

EPHESIANS – “WALKING WORTHY OF GOD’S CALLING”

Ephesians 4:1-16

July 17, 2022

Ephesians divides neatly into two halves, and Paul closes the first half with a prayer, praying that God would strengthen these Gentile believers by His Spirit, so they would grasp the deep love of Christ, a love that surpasses all knowledge and understanding. For three chapters – the reader has been reminded of God’s goodness and the marvelous gift of salvation that is theirs and the privileges they have IN CHRIST. Now beginning in chapter 4, Paul challenges the church to live out their faith and live a life worthy of their calling, which means there is a responsibility and an expectation placed on every believer to actively live out their faith, hosting His presence wherever they go. And if God’s grace and salvation is indeed good, then we need to live it out like victors, never in defeat! The unfortunate issue is that we have been given a million dollar salvation and we often only give a five-cent response in return to God for His wonderful gift! So, Paul deals with this issue by instructing the church on how God is inviting every believer to participate in God’s master plan to bring everything under the lordship of Jesus Christ, by living out a life that exhibits godly character, moral courage, personal integrity, and mature behaviour, an example to those around us of our victory in Jesus!

For each of us to fully participate in God’s plan to bring everything under the Lordship of Christ, we first need to know that every believer has been placed in a particular body of Christ, a specific church, for a specific purpose. So, you are NOT here at SCCC by accident – God has placed a calling on your life and has an important role for you to play within this specific fellowship of believers planted here in Sombra. Paul spoke more specifically about this in his letter to the Corinthians, where he compares the church to the human body, where every part is important, and every part has an important function, coming to this conclusion: ***“In fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be”*** (1 Corinthians 12:18). That means each one of us is significant and important to God, as each one of us here have been personally invited by Christ Jesus to help build a glorious church that comes together to worship God, to pray for our personal needs and the needs of others, to be healed, to be encouraged and to be equipped to reach out to others in love!

I am calling the first sixteen verses of chapter 4 – *“Walk worthy of God’s Calling,”* as Paul starts off this section with this challenge in **verse 1, “I urge you to live a**

life worthy of the calling you have received.” There are a lot of people who stand up and say, “*I’m a born-again Christian,*” but there’s very little evidence of the calling because their walk and their talk don’t demonstrate Christ-likeness and there’s no fruit. It’s easy to talk-the-walk, but it’s very difficult to walk-the-walk. The reputation of the church has been severely damaged by people who know the right things to do but fail to do them. Their doctrine may be right, but their behaviour is not. We need both strong, accurate doctrine and behaviour that backs up what we say and believe. So, Paul is appealing (actually begging) the believers to live with behaviour that will be a credit to God and represent Him well. And it’s not merely doing right when the going is easy, but doing it consistently, especially when it’s difficult. Once people know we are Christians, they expect to find good fruit coming from our lives, so as followers of Christ, we should behave as Jesus behaved while He walked this earth, becoming more-and-more like Christ – our purpose and goal is to represent Him well, so that those around us would be drawn to Christ, not repelled by our bad behaviour!

In **Ephesians 4:1-6**, Paul returns again to encouraging the Ephesians to seek unity, and for unity to take place within the church body, everyone needs to be on the same page, all heading in the same direction, with the same clear purpose, vision and goal in serving the Lord in the task He has called us to. A church that is unclear in their purpose or divided in their purpose, will end up spinning their wheels and going in circles, ineffective in reaching others with the Gospel and building God’s kingdom. A church that is not unified in its purpose and calling within the community where God has placed them, will eventually get discouraged and frustrated, lose their passion and drive, and become complacent – a slow death for that church. Paul’s point in these first six verses is that God hates disunity, disharmony, and infighting which divides the family members God has brought together.

So, Paul’s first instruction to the Ephesians is in how to achieve unity – **verses 2-3** tells us how: “***Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.***” So, let’s break down these verses on how to achieve unity into four categories – let’s call them our weapons for unity:

1. **Humility** – isn’t weakness, but strength under control. Pastor Rick Warren defines it this way, “*Humility isn’t thinking less of yourself, its thinking of yourself less.*” Humility means we renounce self-centeredness, the seeking

of recognition, honour, importance, power, and popularity. Jesus was gentle (meek) and humble (lowly) in heart yet was not weak and He used self-control in His dealings with people, speaking into the lives of others with grace, mercy and compassion, but also with firmness to those who need correction. Jesus modeled the type of humility we should seek, by willingly laying aside His divinity and taking on humanity, taking on the very nature of a servant (Philippians 2:7). And then Jesus washed His disciples' feet as an example for them to follow (John 13:1-17).

