have broken these last three chapters of Ephesians like this:

WALK IN UNITY – EPHESIANS 4:1-16

WALK IN PURITY – EPHESIANS 4:17-5:18

WALK IN HARMONY – EPHESIANS 5:19-6:9

WALK IN VICTORY – EPHESIANS 6:10-24

Now, as we closed our study last time, we said that Ephesians chapters 1-3 is as if Paul was calling us to start our engines because the race is about to start.

Now that our engines are started, we move into chapters 4-6 as we begin moving in our Christian walk since we know what we possess in Christ.

Remember at the Indy 500 how they prepare the racers by saying, ***“Gentlemen, start your engines!”***

The green flag is coming down and the race is starting!

With that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in verse 1 of Ephesians chapter 4 and see how the Lord wants us to walk in our Christian life!

EPHESIANS 4**VERSE 1**

Once again Paul mentions that he is a “**prisoner of the Lord**” and he is reminding us that the Christian life can be costly.

And Paul was an example of what the Christian life was all about.

He wrote in II Corinthians 12:7-10, “**And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**”

Whatever this thorn in the flesh was, it was devastating to Paul, so much so that he was going to have to rely on the grace of God to see him through!

And it is more than that. Remember what Paul wrote in II Corinthians 11:23-28, **“Are they ministers of Christ? - I speak as a fool - I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness - besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.”**

But today, there are many Christians that have gotten the idea that if they do the right thing then God will bless them by protecting them from all hardships which many interpret as the devil's attacks.

And we have seen that Christianity in America has been watered down, it is self-seeking, it is all about self.

We see that as people move from one church to another seeking to be satisfied and never giving of themselves.

We see that in the Seeker-friendly churches where the idea is to make people feel comfortable, to feel good about themselves when that is not always what God wants to do, God's Word can be very convicting at times.

Thus, when difficulty comes, when hardships arise, some kind of imprisonment you might say, they just don't get it. And then they drop out, move on, and they miss what God is doing.

Paul knew, he understood and thus, he wanted his fellow believers to also understand that there is a cost as we serve the Lord!

I think when you understand that, when you have that perspective of the Christian life, nothing is going to move you from the course that God has for your life!

And, as you can see here, Paul is calling for us to walk worthy or “*after a godly sort*” because that is what we are called to do!

Now we don’t walk worthy of this high calling by which we have been called so that God will love us more, so that we will earn favor with God because God can’t love us anymore than He already does nor can He love us any less – we are His children!

Then why do we walk this way?

Because He does love us, we do it, in a sense, out of gratitude and not out of merit!

John tells us in I John 4:19, “**We love Him because He first loved us.**” You see, God is the initiator and we are the responder, we respond to His love and we thus, walk accordingly!

One writer put it like this, “Our Christian walk is not something we do to try to earn God’s favor or merit His love. Rather, it is a response to how He loves us, what He’s done for us, and how good He’s already been to us. We love Him, the apostle John said, because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). He is the Initiator, we the responders. We don’t love Him so He’ll love us. We love Him because He first loved us.” Exactly!

As I have said, Ephesians 4:1-16 deal with unity among believers and that unity is based in Christ.

It is like David said in Psalm 133, **“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing - Life forevermore.”**

Also, in Proverbs 17:17 Solomon tells us, **“A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.”**

And in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 Solomon again tells us, **“Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”**

Thus, unity is important as we shall see, it is something that God desires of us! But that unity must be based in Christ and yet, we see a call to unity at any cost today, and the church is compromising what they believe for the sake of unity and that is wrong!

VERSES 2-3

We need to remember, as I have said, that our unity is not based upon some sort of church membership but in Christ and we must be diligent, we must strive to keep this unity. In other words, it takes work.

Spurgeon wrote, “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.”

Here in Ephesians 4:2-3 Paul gives six essentials for faithful Christian living. He gives us six attitudes or qualities on which walking worthily in the Lord’s call are based.

Paul starts out with “**lowliness**” or TAPEINOPHROSUNE, (tap-i-nof-ros-oo’-nay), which speaks of humility, and, believe it or not, the Romans and the Greeks did not have a word for humility, they always thought of themselves as more important.

