***Unity and Diversity***

**Message #7: Ephesians 4:7-16 October 18, 2020**

***It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets,
some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers,
to prepare God’s people for works of service,
so that the body of Christ may be built up . . . .***

**Ephesians 4:11-12**

**Both unity and diversity**

*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body . . . .
But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it . . . .*

Ephesians 4:4,7

 1) “The One, the Three, and the Many” is a problem of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 2) We are “one” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and “one” \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 3) Body-life is a “new” experience of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**A closer look at the setting, Psalm 68**

*But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says,
 “When he ascended on high,
 he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” [Psalm 68:18]
(What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)
It was he who gave some to apostles . . . .*

Ephesians 4:7-11

 1) The King descends in order to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 2) The King ascends in order to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Scene 1, Part 2: Walking in maturity (and connected to our Head!)**

*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ . . . .
And he gave some as apostles,
 and some as prophets,
 and some as evangelists
 and some as shepherds and teachers,
 toward the equipping* [the making ready for a purpose] *of the saints* [but note alternate trans. in KJV] *into works of service* [diakonos] *to the building up of the body of Christ,
 until we attain, every one, to the unity of the faith,
 and of the knowledge of the Son of God.
 into a mature* [“*complete”,* *from* telos] *man,
 into the measure of the maturity* [see Luke 2:52] *which belongs to the fullness of Christ.
in order that we would no longer be infants* [see 1 Corinthians 3:11] *tossed here and there by waves
 carried about by every wind of doctrine
 by means of the trickery of men
 by means of the craftiness that comes from schemes of deceit
 instead, truthing in love,
(in order that) we may grow up
 into him in all [aspects] who is the head, Christ,
 out of whom the whole body*

 *joined together* [like the promises we make together in a betrothal] *and connected together* [organically] *through the contribution of every joint
 according to the working of each individual member
 (it is Christ) who causes the growth of the body for building itself up* [oikos + dome] *in love.*

 Ephesians 4:7-16 (Doug’s expanded translation based on the NASV, but note the subject of the final verb!)

**The heart of the church (without using the word “church”)**

 1) What does the Author want to teach us about the characters in this drama?

 2) What does the Author of this drama want to reveal about the setting of the drama

 3) What does the Author teach us about the plot, about our journey as the New Humanity?

 4) What does the Author reveal about himself?

**Gifts for the “common good”**

*There are different gifts, but the same Spirit, There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.
Now to each one of the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given . . . .
Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.*

1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 14:1

 1) Our Trinitarian God again reveals himself in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 2) Both instructions about being the church end in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 3) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ matters so reconciliation is not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Resources for furth er studies of Ephesians**

For studying Ephesians 4
Spurgeon’s “Head and Body” sermon is a beautiful look at our connection to the Head at [*https://www.monergism.com/head-and-body-ephesians-415-16*](https://www.monergism.com/head-and-body-ephesians-415-16)
Maclaren’s short commentary at [*https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mac/ephesians-4.html*](https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mac/ephesians-4.html)Riddlebarger’s takes the pastor-as-minister view at [*http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/sermons-on-ephesians/Building%20Up%20the%20Body%20edited%209.pdf*](http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/sermons-on-ephesians/Building%20Up%20the%20Body%20edited%209.pdf)
Bob Deffinbaugh at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/11-calling-and-conduct-christian-ephesians-41-16*](https://bible.org/seriespage/11-calling-and-conduct-christian-ephesians-41-16)

This is a wonderful Bible Project introduction on youtube: [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\_continue=12&v=Y71r-T98E2Q&feature=emb\_logo*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=12&v=Y71r-T98E2Q&feature=emb_logo)

Bob Deffinbaugh’s Ephesians series is at [*https://bible.org/series/ephesians-glory-god-church*](https://bible.org/series/ephesians-glory-god-church)

Spurgeon’s series of messages on Ephesians are at [*http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/index/r\_eph.htm*](http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/index/r_eph.htm)

Kim Riddlebarger’s sermons on Ephesians are at [*http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/sermons-on-ephesians/;jsessionid=3799445CA50CA06F2F395D4FBE89D586.v5-web017*](http://kimriddlebarger.squarespace.com/sermons-on-ephesians/;jsessionid=3799445CA50CA06F2F395D4FBE89D586.v5-web017)

ThirdMill has produced “Paul and the Ephesians” at [*https://thirdmill.org/seminary/lesson.asp/vid/19/version/*](https://thirdmill.org/seminary/lesson.asp/vid/19/version/)

Desiring God, John Piper’s media ministry, has some wonderful resources at [*https://www.desiringgod.org/scripture/ephesians/1/messages*](https://www.desiringgod.org/scripture/ephesians/1/messages)

Mark Johnston’s “Preaching Ephesians” at [*https://www.reformation21.org/articles/preaching-ephesians.php*](https://www.reformation21.org/articles/preaching-ephesians.php)

Doug’s favorite commentaries are John R. W. Stott’s *The Message of Ephesians* (IVP, 1979), William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Ephesians* (Baker Book House, 1967); Ephesians in the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Zondervan, 1981) by A. Skevington Wood; and, much shorter, F. F. Bruce’s *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Revell, 1961).

Martyn Lloyd-Jones has a wonderful seven volume series on Ephesians (Baker Books, 1978).

The text we spent the most time on in Darrell Johnson’s class was Timothy Gombis’ *The Drama of Ephesians* (IVP Academic, 2010)

The Gospel Coalition has resources on Ephesians at [*https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/ephesians/*](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/ephesians/%20)

F.F. Bruce’s paraphrase is available at [*https://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1962-3\_163.pdf*](https://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/eq/1962-3_163.pdf)

**Working outline of Ephesians**

 Overall Theme:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Chapters 1-3 | The Glory of God in the Church |
| Chapter 1 | The glory of God in redemption |
| Chapter 2 | The glory of God in reconciliation |
| Chapter 3 | The glory of God in the revelation of the mystery of the church |
| Chapters 4-6 | The Glory and Pleasure of God through the Church |
| Chapter 4 | The glory of God in the unity and growth of the church |
| Chapter 5 | The glory of God in the imitation of Christ by the saints |
| Chapter 6 | The glory of God in victory of Christ |

#

# The Calling and the Conduct of the Christian (Ephesians 4:1-16)Bob Deffinbaugh at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/11-calling-and-conduct-christian-ephesians-41-16*](https://bible.org/seriespage/11-calling-and-conduct-christian-ephesians-41-16)

1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also 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 over all and through all and in all. 7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. 8 Therefore it says, “When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men.” 9 (Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) 11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of 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 a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

### Introduction

One of my favorite “healings” of our Lord, is recorded in the fifth chapter of the Gospel of John. For 38 years a man had been waiting near the pool of Bethesda, waiting for a miracle. The text tells us he was waiting for an angel to come and trouble the waters. If he could get into the pool first, this man believed, he could be healed.

One day Jesus came to that pool. Without being asked, Jesus approached the man and asked him if he wanted to be healed. The man responded that he did want to be healed, but there was no one who would carry him and put him in the pool. Jesus gave this man a simple command, “Arise, take up your pallet, and walk” (John 5:8).

It mattered not to the Jews that a man who had suffered for 38 years had been healed. What troubled them was that this man violated the Sabbath. He was carrying his bed. They were incensed and scolded the man for breaking their rules. I love his response. His defense was this: “He who made me well was the one who said to me, ‘Take up your pallet and walk’” (John 5:11).

So far as I can tell, this man did not come to trust in the Lord Jesus as his Messiah. When the man learned who it was who had healed him, he went to the Jewish leaders and reported His identity to them. Nevertheless, this man had one thing right. If Jesus was able to make his body whole, He also had the authority to command him to break the legalistic rules of the Jewish religious leaders.