2. **Gentleness** – in order to have gentleness, we must renounce all bitterness and harshness towards others (the lack of caring and compassion), as well as renounce violence towards others (anger, hatred, unfriendliness, and hostility). Gentleness is demonstrated by sensitivity towards others, a desire to lift them up and not harm them. While we need to practice gentleness out in the world, the greatest need is within our marriages and families, where the most emotional and physical damage usually occurs. We tend to be harshest and most demanding on those who are closest to us!
3. **Long-suffering (patience)** – patience is not merely waiting for something to take place, but the important of how we wait. What are you doing as you wait? Are you waiting in faith trusting the Lord or pacing the floor with fear and anxiety? People who are patient can deal with difficult situations or people and endure whatever comes with good temperament. Long-suffering people continue to display the fruit of love and kindness even during their own personal suffering or unjust treatment. Paul says we must bear with one another, which means to make allowances for the weaknesses and faults in others, just as we want them to make allowances for our faults and shortcomings (**Colossians 3:13**, “*Bear with each other and forgive one another if anyone of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you*”). Jesus’ instruction to do unto others as we want them to do unto us (Matthew 7:12) should be our goal. Patience is achieved when you value others above yourself, giving others the room and the time to grow and especially fail, to learn from their mistakes and mature at their own rate. The Christian life is a life of tolerating and putting up with each other in love because we are at different places in our faith journey – some are mature and some are still infants.

4. **Tolerant love** – in order to bear with one another in love, we must renounce our rights and privileges, because insisting on you being right in every situation never leads to healthy relationships. We need to fight the right battles and let the others go! People must be willing to forgo their rights at times and put up with each other in love. If we only think of what makes us comfortable and of getting our own way all the time, we are selfish and selfish people are never happy and content, they love to grumble and complain. And remember, people won't always remember what we said to them, but they will remember how we treated them and how we made them feel.

According to Paul, these four traits are essential to live in peace and harmony with one another, and then we need to remember that unity is not uniformity. We are all very different, but we can still have unity within our differences if we truly make an effort to do so. One thing is for sure: when we all get to heaven, there will be perfect unity – there will be no denominations, and we'll discover that not one of us had perfect understanding of God's Word while we were here on earth.

Next, Paul makes sure that we understand that unity doesn't mean unity at any cost – we can't go running off in every direction trying to please everyone, agreeing to everything society puts in front of us to make peace. The goal of the Christian faith is unity in Christ alone, a unity that comes from a shared faith and shared knowledge of Christ and Him crucified. Therefore, God has set strict limits to unity. Unity within the church body is to always be Christ centred, and Paul makes this clear in **verses 4-6, “There is one BODY and one SPIRIT, just as you were called to one HOPE when you were called; one LORD, one FAITH, one BAPTISM; one GOD and FATHER of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”** These verses contains the seven pillars of the Christian faith that we stand firmly upon, which unifies every believer in the body of Christ as ONE CHURCH, regardless of denomination or affiliation. Let's briefly look at these seven pillars:

1. There is one **BODY**, which is the church – **Romans 12:5** tells us, ***“In Christ we, though many, form ONE BODY, and each member belongs to all the others.”*** Paul is not talking about the EMCC or any other denomination; instead, salvation is in Christ alone, which means there's only one body, the body of Christ. You may belong to a certain denomination or a specific church, but there is only one body of believers – one bride of Christ!

2. There is one **SPIRIT**, which is the Holy Spirit – there are many spirits around us, there are evil spirits and angelic spirits, but there is only one spirit that ministers to us, which is God’s gift to all those that believe – the gift of the Holy Spirit, Who comes to take up residence in our lives once we come to believe in Christ Jesus. The Bible says we are a body, a soul, and a spirit, and remember back to **Ephesians 1:13-14**, where Paul tells us the good news that we have been marked and sealed by this one SPIRIT – the Holy Spirit confirms our identity as belonging to God, adopted into His family as brothers/sisters IN CHRIST!
3. There is one **HOPE**, which is the return of Jesus Christ – this is our rock-solid certainty, something we bank our entire future on. Jesus promised that He is going to come back for His church, so we never have to worry or fret about our future or fear death. God has a plan for those who love and serve Him, which is to live with Him in eternity one day. That’s where we put our hope!
4. There is one **LORD**, who is Jesus Christ – **Acts 4:12** says, *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”* There are many beliefs out in the world, some believe there are numerous ways to heaven, and others believe that they can get to heaven by their good works or by being a good person, and then still others believe that God will not turn anyone away from heaven’s gate. But God’s word is very clear – there’s only one way to heaven because there is only one **LORD**, and one day everyone will come to acknowledge and realize that truth, *“that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord”* (Philippians 2:10-11).
5. There is one **FAITH**, which means there is only one gospel message by which we can be saved. The story of Jesus found within the pages of God’s Word, the holy Bible, is the only book that holds the keys to living a life of faith, so we live according to the Holy Scriptures. They contain the absolute truth. You don’t need an additional book to live by – you don’t need the Book of Mormon or any other new age modern day revelations to add to God’s Word. There is only one true Gospel to give us the absolute truth that sets us free from the bondage of sin and death!

