

Unity in the Body of Christ – Part 2

Eph. 4:8-16

Introduction:

- I. I was sitting in the office of my mentor Dr. Ralph Gilmore who served as my advisor for my thesis. I had done all this research and exegesis on the passages and he looked at my work and said: “Robbie, this all looks great but so what?” I didn’t know what meant so I asked him, “What do you mean?” He said, “You have told me the issue but what does this mean for those reading it today. Bring it all together and answer the question, ‘so what?’”
- II. This morning we looked at the “what” of unity. We are called to be unified through humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love and eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit. We also looked at the 7 one’s which serve as theological anchors for the church.
- III. If you also remember we divided these verses in two ways.
 - a. 4:1-6 – The FOUNDATION of Unity
 - b. 4:7-16 – The FRUITS of Unity
- IV. Now we get into the part of unity that is more about us than the foundation. It speaks to us in how we each were uniquely created. This evening we look at some things that will cause us to analyze our own spirituality and our own level of gifts.
- V. We must look inward in order to look outward.

Ephesians 4:7-16 ⁷ But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." ⁹ (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Also from a paraphrase....

⁷⁻¹³But that doesn't mean you should all look and speak and act the same. Out of the generosity of Christ, each of us is given his own gift. The text for this is,

He climbed the high mountain,
He captured the enemy and seized the booty,
He handed it all out in gifts to the people.

Is it not true that the One who climbed up also climbed down, down to the valley of earth? And the One who climbed down is the One who climbed back up, up to highest heaven. He handed out gifts above and below, filled heaven with his gifts, filled earth with his gifts. He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher to train Christ's followers in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the church, until we're all moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and graceful in response to God's Son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive like Christ.

¹⁴⁻¹⁶No prolonged infancies among us, please. We'll not tolerate babes in the woods, small children who are an easy mark for impostors. God wants us to grow up, to know the whole truth and tell it in love—like Christ in everything. We take our lead from Christ, who is the source of everything we do. He keeps us in step with each other. His very breath and blood flow through us, nourishing us so that we will grow up healthy in God, robust in love.

I. Our Fruits Make us Particular (7-11)

- a. Just as Christ's ascension and descension was for his unique purpose we too have a purpose from our creation.
- b. Look around you tonight friends...we have carpenters, school teachers, people who are talented with their voice, people who are talented with a trowel, people who are talented their hearts, people who are talented with their presence. We have a bunch of different gifts.
- c. Listen to this quote... ***"I'm not really religious but very spiritual. I give money to this company that manufactures hearing aids on a regular basis. More people should really hear me sing. I have a gift from God."*** Christina Aguilera
- d. There are so many different things wrong with that quote but I can't help but to agree with her that her voice is a gift from the Almighty! Sometimes we use our gifts for good and sometimes we use our gifts for bad and then sometimes we don't use our gifts and all!
- e. In this context (verse 11) Paul names 5 different people who have five different gifts...
 - i. Apostles – These were the 12 that were in office for a specific service. They were messengers of the gospel and were commissioned by Jesus himself (save Matthias).

- ii. Prophets – As early as Acts 11:27 there were Christian prophets who were already in the church. We are quick to think of those who prophesy future events but most prophecy was about pronouncing the Word of God or one who had a divine message.
- iii. Evangelists – Hard to distinguish but they are those who simply proclaim a message.
- iv. Pastors – Word literally means shepherd.
- v. Teachers – those who can instruct on a day-to-day basis.
- f. It is our uniqueness that should bring us together. We could ask the question, “Why would God make us so different? Wouldn’t it be better if we were just the same?” So let’s all be robots!!! Let’s all act, talk and look the same. That’s crazy.
- g. John Calvin said, ***“no member of the body of Christ is endowed with such perfection as to be able, without the assistance of others, to supply his own necessities.”***
- h. We need your gifts. The very thing God has blessed you with we need them. One of the toughest things for a congregation is to try to give people different responsibilities. It is so hard because sometimes we fail at finding people but sometimes people fail at telling us. There has to be some sort of give and take. You have a gift with teenagers? I will put you right in. Maybe you have good handwriting...we need notes written. Maybe you are amazing with computers and can fix them or make them work quicker...sign-up.
- i. We need your gifts!

Why?