Thus, some feel that Paul coined this Greek word, and how important it is to us because even today we are looking out for number 1, ***SELF!***

And yet, as Christians we are to put others first, that is how we are to walk.

Jim Boice gives to us this beautiful picture of what this humility or lowliness is all about in our lives, what others are to see. He wrote,

In his commentary on Ephesians, Watchman Nee of China tells of a brother in south China who had his rice field on a hill. During the growing season he used a hand-worked water wheel to lift water from the irrigation stream that ran by the base of the hill to his field.

His neighbor had two fields below his, and one night he made a hole in the dividing wall and drained out all the Christian’s water to fill up his own two fields. The brother was distressed. But he laboriously pumped water up into his own field, only to have the act of stealing repeated. This happened three or four times.

At last he consulted his Christian brethren. “What shall I do?” he asked. “I have tried to be patient and not retaliate. Isn’t it right for me to confront him?”

The Christians prayed, and then one of them replied. “If we only try to do the right thing, surely we are very poor Christians,” he said. “We have to do something more than what is right.”

The Christian farmer was impressed with this advice. So the next day he went out and first pumped water for the two fields below his and then, after that, worked throughout the afternoon to fill his own field. From that day on the water stayed in his field, and in time the neighbor, after making inquiries as to what caused him to behave in such a fashion, became a Christian.

This is humility. It is refusing to insist on our rights and actually putting our neighbor’s interests before our own.

- Jim Boice

Paul then speaks of “**gentleness**” or “**meekness**” or PRAUTES, (prah-oo’-tace) in the Greek and folks, meekness is not a sign of weakness.

It is a word that speaks of power that is under control like a horse that has been broken.

That horse has not lost any of its power, but that power is now under control.

For us as Christians, we have been broken by God and now that wild animal instinct is under the control of our master – the Lord!

One writer put it like this, “Gentleness is the attitude that submits to God’s dealings without rebellion, and to man’s unkindness without retaliation. It is best seen in the life of Him who said, ‘I am gentle and lowly in heart.’”

Paul then moves to “**longsuffering**” or MAKROTHUMIA, (mak-roth-oo-mee’-ah) in the Greek and the idea here is being long-tempered, patient, not flying off the handle!

In other words, it doesn't matter what comes your way, what people may throw at you, you can overlook their actions, you can just forgive them, as God would have you do.

Again, that is how we are to walk!

Let me give you this example.

A rather pious individual once came to a preacher and asked him to pray for him that he might have patience. "I do so lack patience," he said, trying to be humble as he said it. "I wish you would pray for me."

"I'll pray for you right now," the preacher replied. So he began to pray: "Lord, please send great tribulation into this brother's life."

The man who had asked for prayer put a hand out and touched the preacher on the arm, trying to stop his prayer.

"You must not have heard me rightly," he said. "I didn't ask you to pray for tribulation. I asked you to pray that I might have patience."

"Oh, I heard what you said," the preacher answered.

"But haven't you read Romans 5:3, 'And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience'? It means we acquire patience through the things that we suffer. I prayed that God would send tribulations so that you would have patience."

- Source Unknown

And as we move, Paul speaks of "**bearing**" or ANECHOMAI, (an-ekh'-om-ahee) in the Greek and it speaks of making allowances for the faults and failures of others, maybe different personalities and-so-on.

Thus, it truly speaks of Agape love, because Agape love gives continually and unconditionally. God wants us to walk accordingly!

The fifth point that Paul makes is “unity.”

You see, the ultimate outcome of humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearance is *unity*.

Spiritual unity is not, and cannot be, created by the church.

You see, it has already been created by the Holy Spirit when we were saved and became one with each other in Christ - “endeavoring to keep (not ‘attain’) the unity of the Spirit . . .”

The final point is “peace.”

And here is the key for this peace. If a believer cannot get along with God, he cannot get along with other believers. This peace is found in Christ and it is lived out in Christ!

To sum these up. We are to spare no effort in keeping the unity of Christ. But this can only be done as we die to self and exhort others. It can only be done by the power of God working in us as we surrender to Him!

Remember, in Ephesians 4:3 “endeavoring” means to “make every effort” or “to bend over backwards.” May we do that!

VERSES 4-6

Paul calls for us to walk in unity and now he explains what the foundation of that unity is all about.