6. There is one **BAPTISM**, which means every believer is baptized into one body, our baptism into the body of Christ. At water baptism every believer becomes part of the body of Christ, but it's not the water that saves us, or what man does on the outside; instead, it's what God does within us, by giving us the gift of the Holy Spirit to make us into a new creation as He dwells in our heart, helping us to walk the one true path of holiness and righteousness.
7. There is one **GOD AND FATHER OF ALL** – aren't you glad the Bible doesn't call God some kind of angry spiritual deity that we need to try and appease; instead, God is called our heavenly **FATHER (ABBA, DADDY)**. Not all of us may have had a positive experience with our earthly fathers, but God wants to relate to us as a perfect loving father, and He wants us to relate to Him in return as devoted and obedient sons/daughters who adore and love their heavenly Father, with all of their mind, heart, and soul, knowing that God is always good and only wants the best for His child.

When we read **Ephesians 4:1-6** – we see how God intends life to be within the walls of every church. However, the church is not a community that never disagrees, nor a community in which we all look the same, sound the same, or necessarily think the same way on every subject. Instead, the church is a community with rich diversity, where God gives different gifts, calling each person in the church to a different role, but this diversity is rooted in unity, as we all love and serve Jesus and love and serve each other, and that takes us into the next section of Paul's letter.

Verse 7 begins a section on spiritual gifts – actually Paul talks a great deal about spiritual gifts in many of his letters, with his most significant teaching found in **1 Corinthians 12**. Spiritual gifts are important to Paul, and they should be important to us, as the Bible confirms that we all have gifts from God that helps us play our part in His overall plan. And our goal is to mature spiritually so we can do the part God has given us to do as a gifted child of God while working together with all of the other gifted parts of His church. So, everyone needs to know their gift and operate within that gift for the body of Christ to work efficiently and effectively right where God has placed them!

The purpose of a spiritual gift is for ministry – for serving God and serving others. So it's like a tool you are given to use in your employment within the body of Christ. Paul in his teaching in his letter to the Corinthians says every single

Christian has received at least one spiritual gift and every gift is present within the church to help them minister and to serve. The problem in most churches is that people in the pews think that the only people who are gifted to serve are those that stand in front of them every Sunday, the elders, leaders in worship, and those that preach; however, God has called every Christian to serve. Not everyone has been called to be a pastor or a church leader, but we are all called to serve in some capacity in ministry. Maybe you aren't gifted to preach or teach or run a meeting, but you can bake a batch of cookies and take it to a neighbour who has lost a loved one, or visit and encourage someone who is down and out, or go to a neighbour in need and pray with them.

As Paul tells us in **verse 11-13** – YES, the church definitely has been given apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for this reason, **“to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 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.”** However, God never intended that these gifted individuals do all the work while others become spectators, so God also uses other ministry gifts to build up His church to become mature. I also like the what The Passion Translation says about this five-fold ministry, ***“And their calling is to nurture and prepare all the holy believers to do their own works of ministry, and as they do this they will enlarge and build up the body of Christ.”*** These gifted leaders are encouragers equipping the holy believers to use their gifts to build up the body of Christ. Paul here once again stresses the idea of unity, oneness, and working together for a common cause – to enlarge the kingdom of God – to keep expanding the walls of the church until they cover the entire earth!

God loves giving gift to His children – but it's up to us to discover that specific gift. The tragic thing is that many gifted Christians are going around and not using their gifts, because they have never taken the time to discover their special gift or gifts. There are all kinds of spiritual gift surveys out there that you can take, but there is also a simpler way to know your spiritual gifts by looking at these three areas: 1) **ABILITY** – what are you good at? 2) **AFFINITY** – what are you attracted to or drawn towards or passionate about? What gets you excited about serving the Lord? 3) **AFFIRMATION** – the gifts other see within you, the things that others tell you that you're gifted at.