There was a sequence to the command that Jesus gave this man. First, he was to stand up. Then he was to take up his bed. And finally he was to walk. Perhaps at the moment Jesus spoke this man felt life and power in his limbs. Sensing that he had the strength, he arose. From here on it was all down hill. There was no need to stay by this pool any longer. He was going home. And so he very naturally took up his bed and walked away.

As we arrive at the fourth chapter of Ephesians in our study of this great epistle, we move (as many inform us) from the “doctrinal” portion of the epistle to the “practical” part. This may be true, but the connection between chapters 1-3 and 4-6 should be as natural to us as is was to the crippled man to arise and take up his bed.

The instructions which Paul lays down in chapters 4-6 are not just duties, which the Christian is required to perform, they are to be understood as the outworking of the marvelous salvation which God has accomplished in Jesus Christ. Our obedience to His commands are the “good works which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). They are the actions which God’s grace and power has enabled us to perform, and which we gladly do, out of gratitude, to His glory.

This lesson is the first of a number of studies concerning our conduct as Christians, of the conduct which is befitting to our calling. Before we consider these final three chapters in detail, I want to pause long enough to reflect on the implications of our text. Before we begin to study the individual trees of these three chapters, let us pause to consider the forest.

### Observations on the Relationship of Chapters 1-3 to Chapters 4-6

**(1) Chapters 1-3 are doctrinal and chapters 4-6 are applicational.** Most students of Ephesians would agree to this two-fold division of the epistle. The first half of the book focuses on the doctrines which define the Christian’s calling, the second half has many instructions concerning the Christian conduct.

**(2) Chapters 1-3 precede chapters 4-6.**

**(3) Chapters 1-3 are foundational to chapters 4-6.** Chapters 1-3 provide the doctrinal basis for the application called for in chapters 4-6.

These observations may appear to be elementary, but even if this is true they are vital and they are often neglected in Christian thinking and practice. For this reason I want to explore some of the ways in which chapters 1-3 of Paul’s epistle to chapters 4-6.

**The doctrine of chapters 1-3 articulates the goal of our conduct, which is specified in chapters 4-6.** Contrary to some popular teaching, the goal of our conduct is not primarily our own success or happiness or fulfillment. I hear very few Bible teachers urging husbands to love their wives like Christ loved the church because marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. Instead we are told that when we obey Ephesians chapter 5 our marriages will be exciting and fulfilling and we will be the happier for our obedience. While there is an element of truth here, this is simply not the focus which Paul gives us in Ephesians. Marriage, like the church, is an institution created by God to portray a spiritual relationship, to the glory of God. The simple reality (as is implied in 1 Corinthians chapter 7) is that being a godly husband or wife may result in a divorce, precipitated by an ungodly and unbelieving wife or husband. When Paul carried out his calling, he ended up in prison. Ephesians 1-3 emphasize the eternal purposes of God and the fact that He has provided salvation in Christ for the praise of the glory of His grace. The fact that He has also provided for our blessing is also stated, but this is not God’s primary purpose. God’s primary purpose is to display His splendor and glory, to His own praise. Our primary purpose is to seek to bring glory to God, in what we do and in what we avoid. As Paul writes elsewhere, Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).[62](https://bible.org/seriespage/11-calling-and-conduct-christian-ephesians-41-16#P1463_430800)

**The doctrine of chapters 1-3 defines a new identity which every saint receives in Christ, which is the basis for his behavior as described in chapters 4-6.** Chapters 1-3 lay down doctrine pertaining to what we formerly were, apart from Christ, and now what we are in Him. Chapters 1-3 describe the Gentiles as formerly separated from Israel, and now united with true Israelites in the new creation of God, the church. Our change in identity will necessitate and bring about a certain alienation with the world. Chapters 4-6 spell out some of the changes which are required by our new identity. Our identity (chapters 1-3) is the basis for our conduct (chapters 4-6).

**The doctrine of chapters 1-3 prescribes the standard for our conduct, as is defined in chapters 4-6.** All of our blessings have been brought about in Christ. The church is the body of Christ, the temple in which Christ dwells. As Christ is the means by which God has provided for our salvation and blessing, He is also the standard for our spirituality and conduct.

In the days when we were apart from Christ, dead in our transgressions and sins, the world, the flesh, and the devil prescribed and enforced our value system and our conduct. When we were lost in our sins we were at home with the world and strangers to the people and purposes of God. When we came to faith in Christ we ceased to be strangers, alienated from the promises and blessings of God, and we became strangers and pilgrims in this world. Our identity in Adam is exchanged for an identity in Christ. Our close identification with the world has been exchanged for a union with the church, the body of Christ. The teaching of Ephesians 1-3 provides not only a new identity, but a new standard of conduct, one to which the world is opposed.

**The doctrine of chapters 1-3 describes the means for our conduct, as defined in chapters 4-6.** The Christian life is impossible. The standards are too high, to forces which act upon our flesh are too great. All of this can be seen in the description Paul gives in Romans chapter 7 of his own failure and frustration in trying to live a godly life by his own strength. In Ephesians 1-3 we are given not only the goal and the standard for our conduct, but also the means to live up to these standards.

**The power to serve God is not found in us, in our own striving or strength. It is the power which God Himself provides in Christ and by means of His Spirit.** Chapters 1-3 speak much of God’s power, which is at work in us, enabling us to serve Him in a way that brings Him glory (see Ephesians 1:19-21; 3:16-21).

**The doctrine of chapters 1-3 provides the motivation for our conduct.** The doctrine of chapters 1-3 contrasts what we once were, apart from Christ and what we now are and hope for in Him. Chapters 1-3 are all about the grace of God and this grace produces gratitude. Gratitude for God’s grace is one of the motivations for our service. Another is the hope and assurance we have of the fulfillment of God’s future promises. Another strong motivation is the knowledge of our eternal security (Ephesians 1:13), and that God has not only provided the grace to be saved, but also to serve Him, to His glory.

**Chapters 1-3 describe those things which are unseen and unknown to us, while chapters 4-6 prescribe that conduct which is seen.** We would never have known God’s eternal purposes, as Paul describes them in Ephesians 1-3 apart from divine revelation. We would not be aware of the fact that God is carrying out His work in the church for the instruction of the angelic beings, apart from divine revelation. Chapters 1-3 of Ephesians declare to us those things which we would not and could not otherwise know, because of our limitations as human beings. These unseen and unknowable truths become the basis for the behavior which Paul calls for in chapters 4-6.

**The doctrine of chapters 1-3 defines our conduct in time in terms of God’s eternal purposes.** Ephesians 1-3 reveals the general plan and purpose which God has for His church. This was formerly a mystery, but now has been revealed by the Spirit to the apostles. Paul’s stewardship was to declare this mystery, especially to the Gentiles. The purposes of God which shaped Paul’s preaching and his prayers is revealed to us so that our lives may conform to God’s will for His creation, and especially His church. The plan of God for the church corporately goes a long way in prescribing God’s will for our lives personally and individually.

**The doctrine of chapters 1-3, related to our salvation, is applied by chapters 4-6 to our sanctification.** The way we “work out our salvation” is consistent with the way we are saved:

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude (Colossians 2:6-7; see also Philippians 2:12-13).

Our heavenly calling (salvation) is the basis for our earthly conduct (sanctification):

If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all (Colossians 3:1-11).

**Chapters 1-3 of Ephesians speak of the Christian’s birth; chapters 4-6 speak of the Christian’s walk.** In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul has reminded us of our spiritual birth. He has contrasted what we once were, apart from Christ, to what we now are in Him, and the hope of the blessings which are yet to come. Now, in Ephesians chapter 4, Paul speaks to us about learning how to walk. In the first 16 verses, Paul speaks positively of our walk. Our walk is to be conformed to our calling. In verses 17 and following, Paul contrasts our new “walk” with the way we formerly “walked” as lost sinners.

In this lesson we will consider the “new” way of walking which we are to learn and to practice as believers in Jesus Christ. May God grant that we would understand Paul’s instructions and that our walk would be consistent with our high calling in Christ.