And in these three verses Paul gives to us seven basic spiritual realities that will unite all true Christians?

Why did Paul only mention seven?

Maybe because seven is the number of completeness and Paul, I believe, wants us to be spiritually complete and bound in a unity with cords that cannot be broken!

We have seen and we have experienced what happens when man tries to unite himself with his fellow man outside of Christ. It is a disaster because selfishness, greed, pride, lusts show themselves and what you thought was unity ends in disaster.

And even we as Christians can allow things to cause disunity between each other and that is wrong, that is not of God.

Ray Stedman sums it up like this. He wrote,

Here is the fundamental error of modern ecumenical movements. By and large, they strive to generate a man-made institutional unity, ignoring the spiritual unity that already exists in the Holy Spirit . . . The church is not a conglomeration of individuals who happen to agree upon certain things. It is bound together as a spiritual organism in a bodily unity. It cannot therefore derive power from the sum of its numbers. It derives its power solely from the Spirit of God who binds these individuals into a unified, spiritual whole.

- Ray Stedman

So I believe as we look at these seven areas they will help us in understanding and applying these foundational truths to our lives.

These truths are:

ONE BODY

ONE SPIRIT

ONE HOPE

ONE LORD

ONE FAITH

ONE BAPTISM

ONE GOD

You see, we have unity because we share these things; we have these things in common with each other.

So Paul starts out by saying we are “**one body**” and how important that is for us to understand.

Too often Christians want to be the Lone Ranger or to do their own thing instead of working together as part of the body of Christ.

For example, look at the human body; each part is working together for the betterment of the entire body. If they don’t work together that is abnormal.

That is how the body of Christ is to function, in unity, for the betterment of the body of Christ. And yes, we are many members, but one body!

We are not only in unity together because we are of the same body, the body of Christ, but we all have the same *Spirit* that indwells us – the Spirit of God!

We also have *one hope* and that hope is in Christ.

The Psalmist said in Psalm 39:7, “**And now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.**”

You see, all of God’s promises we can be assured will come to pass, our hope is in Him and in Him we will never be disappointed for what He has promised He is able to bring to pass.

In Titus we see another hope in Christ we have, “**For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.**” Titus 2:11-13. Our hope is in the Lord and His return for us one day, His bride!

We are united in *one Lord*, Jesus Christ.

Peter tells us in Acts 4:11-12, **“This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

Paul, in Romans 10:12 tells us, **“For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.”** Folks, if Jesus Christ is not Lord of all then He is not Lord at all in your life!

We are united together in *one faith* that is revealed to us by the Word of God. This is not an area that can be compromised upon or ignored for the sake of unity. It is this faith that unites us together.

Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 3:16-17, **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”**

We are complete in the Lord as we allow the Word of God, empowered by the Spirit of God to help us grow in the faith!

Ray Stedman put it like this,

The one faith is linked to the one Lord, because our faith is centered in the revealed truth about Jesus Christ. There may be many questions on minor details of the life and message of Christ, but there is no disagreement as to the fundamental elements of our faith - that Jesus was born, lived, died, and rose again to save us from our sins. God has not given us different faiths for different cultures - one faith for the Jews, another for the Gentiles. No, there is one faith, one total panorama of truth that God has delivered to us through the prophets and apostles, forming a seamless, self-explanatory truth.

No one can truthfully say, as we sometimes hear, “Well, I have my truth and you have yours. I have my Christ and you have yours. I have my faith and you have yours.” There is only one truth, only one historic Jesus, and only one faith.

- Ray Stedman

We are also united together in *one baptism* the moment we are saved by the Holy Spirit who places us into the body of Christ.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place at the time we are saved and we see that in Acts 19:1-7, where we are told, “**And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, ‘Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?’ So they said to him, ‘We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.’ And he said to them, ‘Into what then were you baptized?’ So they said, ‘Into John's baptism.’ Then Paul said, ‘John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.’ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all.**”

Not only did the Spirit baptize them into the faith but also the Holy Spirit came upon them empowering them for service at the same time, as Jesus does this!

And lastly, we are united together in *one God*, the Father of all and Paul gives us a four-dimensional look at the Father.

He tells us that *He is the Father of all* in the sense that He created all things.

