

August 5th, 2018
Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost
Pastor Matthew Ude

Eph 4:1-16 NKJ I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. ⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." ⁹ (Now this, "He ascended"-- what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) ¹¹ And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-- Christ-- ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you

The adoption is ours, the calling is ours. The salvation is ours. The Holy Spirit, the baptism, the redemption, the forgiveness, the salvation, all of it ours, therefore "walk worthy of the calling."

It's all yours. It's not in doubt. It can't be taken away. Therefore walk in a way that is worthy of this which you have received. The salvation comes first as the gift of God. The life of faith follows and is not a condition.

The cry of pietism is "deeds not creeds," forget about doctrine and live holy lives. But with Paul this is impossible. The life of faith is a response to all the gracious gifts of God. The more Paul learns about what God has done for him, the more he desires to reflect that love and live as he says here worthy of that calling.

The word of God, the teaching of the Word of God, the doctrines of faith lead to and produce the life of faith.

all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love

Notice that the command here is not to change others to suit you, nor to make sure they know just how wrong they are, nor to make sure they know how much you are bearing them. The command here is for you to accept them and bear their sin. The impetus is on the one being wronged to bear the sin of the one wronging him/her. As Jesus said forgive 70 x 7.

I had a meeting with the women in Togo once. And we were talking about marriage. They were bringing up some specific examples, so I was pointing out passages for them and telling them this what God says you should do. And of course right away the women would respond yes, but the man is supposed to . . . And I would say no it's not your job to worry about what your husband is supposed to be doing. It's not your job to make sure your husband is doing a, b, and c what is God saying to you.

Here Paul is very clear the responsibility is on you to forgive them. Not on you to make sure they are doing what is right.

³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit

This is the central thought of this section. We are one church. We are united in Christ.

This unity comes from the Spirit. It is the unity of the Spirit. It is a gift from God not something of men.

This is the central thought of this section. We've transitioned from the doctrine to the implications, what does this mean for your life. And the first implication is that we are united as one family.

Now Paul is going to talk about why, and how, and what is the result of this unity.

Why should we do this? Why should we forgive and bear one another's burdens? First because Christ forgave us and died for us. And also because as Paul has mentioned all the rich blessings that are ours in Christ. But Paul is going to give us more reasons as well.

To begin with because we are one:

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

The you at the end of verse 6 lets us know that the "all" of verse 6 is all believers not all people. Here Paul is calling God the father of all believers. We are all one family with one father.

You get something from your family that you can never get from friends. There is a permanence there and a sharing of history that you can't ever find outside of the family. But you have to learn to forgive.

Look at all that we share here, one lord, one faith, one baptism etc.

We are one. We are one family. When we bear the burden of another we bear our own burdens. We bear theirs and they bear us. We forgive and they forgive and all are forgiven through Christ. We share and grow as one.

The second reason we gladly bear each other's burdens is because we each have our own gift

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift

This is how a body works, each part has its own place and its own gifts and the body works together when each does its own thing and respects and allows the other to do its thing.

This reminds me of all Kaylee's doctors. She's got 29 different doctors and therapists and specialists. They all work together. It doesn't work if the neurosurgeon tries to tell the ophthalmologist what to do, or if the audiologist advises about urology.

Each one has their own gifts. We also need to learn to work together. Each doing his own part.

He ascended on high, . . . , And gave gifts to men.

There is the gift that he gave to men, and then there are gifts he gave to men. In verse 7 we have "gift" and then in verse 8 "gifts". The gift is the Word and the ministry of that Word, the pastors and teachers that Christ Gave to His church. This is what Paul points prominently to. Then there are the gifts which support and promote this primary gift

All these gifts working together lead to the building up of the body of Christ into a soundness of strength and maturity that is able to withstand the false doctrine of Satan.

Notice how unity begins with doctrine and leads to a soundness of doctrine. Far from implying that "all we need is love" Paul rather over and over again stresses the importance of sound biblical teaching if we are to grow in unity and in Christ.

When we work together to promote and teach scriptural teachings, then we are not swayed by all the misleading fads of doctrine, which Satan purposely sows amongst. No we are rooted and grounded in Christ and in his love and in his teaching. But where there is disunity and a refusal to trust and a refusal to forgive than Satan easily lead us astray.

He summarizes this with our verse for the week, **"speaking the truth in love"**

Here we have two things that balance one another, not that truth and love are opposites. They are not opposites. They are one and the same. But in our sinfulness we always have a tendency to always go to the extreme. We tend to “speak truth” or at least our version of truth without love. We tend to refrain from make a clear confession because we don’t want to “offend” anyone.

We always do the wrong one at the wrong time. When we are confronted by someone speaking against the Lord, we are very reluctant to stand firm and speak the truth. Yet when someone disagrees with us about the liturgy or the color of the carpet then we are very quick to insist on "speaking the truth" and not be loving.

The terms truth and love limit and define the scope of each. Do everything to show love BUT not if that love will hide the truth, then it is no longer love. Do everything to speak the truth BUT not if such truth is without love.

Christ has given to us the gift of unity. This is a gift we want to make every effort to hold on to. Therefore we forgive and bear each other’s burdens. Not because in so doing we will earn forgiveness, but rather because we are already forgiven in Christ and saved, and heaven is ours, because we are one family. And in this unity we grow in the true teachings of Christ. And in that truth and unity we are protected from the constant deceits of Satan.

Unity in Christ is built on forgiveness, first his forgiveness to us which then teaches us to forgive one another.

AMEN

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.