### Our Conduct and Our Calling (4:1)

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.

Verse 1 is founded upon a principle which underlies the entire epistle: **A person’s calling sets the standard for their conduct**. The higher one’s calling, the higher one’s conduct must be. The law of the land sets a minimal standard of conduct, which all are obliged to obey. Certain occupations in life set the standard of conduct at this minimal level. But when a nominee for the position of Supreme Court Justice is being considered, he is expected to maintain a higher standard of conduct. Inappropriate behavior toward the opposite sex, or racially prejudiced comments would be cause for serious investigation, as we have recently witnessed.

There is no higher calling than to become a part of the church, over which Christ is the Head and through which God brings glory to Himself. Consequently, we find many exhortations in the Bible to live in a way that is consistent with our faith (see Exodus 19:1-6; 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 4:32-40; Philippians 1:27; Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:12).[63](https://bible.org/seriespage/11-calling-and-conduct-christian-ephesians-41-16#P1483_439277) As Paul has depicted our high calling in chapters 1-3, he now sets out to challenge us to that conduct which befits our calling in the remainder of this epistle.

### Attitudes Befitting our Calling (4:2-3)

With all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

A high calling does not justify a haughty attitude. We have been called to a position of blessing and privilege, but this must not be distorted in any way promote pride. We are not any better than those who are lost. We, in our former condition as lost sinners are just like the rest of mankind. We, in our new condition in Christ are righteous and forgiven only because of what He has done. Our salvation by grace should produce humility and gratitude, but never pride. Thus, Paul spells out the attitudes which befit the Christian.

These attitudes which Paul calls for in verses 2 and 3 are necessary because they are the attitudes of our Lord Himself (see Philippians 2:5-8). If we are to reflect Jesus Christ to the world in which we live, then we must manifest His attitudes. Furthermore, these attitudes are those which promote Christian harmony and unity.

Verses 2 and 3 depict attitudes, not techniques or methods. In world, and even in evangelical circles, people are more interested in techniques than in attitudes. They buy books written by people who appear successful, and who tell them how to be successful, too. The Bible has little to say about techniques and methods. It has much to say about obedience and about the attitudes which are conducive to godly conduct. It was Simon Magus, you will recall, who was interested in techniques (read Acts 8:1-24).

The inference of these verses is that the church is not perfect, nor will it be, until the Lord Himself comes and transforms us completely into His own image.

8 Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. 11 When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known (1 Corinthians 13:8-12).

8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8).

2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is (1 John 3:2).

The descriptions of the church in Acts, the epistles, and in Revelation 2 and 3 all bear witness to the present imperfection of the church. One does not need to be patient with perfect people, nor to be forbearing. We need the attitudes Paul calls for because the saints are not yet perfect, and grace is required for us to live in peace and unity.

The attitudes listed in verses 2 and 3 are the outgrowth of our perception of how we compare with others in the church. The opposite of the attitudes Paul calls for (pride, impatience, pushiness, intolerance) are evidence of the fact that we think ourselves better than others. We read in Proverbs, “The poor man utters supplications, But the rich man answers roughly” (Proverbs 18:23). Why is this true? Because the poor man sees himself as dependent upon others, while the rich man thinks others need him. It is only when we take the place of the servant, like our Lord (see John 13; Philippians 2:1-8) that we can evidence the attitudes Paul requires of us.

Paul’s words in these verses remind us that Christian unity does not come naturally or automatically. Christian unity must be diligently preserved and promoted. We must be committed to the preservation and practice of Christian unity if it is ever going to be evident to the world about us. It is one of the sure signs that God is at work in and through us:

34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35).

20 “I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. 22 “And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me (John 17:20-23).

Another comment should be made concerning the attitudes which Paul has listed in these verses. While they are the virtues which our Lord manifested in His earthly life, and which we should evidence as well, they are not regarded as virtues by the world, but as weaknesses which should be set aside or overcome. The world does not offer seminars on humility, but on self-esteem and self-confidence. The world does not teach gentleness, but does give instruction in assertiveness. The attitudes which Paul proposes are those which the world opposes.

Finally, as regards the attitudes which befit our calling and which promote Christian unity, these are attitudes which will not be found in the flesh, but are the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. These attitudes are the fruit of the Spirit:

19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:19-23).

### The Basis of Christian Unity(4:4-6)

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

The unity of which Paul speaks is not that which we should strive to create, but rather than which we should strive to preserve.[64](https://bible.org/seriespage/11-calling-and-conduct-christian-ephesians-41-16#P1506_446063) The unity is one that exists by divine design and by divine creation. It is that unity of which Paul has already spoken in chapter 2:

For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:14-22).

There is “one body,” the body of Christ, the church. It is in this “one new man” that all who are saved, Jew or Gentile, are reconciled to God and to each other. There is “one Spirit,” the Holy Spirit, who has sealed us (Ephesians 1:13) and who enables us to grasp the hope of His calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance, and the surpassing greatness of His power (1:17-19). It is through the Spirit that the church is made the dwelling place of God (2:22).

We all share a common (one) hope, the hope of His calling (1:18), the full enjoyment of the blessings which God has brought about in Christ (1:3). We have one Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, who redeemed us by His blood and who is the head of the church (1:7, 22). We all share a common faith, all of us being saved in exactly the same way (see Romans 3:19-30; 4:1-16; Galatians 2:16). We all, whether Jews or Gentiles have but one baptism (1 Corinthians 12:13; see Romans 6:1-11). And as such, we all have one God and Father, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. With so much in common, we can see why Paul would speak of something which already exists in fact, and which needs to be preserved and promoted. The unity which we share in terms of our position, is also to be shown in our practice.

### Spiritual Gifts: Unity in Diversity (4:7-16)

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, “When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men.” (Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

The “But” of verse 7 seems to indicate some kind of change of subject. Verses 1-6 speak of what all Christians possess in common, which is the basis of their unity. Verses 7-16 speak of that which Christians individually possess uniquely, which is another contributing factor to Christian unity.

How can diversity contribute to unity? Let me turn your attention to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In what way would Adam and Eve better become one flesh, by being created exactly alike, or by being made very different from each other, but in a way they caused them to correspond to each other? The answer is obvious, isn’t it? The differences between Adam and Eve were by divine design, so that their unity would be complete. Apart from each other, they were not complete. This is why God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable [literally, corresponding to] for him” (Genesis 2:18).

The same is true of the unity which God has purposed for His body, the church. We share in common all of the things mentioned in verses 4-6. Nevertheless, we also are distinct in that God has given each one of us different spiritual gifts and different spheres of service. But when each believer finds his place of service and plays out his or her part, the whole body grows and fulfills its mission and ministry (4:16).

There are other texts which also teach us about spiritual gifts (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; 1 Peter 4:10-11). Our text in Ephesians 4 has some unique areas of emphasis. Let me identity these for your consideration.

**First**, The emphasis in our text is not on the Holy Spirit, who is the means by which Spiritual gifts are given and employed (see 1 Corinthians 12:1-11), but rather on the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the giver of these gifts. Spiritual gifts are gifts “of the Spirit,” but they are also gifts “from Christ.” It is as a result of our Lord’s victory, climaxing in His ascension (see 1:20-21), that spiritual gifts are bestowed upon believers. He, as the victor, has gotten the spoils of war. He, as the head of the church, distributes these “spoils” (gifts) to His body for the on-going ministry of the church.

**Second,** Paul here links spiritual gifts with the descent and ascension of our Lord. It is not easy to see how Paul’s use of some of the words of Psalm 68:18 here squares with the meaning of the psalm itself. We will not attempt to solve this problem. What we will do is to concentrate on why Paul uses these words.

In the context, Paul has been speaking of the attitudes which reflect Christ, and which facilitate Christian unity. The fundamental attitude is that of humility. I believe that Paul’s reference to Psalm 68 has a two-fold purpose. The first purpose is to show that spiritual gifts have their origin in the victory of Christ over the death, the grave, and His enemies. The second purpose is to demonstrate that spiritual gifts are intimately related to humility.