He is also above all things as Isaiah 66:1 tells us, **“Thus says the LORD: ‘Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?’”** God is so vast that the heavens can’t contain Him.

He is also through all things and the idea is that He is the one who guides us, sustains us, loves us, and without Him in our lives there can be no unity!

And lastly, *He is in all*, that is all who believe in Him.

These seven foundations are what bring us into that unity that God desires us to walk in!

VERSES 7-10

Here in Ephesians 4:7 Paul opens up with this word, **“But.”** And it can be translated, ***“in spite of”*** or ***“on the other hand.”***

What is the point?

I think the point he is making here, as he has just finished up speaking about our unity in Christ, is that yes, we are united in Christ but there is diversity of believers with a diversity of gifts!

And it speaks of Christ giving us these grace gifts, ***“according to the gift that pleases Jesus or that Jesus is pleased to give.”***

You see, and this is important, before you think you are so special because God has given you a gift, understand that it is a grace gift. It is not something you deserve or obtained by some kind of merit you did, but God has freely given it to you, He has freely gifted you.

And the point is this. He gets the glory!

Some of you know my singing ability, and I do get lots of requests – ***NOT TO SING!***

I wish I could sing and clap at the same time because I just love to worship the Lord in song. But God did not gift me in that area but has gifted me in other areas, not because I am so special or that I deserve it, but it is out of **GRACE!**

And He has gifted you as well. That is an important point for us to remember.

As we read these verses some have taken them out of context, and they believe that Jesus went to Hades and was tormented by the Devil and his demons down in Hades! Not at all!

Let me explain these verses like this.

First of all, we see that all of creation was in captivity to sin and Satan but Jesus Christ, in His death and resurrection, took us who were captive and set us free.

I want you also to notice that Paul quotes out of the Old Testament, Psalm 68:18 without a concordance or Bible help, which tells me Paul knew the Scriptures; he had a working knowledge of them. What a great example for us to follow after.

Now, here is the part that many are way off on. What is Paul speaking of when he says that Christ **“first descended into the lower parts of the earth”**?

One writer summed it up for us like this. He wrote,

Between Jesus’ death on Calvary and His resurrection in the garden tomb, He was “put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit” He was physically dead but spiritually alive. During the three days He was in that state He also descended “and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison.”

This does not refer to preaching the gospel [from euangelizoe) but to making a triumphant announcement – in this case Christ’s announcement of His victory over the demons even while they tried to hold Him in death.

- John MacArthur

I don't think He needs to tell the demons that He was victorious, but more importantly to go and show those that died in the faith and were waiting in Abraham's bosom before His death and resurrection.

You see, they were looking to the coming Messiah and as Jesus spent three days and three nights in the belly of the earth I believe He was showing them that He is the one they have been waiting for, the one they were looking to!

Once He rose on the third day He took all those who died in the faith from Abraham's bosom and they ascended with Him, and the only part that is occupied now in Sheol or Hades is the part where those who died outside of the faith and are waiting for the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the Millennial reign of Christ.

And then, after He descended that He then ascended and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

And as Jesus fulfilled His mission and paid the price for this reconciliation between God and man, He was exalted above the heavens as He returned to His glory, seated at the right hand of the Father.

Paul expounded on this in Ephesians 1:20-21 when he said, **“which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.”**

I hope that clears these verses up, because there are many well known teachers, many in the health, wealth and prosperity teaching, that believe that Jesus was tormented in Hell, and it is not Scriptural.

VERSES 11-12

Here is something that many make a mistake on and that is everyone is gifted the same. That is not true.

Yes, Paul was talking about us all being part of one body, which is true, and yet within that one body are many different parts all working together for the betterment of the body. Think of the human body and there are many parts to it, and they all work together for the betterment of the body, not in competition!

Paul, in I Corinthians 12:12-20 tells us, **“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body.”**

Think of the Godhead. There is God the Father, then there is God the Son who has freely subjected Himself to do the will of the Father and then there is the Holy Spirit who is testifying of Jesus to a lost a dying world as He works through the lives of believers.

One God manifested in three distinct persons, all God but different roles within the Godhead!

Now what we see here are the offices of spiritual leadership but understand that there are many Spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives for the edification of the body of Christ, but this is specifically focusing on leadership.