II. Our Fruits Make us Perfect (12-16)

- a. We are to equip the saints...
 - i. This is why we are so unique and that is to give people the proper equipment that they need.
 - ii. A football player does not go out on the field wearing what Michael Phelps does when he swims.
 - iii. We give people the proper equipment they need.
 - iv. We help each other out. But it is not just for any purpose...we equip to in turn help others for the ministry. We are all ministers!!
- b. To Mature Manhood...
 - i. The word literally means, “full-grown man!” Or a complete man.
 - ii. How does one grow and become mature in the faith? By knowing Christ! By doing his will!
 - iii. Maturity comes from discipline and discipline is not something that comes immediately. It takes time and practice.

- iv. Do you remember the Hebrew author who was so frustrated with the people because they should have been teachers but were still on the milk of the word (Heb. 5:11-14)? We equip the saints to be complete and mature ready for anything.
- v. A sports team practices all through the summer and athletes run so that they can be complete right?
- vi. At school we study so we can be complete.
- vii. At work we continually learn each day to become better at what we do.
- viii. All of this points to maturity. My question for you is this? Why are so many of us immature in the faith. Please understand that maturity and biblical knowledge do not necessarily go hand in hand. I think those who are mature have a good knowledge of Scripture but that does not mean they know everything.
- ix. But why should that matter? Perhaps we need to have a special class (which Joe and I would be willing to teach) on how to study the bible. How do we get the most out of God's Word?
- x. But knowledge is one thing we also have to learn how to live it as well...that is why a community of believers is so important.

c. To Prevent False Teaching...

- i. I am worried at certain doctrines that are out there. I do worry that people who are weak in the faith will believe just about everything.
- ii. Paul was so concerned about them walking in their calling because of so many doctrines that were out there.
- iii. The reason why we must prevent false doctrine is because they are so crafty in what they do.
 - 1. By human cunning means they literally roll the dice. It is like people who just wait and pounce on you. They don't let their beliefs come out immediately but they seize the moment quickly.
 - 2. People unfortunately are like this and most of the time they are the ones who are not well-grounded.
- iv. Brethren we must be prepared for this just like the 1st and 2nd century had to be prepared against Gnostic threats.
- v. But what do we do when we know there are false things being presented.

d. By Speaking the truth in love...

- i. How do you correct someone in a manner that represents Jesus? The truth is...it is hard. It is difficult but it must be done. If you love them then you will let them know in love.
- ii. However, many churches brag about how they are "doctrinally sound" and they could rattle off 15-20 verses on any given biblical

subject. Were you to be in “error” on these biblical subjects they could forcefully show you the right verse for you to understand the error of your ways. Some churches (and institutions) even publish articles relaying information on who is doctrinally wrong and how they have misrepresented Scripture in the most blatant ways.

- iii. My response to this type is that it is not done in love. I believe in the responsibility in speaking truth and bearing witness to Scripture but I do not believe in finding people to argue with.
- iv. I will sit down with people but I will not call them out.
- v. When we speak to people are we doing it in love? Love unifies but pride separates.
- vi. I think we spend more time arguing about matters of opinion than we do seriously concerning ourselves with weight matters. We are like the Pharisees who would tithe mint, dill and cumin yet forgot about love, justice and faithfulness (Matt. 23:23).
- vii. Speaking the truth in love means we have their best interests!
- viii. When I go up in private to students in the youth (some of them could tell you this) I always do it because I love them and I care about them. I will not embarrass them!
- ix. We need to speak the truth brethren but it needs to be done in love.

e. To achieve the end result!

- i. Look at verse 16...you cannot get a better picture of unity and growth than this one.
- ii. Body
 - 1. Every joint is equipped...
 - 2. Each part is working properly...
 - 3. The body grows...but is continually fed with love.
- iii. The right equipment and the proper training equals growth! Growth! This is a possibility.
- iv. The problem with growth is that we need our joints supplied and our parts working properly.

Conclusion:

After an accident in which she lost her arm, Jamie refused to go to school or church. Finally, the young teen thought she could face her peers. In preparation her mother called her Sunday school teacher and asked that he not call attention to Jamie. The teacher promised, but then he got sick on Sunday and had to call a substitute.

At the conclusion of the lesson that day, which was about inviting friends to church, the substitute teacher led the class in doing the hand motions to the familiar children’s poem:

*Here is the church,
Here is the steeple.
Open the door*

And see all the people.

Jamie's eyes filled with tears. A thirteen-year-old boy sensed Jamie's pain and knelt beside her. With one hand apiece, they supported each other, making the church, steeple, and people.

Together they illustrated what real church is.

— Billy Waters, *Teacher Touch* (Cook, 1999)

We need you. We need you. We cannot do it without you! Will you join me!