Did Christ give spiritual gifts to His church because of His ascension? Yes, He did. And how, Paul challenges us, did Jesus come to ascend? He ascended only because He first descended. Without His descension (so to speak) His ascension would have been impossible. I believe that this link between ascension and decension is the point of Paul’s words in verses 9 and 10. What Paul is showing us is that even in our Lord’s life and ministry the way “up” was “down.” Christ descended in order to ascend. So, too, as our Lord taught His disciples, the way to greatness is through service. If we are to employ spiritual gifts in a way that is consistent with the way our Lord obtained them for us we must humble ourselves as He humbled Himself.

**Third,** the gifts which are named are a small and distinct group. This list of spiritual gifts is very different from any other list. I believe that other lists encompass a broad variety of gifts, while this list of four or five gifts[65](https://bible.org/seriespage/11-calling-and-conduct-christian-ephesians-41-16#P1522_453813) encompasses just one category of gift. All of the gifts Paul names here are what we might call “foundational gifts.” These gifts are those which are necessary and essential for all other gifts and ministries. The apostles and prophets have laid the foundation for the church and ministry by inscripturating the teaching and doctrine of our Lord (see Ephesians 2:20; 3:5). Evangelists proclaim the gospel defined by the apostles and prophets. They are the obstetricians of the faith. And pastor-teachers are the pediatricians. All Christian ministry is dependent upon the operation of these gifts. The first two gifts I would understand to have been fulfilled by the apostles and prophets of the New Testament era. The latter two gifts continue to function in the church today.

**Fourth,** the spiritual gifts are viewed as given to the whole church, not just to one local church.[66](https://bible.org/seriespage/11-calling-and-conduct-christian-ephesians-41-16#P1524_455002) This realization has come to me slowly in the case of the last gift(s) mentioned, that of pastor-teacher. Usually, we think of this gift as functioning in the context of a particular local church. Usually, we would hope to find a pastor-teacher on the staff of a local church.

I am now beginning to wonder why pastor-teachers should not be considered a gift given to the church at large, and not just to one local church alone. We do not usually expect evangelists to restrict their ministry to one local church. Why, then, do we expect pastor-teachers to do so exclusively? I am inclined to think that each of the four gifts named in verse 11 are given to the church at large, and not just to a particular local church, which possesses them in a manner of speaking.

If you look at the Book of Acts and the epistles of the New Testament, you will find that teachers were not limited to one place of service, where they stayed for a long period of time. Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus, and to many other cities as well. Apollos also traveled from one place to another (see Acts 18:24-28), as did Paul. Never do you see a teacher in the New Testament staying on permanently in a local church as its pastor. This is an office which the Scriptures do not teach or require.

I think I am beginning to understand myself better as a result of my study of this text in Ephesians. I enjoy ministry in my local church, but I also find a strong inclination to exercise my gift of teaching in other contexts, outside the church. And so I minister in prisons, and have had the opportunity to teach overseas as well.

A few years ago, a godly Christian leader from India, Theo Williams, visited with the elders of our church. The elders asked him why it was worth the expense to send me all that distance to teach in India when they had godly Indian teachers there already. He responded that Christians in the West have certain strengths and perspectives which are needed by the church in India. He also quickly added that Indian saints have some perspectives very much needed in the West.[67](https://bible.org/seriespage/11-calling-and-conduct-christian-ephesians-41-16#P1529_457369) The ministry of pastor-teachers ought not to be hoarded, but should be shared in such a way as to benefit the body of Christ at large.

The epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, and especially his teaching here in chapter 4, raise some real questions about the doctrine of the “autonomy of the local church.” In the past I have been associated with churches and denominations which hold to the “autonomy of the local church” as one of the fundamental tenants of their doctrine. And yet, having heard this said repeatedly, I cannot think of a single biblical text which teaches this at all, let alone repeatedly or emphatically.

I suspect that this “doctrine” is a leftover reaction from the reformers to the abuses of the Catholic Church. If we mean by this that no man or no body is able to dictate truth and divine directives to the church at large, then I agree. But when we use this teaching to justify the independence of individual churches, rather than inter-dependence, we have gone too far. We have too little communion and cooperation among and between individual “autonomous” local churches. Paul’s teaching on the church should challenge our thinking about the church and about our practice as a local church.

I think that the term “church” is used more broadly in the New Testament than it is understood by Christians today. We generally think of the church in one of two ways: (1) the church universal—all believers of all the ages, living and dead; and (2) the church local—the believers who gather in a particular local church. Paul seemed to think more broadly. The “church” at Ephesus or at Philippi or Rome was not just one local congregation but all of the saints in that particular city. We should be thinking not only of our church, but of all the saints, in our city, in our nation, in the world. It was with this broader view that the predominantly Gentile saints in the newly born church at Antioch took up a collection for the needy Jewish saints in Judea (Acts 11:27-30). Let us think beyond our own individual growth and well-being, and even beyond that of our local church, but of the growth and maturity of the church at large, around the world.

One final comment about the larger dimensions of the church, as Paul speaks of it. We often agonize when someone leaves “our church” to go to another. There are times when we should be concerned. We should be concerned if we have failed as a church. We should be concerned if our church has failed to live up to its calling, and especially up to the Scriptures. We should be concerned if people have left for the wrong reasons, or have gone to a church that departs from sound doctrine and practice. But we should not agonize over everyone who leaves our church to serve elsewhere. The “church” is bigger than “our church” and God may wish to use the gifts of some of our former members there. They have not deserted Christ who have left our congregation to serve Christ in another.

**Fifth,** the emphasis falls not on knowing your gift, but on finding your place of service. From Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Peter 4:10-11 is seems impossible for one to be a good steward of the grace of God without knowing what his or her spiritual gift is. Having said this, I see many Christians waiting to serve until they have discovered their gift. This text in Ephesians chapter 4 may provide a happy solution. In this text Paul does not urge the saints to “discover their gift,” but rather to find their place of service in the body of Christ. I believe that as we seek to find a place of service we will also discover the gift or gifts which God has given to us.

Finding our place of service is not really that difficult, as I understand the Scriptures. The first thing we must know is what it is that God has commanded us to do. We are, for example, to minister to the orphans and the widows (James 1:27). We are to “contribute to the needs of the saints” and “practice hospitality” (Romans 12:13). We are to “admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, and help the weak” (1 Thessalonians 5:14). All we need to do is to look around us for those things which need to be done, which our Lord has commanded us to do. We should give a higher priority to those things which we do best, as good stewards of the grace of God. In so doing, we will discover not only our place of service, but those gifts which God has given us to enable us to serve. This is the emphasis which is evident in Paul’s teaching in Ephesians 4.

**Sixth,** the focus here is not on the individual, but on the contribution which the individual makes to the corporate body of Christ. Even though individual saints are addressed here, and each has his or her unique blending of gifts, the emphasis falls on the church. Often I hear the subject of spiritual gifts taught in such a way as to place the gifted individual in the place of prominence. Status is attached to the gift, and if not, then people are told that knowing and exercising their gift will give them a feeling of significance and fulfillment. This may well be true, but the focus is wrong. Spiritual gifts are not given to us for our benefit as much as they are given for the building up of the body of Christ.

Spiritual gifts, according to Paul’s words in verses 12-16, are given for the edification of the body, and to facilitate the ministry of the church as the body of Christ. Christ indwells the church corporately (2:21-22) and the church corporately ministers on Christ’s behalf. The church is the visible manifestation of Christ on the earth. Christ not only dwells in it, it visibly manifests Christ to the world.

So often, when the saints go to church, the go to be ministered to, not to minister. They go in order to be blessed, not in order to be a blessing. They leave, not asking whether Christ was exalted and whether others were edified, but whether or not they were blessed. Our text tells us that we are given gifts so that we may contribute something to the body of Christ, so that we may fulfill our mission to the church and through it.