Now as some read through this, they see the *“five-fold ministry”* and others see a *“four-fold ministry”*, who is right?

When we get to the supposed discrepancy regarding pastors and teachers, we will deal with this. So let’s look at these leadership roles within the church

First of all, there are *APOSTLES*.

The word **“apostle”** means “one who is sent forth with a commission or a divinely appointed representative.”

Thus, in the broadest sense of the word, we are all apostles; we are all sent forth by God with the good news of Jesus Christ.

In the strictest sense of the word, it speaks of the 12 apostles, including Matthias and their function was to lay down the foundation of the church.

Now there are some today who believe this role of apostles are still around today and they will tell you that they are apostles. I don’t believe it is!

Paul, in Ephesians 2:20 tells us this, **“having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.”**

Think about that for a minute. Once the foundation was laid you don’t continue to lay other foundations and thus, the office of the primary apostles has passed off the scene.

Next, there are *PROPHETS*.

The prophets, unlike the apostles who were sent out, remained in the local churches to minister and to teach doctrine.

And the prophets sometimes spoke revelation from God (Acts 11:21–28) and sometimes simply expounded revelation already given (as implied in Acts 13:1, where they are connected with teachers).

Thus, it seems like the office of the prophet was for the working within a local congregation while the apostles tended to move from one area to another.

Once again there are those groups who believe that prophets are still around today, but I don't think so.

You see, as we read in Ephesians 2:20, the prophets were laying the foundation for the church to be built upon and thus, the office of the primary prophets has passed off the scene.

Now, in a sense, we are all prophets because a prophet not only foretold the things of God, but he also spoke forth the things of God, the words of God, forth telling.

So in a broad sense, the office exists like does the office of apostle, but not in the strict sense in which Paul is writing about!

From there we move to the ***EVANGELISTS***.

These are those who are specifically gifted to preach the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. And, of course, evangelists are still around today in the church.

And then there is the ***PASTOR/TEACHER***.

Now some see this as an office of pastor and then there is an office of the teacher, but folks, a pastor is a teacher.

If the pastor is not a teacher of the Word of God, then he should not be a pastor!

Yes, the pastor wears many hats as he shepherds the flock that God has entrusted to him by not only feeding the sheep the Word of God, caring for them, watching over them, warning them of danger, exhorting them, protecting them and-so-on.

Paul, in Acts 20:27-30 tells the Ephesian elders what their responsibility was, **“For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”** Acts 20:27-32.

Tragically today, we have pastors who want to entertain the people that God has entrusted to them and they are not helping them but hurting them by not giving them the whole counsel of God!

And lastly, there is the ***TEACHER***.

Folks, there are some who are teachers of the Word of God but in no way are they pastors.

And so, I do see five ministries here.

You see, teachers don't necessarily like all that goes on with being a pastor, they would rather just teach the Word of God and be done, and that is fine, there is a need for teachers in the body of Christ.

I have seen some men who have gotten in the ministry as a pastor/teacher and they are great teachers, but they are not pastors and it is a mess, it just doesn't work!

Now, let me say this, because it is important. These leadership positions are not about them, but about the people that God has entrusted to them!

Thus, as you read through these offices in the church did you see what they are supposed to accomplish?

They are to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

It is not the pastor that does the work of the ministry but the saints that are being taught by those that are in these offices.

It doesn't mean the pastor doesn't do these things, but that is not his primary purpose.

The Greek word that Paul uses for “equipping” is KATARISMOS, (kat-ar-tis-mos).

It is a word that is often used as a medical term for the setting of a bone. It also illustrates to us the idea of putting something back to its original condition, that it is made complete, perfect.

These offices are there to help return men and women back to God and to make them complete in their walk.

Today, tragically it is not about building people up in the faith but to grow a church in numbers and so the church in America may be 3,000 miles wide but only an inch deep!

And we therefore have Christians who are unstable in their walk because they don't know what to believe; they are not built up in the faith!

Let me say this, the reason the church of Jesus Christ exists today is:

TO EXALT GOD – That is why we gather together to worship Him, sing praises unto Him, to pray corporately.

TO EDIFY HIS PEOPLE – That is why we study God’s Word, to give you the whole counsel of God so that you may grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

TO EVANGELIZE THE UNSAVED – That is why we go to the highways and byways and compel people to come in, we preach salvation, the good news of Jesus Christ to the lost so that they may enter into eternal life with Him!

