

**Passage: Ephesians 4:1-7; 11-16 (prepared 7/19/09; preached 7/26/09)**

<sup>1</sup> As a *prisoner*<sup>2</sup> for the Lord<sup>3</sup>, then, I urge you<sup>4, 5</sup> to live a life *worthy*<sup>6</sup> of the calling you have *received*<sup>7</sup>.  
<sup>2</sup> Be completely *humble*<sup>8</sup> and *gentle*<sup>9</sup>; be *patient*<sup>10</sup>, *bearing with one another in love*<sup>11</sup>.  
<sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.  
<sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—  
<sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, *one baptism*<sup>12</sup>;  
<sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over *all and through all and in all*<sup>13, 14</sup>.  
<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us *grace*<sup>15</sup> has been given as Christ apportioned it.  
<sup>8</sup> This is why *it says*<sup>16</sup>: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.”  
<sup>9</sup> (*What does “he ascended” mean*<sup>17</sup> except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?  
<sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, *in order to fill the whole universe*<sup>18</sup>.)  
<sup>11</sup> It was he who *gave some*<sup>19</sup> to be *apostles*<sup>20</sup>, some to be *prophets*<sup>21</sup>, some to be *evangelists*<sup>22</sup>, and some to be *pastors*<sup>23</sup> and *teachers*<sup>24, 25</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> The opening of chapter 4 marks the principal transition of the entire Epistle. As is his method in other writings, Paul turns from the doctrinal to the practical. It must not be imagined, however, that the break is complete. Theology is not left behind but interwoven with the moral exhortations that make up the bulk of chapters 4-6. Nor does the liturgical style, so apparent in chapters 1-3, disappear altogether. The predominant hortatory element may reflect the content and method of Paul's sermons set here in a context of praise and worship. It is highly significant that the first item on the agenda is the need for Christians to live together in love and unity. (Exp.)

<sup>2</sup> By introducing himself here, again, as a prisoner for the Lord, Paul implicitly points to the level of commitment he expects of himself and of others. His readers will not have failed to note that he was a prisoner precisely because of his zeal for the sort of unity he now requests of them (NBC)

<sup>3</sup> since for Paul the whole sphere of Christian living was “in the Lord,” his imprisonment was to be seen as no exception. The phrase functions here to lend Paul's authority to the writer's pastoral appeal and to underline the seriousness with which it is intended. (WBC)

<sup>4</sup> The appeal is couched in urgent terms not easily translated into English: ‘the imperative ... excludes passivity, quietism, a wait-and-see attitude ... Yours is the initiative! Do it now! Mean it! You are to do it! ...—such are the overtones in verse 3’ (Barth)

<sup>5</sup> “therefore,” indicates that this ethical exhortation has its source in the earlier chapters' depiction of what God has done in Christ for human well-being. (WBC)

<sup>6</sup> What the apostle urges is that the Ephesians may lead the sort of life that matches their Christian vocation. “Worthy” (axios) is literally “bringing up the other beam of the scales” and hence indicates equivalence (TDNT, 1:379). Paul is insisting that there shall be a balance between profession and practice (Exp.)

<sup>7</sup> By definition it is a calling they have received (literally, “with which they were called”)—not one they have acquired by self-effort. Those who share such a divine call constitute the church, the called-out company (ekklesia). (Exp)

<sup>8</sup> tapeinos is a derogatory term suggesting low-mindedness and groveling servility. The adjective was redeemed by the gospel to represent a distinctively Christian virtue, and this euphonious noun was coined to stand over against the admired high-mindedness of the heathen (Exp.)