**Seventh,** spiritual gifts are given to members of the church until that time when the church has finally reached the goal of Christlikeness (see verse 13). There are some who teach that spiritual gifts existed only in the early church of the New Testament, and that gifts are no longer needed or present in the church today. While this may be a quick and easy way to handle some of the more controversial gifts, it is throwing the baby out with the bath water. In the light of Paul’s teaching here, how can we possibly conclude that spiritual gifts no longer exist? According to Paul, spiritual gifts cease will only when the entire church has matured and has become fully like Christ. Spiritual gifts cease only when that which is perfect has come, and this will take place only when our Lord returns.[68](https://bible.org/seriespage/11-calling-and-conduct-christian-ephesians-41-16#P1540_464577)

**Eighth,** while every spiritual gift has its own particular function, Paul sets forth the goal of every gift functioning in the body for the corporate ministry and maturity of the body of Christ. By each and every member of the body of Christ ministering to the body of Christ, the church is built up toward the goal of Christlikeness.

**Ninth,** in this passage, Paul contrasts maturity and immaturity as it pertains to the church. Immaturity is to no longer be “like children” (verse 14). The early church did pass through its stage of infancy. As individual churches are established, they also must begin at the “child” state and grow to maturity. The same is true of individual believers. Children begin life totally dependent on their mother. Their identity is linked with their mother. And then (almost too quickly, it would seem), the child begins to gain his own identity, his own individuality. Now the child is only aware of himself, of his own wants and needs. But as a child grows older, he not only becomes more independent, he also becomes more able to serve others.

While this kind of child development is readily evident to us, this is not what Paul chose to emphasize. He focused on the instability and the vulnerability of children. Young children have a short attention span. They flit about, from one activity to another. They are gullible and they believe nearly anything that someone tells them. Doctrinally, an immature church is unstable, changing its doctrinal views as often as some self-serving religious huckster comes to the church.

This is not the goal Paul holds out for the church. His goal is that due to the active involvement and ministry of every member, the church will grow up to maturity. It will be marked by doctrinal purity and stability. It will discern those who hold to a different doctrine and refuse to be turned away from the truth. The mature church will be growing in Christ-likeness, never arriving at it in this life and never being content with how far it has grown. The mature church is committed to the truth of God’s revealed Word and ever seeking to be more closely conformed to Christ, its Head.

The mature church, Paul says, is “growing up into Him who is the head” (verse 15). On the face of it, this statement seems difficult to understand. How can the body grow up into its head? We are not growing up into the Head, we are growing up to be more and more like the Head, Jesus Christ.

Let me try to illustrate what I think Paul means. Christ is the “Head” of the body in several ways. He is also the one who provides for the needs of the body, and He also guides and directs the body. He is the One who is to be preeminent in the church, to receive the glory and honor. He is also the one who created the church, who brought it into existence by His incarnation, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. In this last sense, our Lord begat the church with the “imperishable seed,” through the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23). Maturity is becoming more Christ-like as we become more obedient to the Word of God, and as we become more like our Father. Just as a child is born with all kinds of genetic potentialities, which become more and more evident as it grows up, so we become more like we were destined to be as we grow up into Christ.

### Conclusion

The Christian’s conduct is to be based upon and consistent with his calling in Christ. He has been called to become an active, functioning member of the body of Christ. He has been called to obedience. The church is the dwelling place of God in the Spirit, and the instrument by which God demonstrates the glory of His wisdom, power, and grace. As we obey Him and manifest His likeness, we fulfill our calling.

Christian unity is not an option, it is a mandate. It is both that which we possess and must preserve, and that for which we continue to strive. It is rooted in the origin and the life of the church. It is to be preserved by those who possess a servant’s spirit, and who respond to the grace of God by being gracious to their brothers and sisters in Christ who, like them, are not yet perfected.

I have but two questions to ask you as we conclude this lesson. The first is this: Are you in the body of Christ? I did not ask if you were a member of a certain church or denomination. I am asking if you have ever trusted in Jesus Christ as God’s only means of salvation. Have you received eternal life by trusting that He died in your place, that He suffered the punishment for your sins, and that He rose from the dead for your eternal justification? If you have been “born again” (see John 3) by personal faith in Jesus Christ then you are a member of His church, the body of Christ.

Having asked this, I must press on to ask: Are you an active and vital part of a local church? The Bible never conceives of anyone coming to faith in Christ apart from becoming associated with a local church and then finding your place of service to the body of Christ. I do not mean to say that your primary service can only be in the local church, for there are those who serve the body of Christ in the context of para-church organizations. Nevertheless, every saint should be associated and involved in a local church. Every saint should seek to find his or her place of service. Every saint should seek not only their own growth and maturity, but that of the church at large as well.

Are you in the body of Christ by faith in Him? Are you actively involved in the body of Christ? Are you serving the body, playing out your role, and thus contribution to the growth of the body and the glory of God? I pray that you are, for this is surely what our text demands of each and every Christian.

62 This instruction, in the context of 1 Corinthians 8-10, clearly indicates the necessity of subordinating our pleasure to the glory of God. The Christian liberties we might otherwise enjoy are to be sacrificed for the edification of our brother, for the sake of the gospel, and especially for the glory of God.

63 See also Romans 12:1-2; Colossians 3:1-ff., especially verses 12-17; 1 Thessalonians 4:1; Titus 2:1; Hebrews 12:1ff.; James 1:21ff.; 1 Peter 1:13ff.; 2 Peter 2:3-11.

64 Note, however, that in verse 13 unity is viewed as a goal, but not something which we create.

65 There is considerable doubt (and even debate) over the question of whether 4 or 5 spiritual gifts are named in verse 11. “Pastors and teachers” may either be “pastors” and “teachers” or “pastor-teachers.” I am inclined toward the latter option, though the significance of this is of little import to our study.

66 When you stop to think about it, even some of the epistles which were addressed to one individual (Timothy, Titus, Philemon) or to a specific local church were both circulated (Colossians 4:16) and collected as a part of the New Testament canon, so that the whole church has been blessed by them.

67 I am reminded of Paul’s words to the Roman church, where he had not yet visited: “For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established” (Romans 1:11). It was not that this church had no other gifted teachers, but that Paul’s gift would benefit them in a unique way, in a way that the teaching of others could not.

68 In addition to this line of argument, let me suggest another. Spiritual gifts are supernatural abilities to carry out certain functions. The “functions” or ministries of evangelism, teaching, giving, exhortation, helping and administration are still necessary, and so are the gifts which supernaturally empower and enable them.

#

# The Head And The Body - Ephesians 4:15, 16

### by C. H. Spurgeon at [*https://www.monergism.com/head-and-body-ephesians-415-16*](https://www.monergism.com/head-and-body-ephesians-415-16)

*“The head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every* *joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”* - Ephesians 4:15, 16

IF I had to preach fully and accurately upon all that is taught in this text, I would certainly need to deliver a course of sermons, say five or six at least! There is such a wonderful depth of meaning in these Inspired Words that I might keep on expounding them and all the while be as one who takes water out of the sea–always wondering that there is so much more left than I can possibly draw from it. One writer says that the sense of this passage is as “compacted” as the joints of which it speaks, and that remark is a very true one, for here we have thought compressed as by hydraulic pressure! There is any quantity of it packed into the smallest possible space.

Our translation of the words here used by the Apostle is not, in every point, absolutely accurate. I wonder whether one could be made that would be so? We would need a paraphrase rather than an exact rendering of the original, for such is the fullness of meaning that no one translation into our poor tongue could really convey all that the Holy Spirit intended to teach by the Greek words. They seem to totter and tremble beneath the burden of the massive thought they are meant to carry. I am, therefore, only going to preach a plain, simple sermon upon the passage as it appears in our Authorized Version, which, though it is not strictly and literally correct in this case, is, at any rate, quite according to the analogy of the faith–and can be abundantly supported by other passages of Scripture of similar import.