How long are we supposed to do this?

What happens if we don’t?

Paul is going to respond to those questions next, and we will first deal with the first question, and then read on and see what happens if these things are not done.

VERSE 13

Do you see my responsibility here? It is to equip you for the work of the ministry, as I have said!

And yet, today, an area that is lacking is the teaching of God’s Word, the building up of God’s people. It is as Vance Havner reminds us,

Every Christian is commissioned, for every Christian is a missionary. It has been said that the Gospel is not merely something to come to church to hear but something to go from the church to tell - and we are all appointed to tell it.

It has also been said, “Christianity began as a company of lay witnesses; it has become a professional pulpitism, financed by lay spectators!”

Nowadays we hire a church staff to do “full-time Christian work,” and we sit in church on Sunday to watch them do it.

Every Christian is meant to be in full-time Christian service . . . There is indeed a special ministry of pastors, teachers and evangelists - but for what? . . . For the perfecting of the saints for their ministry.

- Vance Havner

Think of it like this, this growing up or maturing in the Christian faith.

As children mature, they become less and less dependent on their parents, or at least we hope they do, until they are independent and on their own.

The exact opposite is true for us as Christians.

We are not to become independent from Christ but as we mature, we become more dependent upon Him.

Paul speaks of a **UNITY OF FAITH**, not an organization but a unity that is based in Christ.

Another goal for us is **THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD**, or a greater intimacy with God that comes as we mature.

He speaks of **A PERFECT MAN**, to the **MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST**, and that is a goal for us, maturing in the Lord, become complete in Him as individuals and as a body of believers.

A mature Christian is being transformed into the likeness of Christ by the renewing of his mind. He is able to discern between good and evil. And lastly, he has developed into the likeness of Christ as he manifests the fruit of the Spirit in his life – **AGAPE LOVE** and how that love is then manifested in many different ways.

And this will continue on until we go home to be with the Lord!

This is not something we do for a time and then stop or get into other books, people's ideas, but we are steadfast in our learning of the Scriptures as we are taught, as we dig through them on our own as well!

And it all boils down to this, as Warren Wiersbe said in his book, "The Five Secrets of Living." He wrote,

The secret of living is fruit bearing. God did not create you and Christ did not die for you that you might go through life getting. God created you and Christ purchased you that you might invest your life giving.

- Warren Wiersbe

Remember, as we get older in Christ, we also should be getting nearer to Him, becoming more like Him!

What happens if we don't? Let's read on and see.

VERSE 14

Paul is saying that untaught Christians and those who don't put the effort into their walk to cultivate a deep relationship with Jesus through prayer and the reading of the Word will remain spiritual children.

The manifestation of that is they are spiritually unstable and susceptible to any and all kinds of winds of doctrine that come blowing through the church by cleaver wolves who lie in wait to deceive them. And today, there are many out there and they are deceiving many!

Warren Wiersbe put it like this,

There are religious quacks waiting to kidnap God's children and get them into their false cults, but the maturing believer recognizes false doctrine and stays clear of it.

The cultists do not try to win lost souls to Christ. They do not establish rescue missions in the slum areas of our cities, because they have no good news for the man on skid row.

Instead, these false teachers try to capture immature Christians, and for this reason, most of the membership of the false cults comes from local churches, particularly churches that do not feed their people the Word of God.

- Warren Wiersbe

How true that is, and I have seen it over the years and now, more frequently and I never thought it would happen to believers like this, but it is. Be steadfast in the faith!

You see, these believers, instead of being stable, those that don't grow in the Lord are unstable.

Paul uses the Greek word, KLUDONIZOMAI, (kloo-do-nid'-zom-ahee) for "**tossed to and fro**" and it is the same Greek word Luke uses in Luke 8:24 as he is describing the stormy Sea of Galilee.

And men come in and they use "**trickery**" or KUBEIA, (koobi-ah) in the Greek, which is a word that illustrates the idea of a person who has skill in manipulating the dice.

He is a master of deception.

Thus, immature Christians hoist up their sails and as these men blow their false doctrine through the church, they are taken away, they go whichever way the wind is blowing them, they have no real direction.