Paul's point is that we need everyone in the church knowing and using their spiritual gifts – so that we can become mature, and that is where Paul is going next in **verses 14-16**. What Paul is telling the church in these verses is that we need to **“GROW UP!”** Many of us have heard the expression, *“You're not getting older; you're getting better.”* However, that may or may not be true! As some get older, they do get better, but then there are others who just get bitter! And then some are only putting in their days until they die, while others are adding life to their years. The same can be said about us spiritually – there are Christians who are not growing spiritually, they remain as spiritual infant. They are not grounded in the Word of God, so they are easily influenced and manipulated by false teaching, and not living by God's absolute truth. In **verse 14**, Paul tells these Gentile Christians that we all begin as spiritual babies but must grow in the faith for this reason: ***“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful schemes.”*** Eventually we are to leave the baby stage of Christianity and develop and grow into spiritual maturity. This is important to Paul because spiritual infants are easily affected emotionally by the storms of life. Paul wants us to be mature, so we are no longer manipulated and adversely controlled by our circumstances!

Surveys have shown that biblical illiteracy is the number one issue in the church today – in fact biblical illiteracy is one of the signs of the end times according to Jesus. In **Matthew 24** Jesus warned us that many will be deceived as a sign of the end times – **Matthew 24:4-5**, ***“Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many.”*** And turning away from the faith is another sign according to **Matthew 24:10-11**, ***“At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.”*** Then Jesus said these sobering words that during those last days before His return, people will be caught totally off guard because they are not interested or lost interest in attending church or reading their Bible. They have no time for God because they are running hard after the things of this world, so that they will be left behind like in the days of Noah. ***“For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man”*** (Matthew 24:38-39). Paul's point and warning here is that being an

immature infant Christian is a very dangerous place to be! Things a baby does is considered cute when he/she is an infant, but no longer cute when there thirty or forty. If we expect our natural children to grow up, surely God expects us to do the same regarding spiritual maturity!

Then after warning us what would happen if we remained immature – Paul tells us that the fruit of unity is maturity in Christ. **Verse 15, “Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.”** The mature unified church body that is operating in the gifts of the Spirit will not resemble the pastor, or a board member, or anyone else within the congregation; they will resemble the head of every church, who is our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. As we travel down our road to maturity, let us keep measuring ourselves to only one standard, which is the standard of Jesus Christ, and we do that by studying Him – learning how He treated others, learning how He accepted others, and learning how He forgave others. How He dealt with the legalistic Pharisees who were leading others astray by false teaching, and then in how He treated children, women, and the worst of sinners. To be like Jesus we need to know how He ministered to others, and especially how He loved others. When we step out onto the path of following God, His Word becomes a light for each step we take, and that path becomes brighter and brighter the more we learn from Him and grow in the faith. God is always looking for mature Christians – who know their gifting and are playing their part in complete unity and harmony, because they are useable.

Paul ends this section with another encouragement – the importance of being joined together with other believers so the body of Christ can work properly. Paul tells us in **verse 16**, that the body of Christ can only become whole when it is firmly held together in the bond of love, when every part is joined and knitted firmly together and working properly, causing the body to grow and mature in the faith. Here’s how the Passion Translation explains it, **“And every member has been given divine gifts to contribute to the growth of all, and as these gifts operate effectively throughout the whole body, we are built up and made perfect in love.”** When the church functions in this way, when each part is doing the work that God has called it to do, it creates something beautiful that can be used by God to bring Him honour and glory, and that means that all parts need to be present and accounted for. When you are not here they body can’t function properly because a part is missing!

I want to close with this story – One day the tools in a toolbox decided to have a business meeting. Mr. Hammer presided over the meeting because he was the biggest and strongest. He called the meeting to order. Mr. Saw stood up and said, *“I think we ought to get rid of Mr. Hammer because he’s always knocking people around and making a lot of noise.”* Mr. Plane stood up and said, *“If you get rid of Mr. Hammer you will have to get rid of Mr. Saw, because he’s always cutting people down.”* Mr. Ruler stood up and said, *“If you get rid of Mr. Saw you will have to get rid of Mr. Plane, because he only does surface work, he’s so superficial.”* Mr. Sandpaper stood up and said, *“Well, if you get rid of Mr. Plane you will have to get rid of Mr. Ruler, because he’s always measuring himself by other people, and he always thinks he’s right.”* Someone else stood up and said, *“If you get rid of Mr. Ruler, you will have to get of Mr. Sandpaper, because a rougher guy you have never met. He is always rubbing people the wrong way.”* So, the tools just continued to argue and fuss and fight about who was most important until the Carpenter of Nazareth walked in and picked up each of these tools and built a pulpit from which the whole gospel could be preached to the entire world. When all of those tools found out what they could become in the hands of the Master Carpenter, they decided they would quit fussing and fighting, and just surrender to be used by the Master Carpenter for the purpose they were created for. That’s what you and I need to do as His tools in God’s toolbox, called the church, where each tool is present and accounted for!