Turning to the text, we find that the Apostle was very anxious that the saints at Ephesus should be knit together, like the different parts of one body. Unity is not an easy thing to attain. Have you found it so in your own family? In many large families and even in small ones, there are sometimes most unfortunate jars and disagreements–and it is a happy household, indeed, that is wholly joined together as one body. Look at the world in general, in its various corporations, societies and associations, and see what disunion and discord are manifested everywhere! Half the newspapers are occupied with reports of the squabbles in the different vestries, or in the big vestry that meets in the House of Commons–or the other one that assembles in the House of Lords. I suppose we would scarcely be men if we always agreed on all points. Certainly, there is plenty of division among us. We seem to remember the Tower of Babel and the dispersion, for our tongues are still confounded and we misunderstand one another! And what is more criminal, we often misrepresent one another and we are all too apt to forget our Lord’s Words, “It must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!”

Paul was most anxious to have the Ephesian Church thoroughly knit together. And the chapter from which our text is taken is all about unity and how to maintain it. With his manacled hands, the prisoner of the Lord writes to beseech them to be truly one–to walk worthy of the vocation by which they were all called by the one Spirit of God. He entreats them, with all lowliness, meekness and long-suffering, to bear and to forbear with one another in love. He most touchingly and tenderly pleads his own imprisonment as an argument with them to endeavor “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” “By the remembrance of my bonds,” he seems to say, “put yourselves into the blessed bonds of brotherly love.” And then he adds, “There is one body and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” Both in the inward creed and the outward confession of it they were all one–they were not divided on these points–so he begged them to be divided in nothing, especially as he was able to assure them that they had one God and Father, above all, through all and in all–and one Christ, the Savior of all!

When he reminded them that He who ascended up on high is the same Jesus who descended first into the lower parts of the earth, I think he intended to remind them of the continuity of the work of Christ–that it was the same Christ who both descended and ascended. There was no change in the Worker, for the one work was worked by the one Person, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Why, then, should we split up, divide and hold a hundred opinions as if Christ were divided? Paul tells us that when He ascended on high, He gave all sorts of officers that were necessary for His Church–Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists and so on–all for this purpose–“for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” It is this that the Apostle aimed at–that the saints should be one in Christ Jesus and then, remembering that one very frequent cause of division is the instability of many minds, he urged them to “be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.”

But that they might know what they believed and not be driven away from it with every puff of wind. That they might not be misled and deceived by the sleight of men, by cleverness, by magicians who spirit the Truth of God away–as so many religious tricksters are continually doing nowadays, establishing lies and overthrowing the Truth by their magical deception–Paul seems to allude to the casting of dice when he speaks of “the sleight of men.” And I am afraid that there are many people whose religion comes to them according to what they call, “luck.” They happened to be born on a certain street and their parents attended a particular place of worship, so they believed what was taught there. But if the dice had fallen in some other way, they might have been Muslims, or Mormons, or Roman Catholics, or God knows what, for they have not any solid reasons for believing what they are supposed to believe! They hold it, as it were, by a kind of chance and they are quite ready to let it go if “chance” should so arrange.

The Apostle beseeches us to guard against this evil and to hold fast the faith, to be established in it and to know why we believe it, so that, “speaking the truth in love,” we may grow up in all things into Christ, who is the one and only Head of the Church and to whom every living member is vitally joined. Every man who is indeed, saved, is a part of Christ’s mystical body and he is to develop in harmony with the growth of the entire body until he and every other one joined with him in the living structure shall attain to the stature of a perfect man–the whole Church with its Head, Christ Jesus, becoming God’s mystic, “perfect man” to be glorified forever and ever!

You see, dear Friends, that even when I am only trying to introduce this great subject to you, I am overwhelmed with the vastness of it! There is a mint of meaning. There are masses of un-coined bullion in the heavenly treasury to which the Apostle brings us! It is impossible for me to set forth all the spiritual wealth which is revealed here, but I shall endeavor to point out four things which are brought to our notice in the text. First, our union to Christ the Head. Secondly, our individuality–“joined together”–“that which every joint supplies.” And, lastly, our compact unity in the one Church of Jesus Christ “makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

1. First, then, Beloved, I have to speak to you concerning OUR UNION TO CHRIST. We cannot do better than begin with this great Truth of God–that Christ is the Head of His Church.

Hence, we learn, first, that union with Christ is essential to the life of His Church. Men sometimes lose a foot, or a leg, or an arm, or an eye, or an ear. It is very remarkable how a man may continue to exist after he has lost several of his limbs, but he cannot live if his head is taken away. Cut that off and the decapitated body is dead in an instant! So, Brothers and Sisters, the Church of God lives because Christ lives and its life is entirely derived from Him. If there were no Christ, there would be no Church. And if there is, anywhere, a body of professors without vital union to Christ, they are not a church! They may have the name of a church, but they are assuredly dead! The Spirit of God flows through Christ into the whole of His true Church, permeating every part of His wonderful mystical body. But the Spirit of God is first on the Head and in the Head–and then from Him the gracious unction of the Holy One descends to the entire body. Ask yourselves, dear Friends, whether you are joined to Christ. Do you belong to that Church which is really one in Christ–the true Catholic and Apostolic Church? By Catholicthe one and only Church of the livingGod! All who are in Christ belong to His Church, but those who are out of Christ are outside the pale of His Church and if there is a church that is not in Him, it is not Christ’s Church at all! So you see that union with Christ is essential to the life of His Church.

Next, union with Christ is essential to the growth of His Church. Christ’s Church must grow. We, as a Church, mustseek continually to increase. A living Church is not like the building in which it meets–the material structure may never be enlarged–but if the Church is a living one, it keeps on growing. The true Church of Christ in the world is always advancing and multiplying. As the Apostle says, in our text, it “makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” But, Beloved, there is no edification except that which comes from Christ! He is the Church’s true Teacher. He is the great Master Builder and it is by Him that the whole spiritual building is fitly joined together. We try to preach those Truths of God which are the nutriment of men’s souls, but they do not nourish them because they come from us–they only nourish them as they come from Christ! If you want to grow in Divine Grace, you must get from Christ all that is necessary for your growth. Do not think that Christ begins the great work and then leaves you to finish it. Oh, no! He makes us alive and He keeps us alive. He strengthens and develops the life that He has given–all its force and powermust come from Him. Need I remind you of this? Yes, for I find it necessary to remind myself and, therefore, I judge that Imust also stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. Not a step heavenward, not in the least likeness to God, not to the smallest degree of holiness can you proceed apart from Jesus Christ your Head! Never forget this fact, simple though it is.

Further, union to Christ our Head is also essential to our perfection. Will a time ever come when a saint will be perfect in himself, apart from Christ? Never, for we are only perfect in Christ Jesus, or, as the Apostle puts it, “You are complete in Him.” Shall I ever get to be so holy that I can stand before God without my Mediator? Shall I ever have a spiritual beauty of my own which shall render the imputed righteousness of Christ unnecessary for me? Never! For even in our highest estate in Heaven, we shall still need to have our vital union with Christ perpetually maintained. He is the Head of the Church triumphant as well as of the Church militant! He will forever be the Head of the Church made perfect as surely as He is the Head of His poor, weak, feeble, but ever-growing Church on earth!

Remember one more point, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, and that is that union to Christ the Head is essentialto every member of His Church–not only is it essential to the body as a whole, but to every member of that body in detail. It is no use for my little finger to have unity with my hand and my arm if that arm is not united to my body, and my body is not united to my head. So each Believer must be personally joined to Christ. Whether he is only comparable to a little finger, or is like the strong bone of the leg, he must equally be joined to the Head–the smallest member of the mystical body of Christ cannot live apart from the Head, nor can the largest member. All alike, both great and small, comely and uncomely, manifest or concealed, must draw their life from Christ the Head! You must do so, my Brother or my Sister in Jesus, and so must I–let us always keep this great Truth of God in memory–a church that is only united in itself, but not united to Christ, is no living church at all.