God's desire is that we would grow and not be tossed around like this!

You see, sound doctrine, healthy doctrine, if taken in and applied to your life will keep you from being tossed to and fro by these false winds of doctrine that are blowing through the church today!

VERSES 15-16

Here is a question you might have as you read through these verses. ***“What does Paul mean when he talks about speaking the truth in love and how does it help the Body of Christ grow spiritually?”***

This is so important. You see, a mature believer is not going to be deceived by false doctrine and must constantly keep speaking the truth from God's Word into the lives of those who are immature and weak in the faith. But as they do this, they must do it in love!

Remember what the Psalmist said in Psalm 141:5, **“Let the righteous strike me; It shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; It shall be as excellent oil; Let my head not refuse it.”**

That is a good thing and yet today, you try to correct someone, and they get mad at you or they leave the church holding onto their false doctrine. That, I am sorry to say, is just pride on their part.

Now that may sound harsh but think about it. You are holding onto a false teaching even though you have been shown that it is wrong from the Scriptures. Again, that is pride and I have seen that, especially over the last few years in the church!

“Let me believe whatever I want!” That is the mentality and sorry, not in this church. We hold to the truths of God's Word and I am sorry if you don't like it!

We are to be focused today because there are so many false teachings that are out there to distract us from the race that we are in, the work we are to do.

Have you ever seen Edwin Moses run the hurdles? It is a sight to see.

I know, I am dating myself here. It was over 30 years ago!

But as you watched him, his head is focused straight ahead as it controls every part of his body, the actions that he needs to do. As the gun goes off there is an explosive driving force from his legs and arms as he is pushed out of the starting blocks.

As he approaches the first hurdle every muscle, every part of his body responds appropriately as he just glides over the top of the hurdle.

This is repeated over and over until he reaches the finish line and extends his chest forward to cross the tape and obtain the prize.

Make no mistake about it. We as Christians are very much in a race.

And as the body of Christ is healthy and ready for the challenge ahead it must work as a thoroughly coordinated machine, but keep in mind that the body of Christ is a living organism working together.

The head is Jesus Christ, and He must be in control of the entire body.

If not, the body will move spastically just as if Edwin Moses was not thinking about what he was doing, and he would plow into the hurdles instead of gliding over them.

Or can you imagine as Edwin Moses approached the next hurdle that his lead leg decided not to extend upward and instead decided to plow right through the hurdle? It would spell disaster for the racer and the same is true in the body of Christ.

As I have said before, it is a team effort and we should think of everyone else as being more important than us as we all work towards the goal.

It is when we work in truth and love that we grow into the likeness of Christ, and as the body is knit together, working in an unselfish manner, that there will be growth and edification within the body of Christ. And this is all done in the love of God, Agape love, unconditional love.

But if we are not growing, if we are not working together, then what does it look like? Let me give you a few examples and you will see how this is not a good thing.

If you are always at odds with other Christians, dividing over non-essential doctrines or bickering about petty things.

If you aren't growing deeper in your relationship with Jesus by being in prayer and in the Word regularly. Or if your attendance at church on Sunday's and for Bible study is sporadic at best.

If after being a Christian for two or more years you still can't articulate the fundamentals of the Christian faith and share them with others. And if you get more excited about the latest Christian guru and his new book than you do about God's Book, the Bible.

And if you're not serving in the Body somewhere, working together with other Christians using your gifts and selflessly doing your share or if you do sign up to serve but lose interest quickly and quit so that people can't depend on you.

If those are some of the things manifested in your life as a Christian, then you are not measuring up or growing in your Christianity!

In other words, start making some changes in your life to help yourself to grow in the Lord!

What can I do? Simple, listen to what the early church was like, what they did and apply these things in your life, fall in love with Jesus all over again!

In Acts chapter 2 we are told, **“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles . . . So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”** Acts chapter 2:42-43, 46-47.

So don't lose heart even though you've not grown as much as you would like. You no doubt have grown and will continue to grow. So stay in the Word and keep drawing close to Jesus.

May we learn the lesson and mature in the faith!

As we have seen, Ephesians 4:1-16 deals with our walk in unity!

Next week we will begin a section that covers Ephesians 4:17-5:18 that deals with our walk in purity!