You may attain to the unity of the frost-bound earth in which men and women are frozen together with the cold proprieties of aristocracy, but it is not the unity of life! Or you may get the union of mere worldly enthusiasm in which men are fused together like molten metal, but the fire, if it is not of God, though it creates a certain sort of unity, creates not that living union which God designs and effects. The one all-important question for each of us is, Do I love the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, there is between my soul and my Savior a living, loving, lasting union. And if we all love Him, then Christ loves all of us, and we are living in Christ and Christ is living in us–and this is that marvelous miracle of union between the Divine and the human which, when men see it, are astonished! They cannot see the union itself, but they can behold its effects, as our Lord said, “By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love, one to another.” This was Christ’s prayer for us, for in that great intercessory supplication of His, He pleaded, first, for His immediate followers and then He added, “Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, who shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they, also, may be one in Us; that the world may believe that You have sent Me.”

That is the first point in the text, and a very essential one, our union to Christ the Head.

II. From that I want to lead you, Beloved, as best I can, to the consideration of the second point, which is OUR INDIVIDUALITY.

The Apostle speaks of “every joint” and “every part.” We are many as well as one and it is a great Grace of God when men and women merge their individuality in the community of which they form a part. Remember, dear Friends, that you, by yourselves, are not the Church and you must not always keep on saying, “we,” if you are not doing anything at all in connection with it! You are yourself and you must look upon yourself as a distinct individual–your first care, in the sight of God–must be concerning yourself. The body is made up of many bones, sinews, muscles, veins, arteries and so on, and each one has its special place and function. And each of you has a particular position and office in the corporate body which is called by the name of the Church.

Think of your individuality and think of it thus. See that you are really united to the body. It does not matter howbeautiful a member may be if it is not in the body, for it is not where it ought to be–and it is not where it will be of any service. There is an eye which has just been taken from a dead body. It lies on the operating table–what will you give for it? It is worth nothing and it must be put out of sight, for it is of no use. There is a finely-formed ankle, but it is useless apart from the rest of the body. How beautiful that leg is! Yes, but as it is not joined to a body, you must bury it out of sight. Now mark particularly what I am going to say and if any of you are wicked enough to misrepresent my words, on you will be the responsibility. This is what I say–Nobody can possibly have spiritual life unless he is joined to theChurch. “Oh,” somebody says, “Mr. Spurgeon said that people had no spiritual life unless they were members of his church.” He did not say anything of the kind and he never thought anything of the sort! “But he means that they must bemembers of the Baptist Church.” He does not mean anything of the sort! “Oh, but he means that they must be members of some visible church!” Well, we would have to talk a little while about that say that and I did notmean it!

I believe that every Christian ought to be joined to some visible Church–that is his plain duty according to the Scriptures. God’s people are not dogs, otherwise they might go about one by one. They are sheep and, therefore, theyshould be in flocks. If I meet a man all by himself, snapping at everybody–I may be called uncharitable, but, I should hardly think that he was a sheep–I would be afraid that he was a dog. But when I see a man who consorts with his fellow men, feeds with them, takes delight in their company and with them draws near to the Great Shepherd of Souls, I say to myself, “I think he must be one of the sheep, for that is the way in which that animal always acts.” So, Beloved, you should go in flocks or companies–that is to say, you should be joined to some Christian Church.

But I was speaking just now of the Church. There is a Church which is the Church of Christ. I see it not, but it is visible to Him who bought it with His precious blood. The members of that Church are scattered up and down throughoutall the world. Some are in this Church, some are in other churches, but Christ is causing that Church to grow up for Himself from the girlhood state, in which she now is, till she shall come to the measure of the perfect stature of what God designs her to be when she is ready to become “the bride, the Lamb’s wife.” This Church, chosen before all worlds, redeemed upon the Cross, quickened, fashioned and called out by degrees by the Holy Spirit and united to Christ, is the one of which you and I must be members, or else we shall be lost forever! See to it, then, dear Friends, that you are vitally joined to Christ’s Church and specially that you are united to Him who is the Head of it.

Next, we must be careful to find and keep our true position in that body. I call your attention to a point which maynot seem to be as important as it really is. A body owes its beauty, comfort, healthfulness, happiness–perhaps its very life–to the position of the different members of which it is composed. Any book on anatomy will teach you that this is the case. There is no other place where our eyes could be but just where God has fixed them. Try whether you can find another position where your eyes could be so fitted for their work as where they now are. Our feet, with which we walk, are the best members to walk with and they are put in the proper place for that purpose. Suppose they were attached to our shoulders and we had to walk with them? I do not know how we would manage it. And if our hands were where our feet now are, it would be exceedingly awkward and difficult for us to use them. We would, indeed, be monstrosities rather than men if any part of us should be shifted from its present position! When men write romances about mythical beings, they describe hideous creatures whose heads are under their arms, or like the fabled Cyclops, with one eye in the middle of his forehead–but Christ’s Church is not a monstrosity! Mind that you do not act as though you thought that she was.

Try, dear Friends, to be in the body of Christ what you were meant to be. I have known some men who were very eager to preach. They have had wonderful gifts of dispersion, but no power to gather or hold a congregation together. They have fomented a quarrel within a month and split up the church into fragments in order to purge it from some fancied evil–and they have purged it till there is nobody left in it! They think that it is the wickedness of men which makes hearers unwilling to listen to them, whereas it is only their own folly. They, who might have been useful as ears, listening to somebody else, are altogether useless as a tongue! Do not get out of your position, Brother, if you are already in it. But if not, get into your right place as soon as you can and do there what the Lord would have you do. Some persons have a very great gift of finding fault with other people, but I do not know any place that God has arranged in the body for

that particular faculty! It is a kind of disease or, rather, an evil spirit which needs to be cast out! If you who are thus afflicted would try to do something, yourselves, you would perhaps discover that while it is exceedingly easy to complain of others, it is more difficult to do your own work in such a way that people cannot justly find fault with you! Do, dear Friends, seek to have every joint and every part in their right place. Let every ligament and tendon of the body be just where it should be. If we were to put the doors of our houses where the windows now are–and to put the roof where the foundation stones are, we should have very strange houses–and you will not find a true Church of Christ unless every part of it is in its right place according to God’s order and arrangement.

A third thing about our individuality is that every part of the body should be careful of its own health. If I happen tobe only like a little finger in the body of the Church, it is a great pity that I should be ill, for the whole body will be affected. If my little finger is full of some evil complaint, it may cause great inconvenience to my whole system. Did you ever have a splinter in your hand and yet the rest of your body did not know that anything was the matter? Instead of that being the case, your finger has been of greater consequence to you than all the other parts of your body when it has once begun to smart and to be full of pain–and to swell and fester! Now, you little members, you can do any quantity of mischief if you like. It is possible for a Christian to have so little Grace, and so much sin, that he may cause pain to the entire Church of God. for people will point to the most obscure of you if you do wrong! They will say, “That is one of the people that go to the Tabernacle and no doubt they are all alike.”

It is very unjust to say that we are all like the worst person we have among us. If we have one especially godly and gracious member, the world never says, “They are all like he.” No, no! They say, “Ah, he is quite an exception! If they were all like he, then we would go there, too.” But they take as their standard and test the most sickly and unhealthy in the whole flock. Therefore, I pray you, dear members of this Church, ask God to make each one of you healthy in spiritual things. Do not think you are of no importance. Never belittle yourself by saying, “It does not matter whether I pray, or whether I live near to God.” It

does matter, Brothers and Sisters, for it may give some of us the greatest pain if we see

you behaving unworthily or living inconsistently with your profession. Therefore let your individuality lead you to see, first, that you are in the Church. Next, that you are in your right position in the Church. And then, that you are a healthy member of the Church, which is Christ’s body.

And, once more, be careful of your growth for the sake of the whole body. “Oh,” you say, “I do not know that I needto growgrow becausethe whole Church of Christ is to grow! Suppose that, when I was a lad, one of the bones of my arm had persisted in not growing. If all the rest of my body had been properly developed–what would happen if that particular bone did not grow? Why, I would have a short arm! Suppose that one of the bones of your leg had said to itself, "I am in the body and that is enough for me! I do not mean to grow any more.” You would have had to go hopping through the world with one short leg all your life–and that would have been a very uncomfortable thing for you–you would probably have had great pain as well as inconvenience. So, if one Christian in the Church does not grow, he will give trouble to others, for the next Brother to him is growing and it makes matters very awkward when some advance and others do not. I would like to have a Church composed of effective soldiers–but I suppose that I shall never have that. Usually we have a certain number of lame folk among us.

We cannot leave them behind, yet they cannot fight in our ranks. We cannot do as Gideon did with his followers–send the faint-hearted ones home. No, they will stay with us and their inefficiency cuts off a certain number of those who would be good for fighting, for they are so ill that they need somebody to wait upon them and, perhaps, a third of the Church has to be employed in driving the ambulances and attending to the invalids. Then, when the battle begins to get hot and we need all our regiments to the front, there is a certain number of soldiers who cannot stand fire–they turn their backs and so bring shame upon the Church. I wish it were not so, yet it often is because all are not of one heart and one soul–there is not the living unity that there ought to be, for then all would grow at the same rate and the body, growing harmoniously, would be strong and beautiful–and in the day of conflict it would be able to vanquish the foe. Look, then, to this matter, each one of you. Laggards, come on! You that have been slothful, quicken your pace! You that have been sick and weary, may God restore and refresh you, so that the whole body may be healthy and vigorous. So much, then, about our union to Christ and our individuality.

III. Now for a few words about OUR RELATIONSHIP TO EACH OTHER.

The Apostle says a good deal here about joints–“That which every joint supplies.” That expression conveys the idea of relationship and teaches us that

we are, in our desire and spirit, to be fitted to work with others. This bone is so wisely

constructed at this end that it fits into the next one and thus both work together. Our joints are very amazing things. This wrist joint is, perhaps, the most wonderful piece of mechanism in the world! The bones fit into each other so beautifully and work together so harmoniously. I know some Brothers who would make splendid men if all the rest of the people were dead, for they are very loving and amiable to themselves. They would be just the sort of folk to become hermits–shut them up in a cave with a bucket of water and a loaf of bread–and all their virtues would shine out! They have taken the motto which our Scotch friends link with the thistle and which I might freely translate–“Nobody shall touch me without catching it.” Whoever comes near them, they are always upon their guard. They are sure that person means them no good, so they repel his advances at once.

When we get such people as that into a Christian Church, it is very awkward for the rest of the members. It is as if we had bones in our body without any joints to them–they grate against each other and constantly wear each other away when they come into contact. Now, dear Friend, if you are in a Church, try to make yourself a bearable person as far as you can. Keep your own peculiarities, if they are worth retaining, yet do not display them so as to make yourself obnoxious! And do not let everybody, or even anybody, if you can help it, be obnoxious to you. Perhaps you have some bonejoints outside of you–if so, then pray God to make those joints fit into the persons that happen to be near you. In this wondrously complex body of Christ, we need to be jointed all over so that we may, in our various relationships, be to others just what Christ would have us to be!

Next, notice that the Apostle says that there is something “which every joint supplies.” So there is. Every joint supplies oil and if there were not any, it might be very awkward for the rest of the system. In the Church of Christ, which isHis body, we need the joint oil of love. If you are traveling by railway, you will see, when an express train pulls up, that a man goes round and puts fresh grease into the box to keep the wheels from firing. What a wonderful machine our body is, for it puts the grease into its own box and keeps all the joints right without friction by supplying them with its own oil! There are some Brothers and Sisters, with whom I come in contact, who expect me to find all the joint oil for them, but even then they are often very trying. Yet I must not lose my temper, or be at all hard with them! Well, I can supply the oil for my own joints, but you must put the oil into yours, or else we cannot work well together.

Perhaps someone says that there is no love in the Church. Quite right, Brother. You mean that there is none in you!Your bones have no joint oil. But if you had your own measure of holy, hearty love to your Brothers and Sisters, I believe that you would find that some oil would exude out of them, for there are none of the bones of Christ’s body that are quite dry. There is some oil in them all, although you may not know how to get at it. And some bodies that are called strange are so reckoned because, perhaps, they are better than we are. But if we could get at them in the right way, we would find them to be full of love and we would rejoice that we knew them. Do let every joint, therefore, take care to supply its oil when it comes into contact with the next bone.

In this way, we would aid the compactness of the body. That is the expression in our text–“compacted by thatwhich every joint supplies.” When all the bones work well together, they greatly assist the compactness of the body, for the muscles, tendons and so forth bind the whole together. The bones of the body are its strength and give it compactness–and so strengthen certain other parts of the system that are soft and would give way if left to themselves. So, in every Church, when there is bad doctrine preached, there are certain pieces of flesh that seem to give way under the heretical touch. Yes, but you who are like the sturdy, stiff old bones that do not give way, you must just stand firm and steadfast in the faith, whatever is preached! Stand fast by the Truth of God under all opposition, for so you will give compactness and stability to the entire Church! I pray that we may always have, in this Christian community, a number of godly men and matrons who know what they know, so that when the younger sort are a little perplexed, they may go to them and say, “Tell us, dear Brothers and Sisters, are we right or wrong on these matters?” And they will say, “We have tasted and handled the good old Doctrines of Grace and we are afraid that you will go quite off the right lines if you accept these new notions. Therefore, cleave to the Truth which you have received.” That is the way that the Church is made strong, by all the joints ministering the oil which holds it together, or helps to the harmonious working of all–the bones being themselves confirmed while strengthening others.

Besides that, let every member offer his own services to the Church. Let each one be doing what he or she can. No oneminister, no 20 ministers, no elders, if there were a hundred, no deacons, if there were a thousand, could ever fulfill all the ministries of the Church! God has given Apostles, Evangelists, pastors, teachers and so forth to bring the Bread of Life to us. That is the outward feeding of the flock, but, then, each living person must take the food into himself–the Church must edify itself. There must go on, within the Church, the proper processes of digestion and assimilation of the Truth of God, the reception of and yielding to the Spirit of God by which the Church is built up by itself, as well as by all the external influences which God has prepared for its strengthening and increase.

IV. Now I must close, for our time has gone, by only a few sentences concerning OUR COMPACT UNITY AS A CHURCH.

The Church of God should be one, but not piled into one heap. It should be one in Christ Jesus by a living union. May I ask each one of you whether it is so? Is the life of God in you, dear Brother, dear Sister? If it is and you feel that it is the same life which is in the other members, then you have a unity of the most indestructible kind–one which never can be broken! This union must be a growing union. We ought so to grow continually as to love each other better andbear with each other more and more. It is often my prayer for this Church, when I am anxiously thinking of the great work here, that nothing may ever arise to divide us in spirit and in love to each other. It is, to my mind, a standing miracle that all these years we have been bound together in the unity of the Spirit and in the bonds of peace. But, for the years that are yet to come, shall we quarrel with one another? Shall there be a root of bitterness to spring up and trouble us? I see no trace or sign of it at present, but before it does appear, I beg of you, by the years in which we have worked together, by the blessings we have been made to see, by the benefits which God has given to thousands of souls by this Church, let us not tear this garment of Christ, let us not do anything in any way by which our union may be marred. But let us be “compacted by that which every joint supplies.”

I may be speaking to some friends who are a little out of temper with a Brother or Sister. Go and settle the difficulty at once. Resolve in your heart that you will settle it tonight if possible. If you have any disagreements, if there is any coldness at all between you, before you come to this Table, bury it all! Get closer to Christ and then get closer to one another–and may our blessed Lord, when He comes, find us all one in Him! We ask it for His dear name’s sake. Amen.