<sup>9</sup> it denotes controlled strength and not supine weakness (Exp)

<sup>10</sup> reluctance to avenge wrongs. It is to be displayed to other Christians and to everyone else (exp)

<sup>11</sup> Bearing with others means fully accepting them in their uniqueness, including their weaknesses and faults, and allowing them worth and space. It is only the love that is the power of the new age (cf. Gal 5:14, 22; 1 Cor 13), supplied by the Spirit of that age (cf. Rom 5:5), that can enable one to bear with others without expectation of reward so that their concerns weigh more heavily than one's own desires for personal fulfillment and peace of mind. Via the mention of love, the opening exhortation moves to the theme of unity that will dominate the rest of the passage. The transition is an appropriate one, for the absence of love always leads to the loss of unity. (WBC)

<sup>12</sup> “One baptism” is the external seal of incorporation into the body of Christ. Falling as it does in the second triad (related to Christ) and not in the first (related to the Spirit), it appears to indicate water baptism and not primarily the baptism with the Spirit of which water baptism is the sign. Baptism is one because it makes one. It provides the evidence that all Christians, without discrimination as to color, race, sex, age, or class, share the grace of Christ. If we ask why Paul does not at this point mention the other dominical sacrament, that of the Lord's Supper (cf. “one bread” in 1Cor 10:17), the answer may be that he regards the eucharist not as a prerequisite of unity but an expression of it. (Exp)

<sup>13</sup> It is worth noting that all this addresses unity both within the local congregation and, more especially, as a universal church. Many Christians have often been more keen to promote the loving harmony of a single congregation (even sometimes, alas, only of cliques within it!) than to deal with the divisions between churches (NBC)

<sup>14</sup> God reigns “over” (epi) all in his transcendent sovereignty. He works “through” (dia) all in his creative activity. He dwells “in” (en) all by reason of his immanent pervasiveness. (Exp)

<sup>15</sup> Not “saving grace” but grace-gifts

<sup>16</sup> Paul adapts the text of Psalm 68 to make this point... Jesus, in arising, is a conqueror. Once as conqueror had received tribute and plunder from the defeated he distributed most of these spoils to his soldiers. (IVP BB) the alteration from “received gifts for men” to “gave gifts to men.” Attempts have been made to account for the apparent discrepancy by the conjecture that Paul was quoting from memory and that his recollection was imperfect, or that he arbitrarily doctored the text to suit his line of argument. With more plausibility some have claimed that, under the inspiration of the Spirit, Paul felt free to amplify the meaning of the Psalm, since the giving is implicit in the receiving for. But it seems more probable that the apostle was drawing on an ancient oral tradition reflected in the Aramaic Targum on the Psalter and the Syriac Peshitta version, both of which read, “Thou hast given gifts to men.” Early rabbinical comments applied the verse to Moses when he received the Law on Sinai so as to bring it to the people (Exp)

<sup>17</sup> Either that the one who ascended on high also descended into Hades; or that the one who ascended is the one who earlier descended to incarnation and humiliation of the cross; or that the one who ascended also then redescended (in the Spirit) to bring his gifts to humankind. How do we decide? The phrase ‘the lowest parts of the earth’ is probably rightly interpreted by the niv and gnb, and especially the reb to mean ‘the lowest level (of the universe; as seen from heaven), down to the very earth’, and so we should exclude the first option. The third option is possible, but v 10 suggests that Christ ascends and fills the universe from heaven (see on 1:23 for this), rather than that he redescends from it to bring gifts. The second option is probably to be preferred; the point being that the one who ascended and now fills the world (and gives the different graces to us) is none other than the one who first descended in humility to incarnation and death for us (cf. 2:14–17). His coming (2:17) at the cross and resurrection brought us the Messianic peace, blessings and graces we enjoy. (NBC)

<sup>18</sup> Hendriksen (p. 195) sees the exalted mediator now filling the universe with blessings. But it is sufficient to recognize without further elaboration that it is with “his presence and himself” (Barclay, p. 122) that he fills all things (EXP)

<sup>19</sup> As in many ancient lists, some of these terms may overlap considerably (the Greek indicates an especially strong overlap between “pastors” and “teachers”). They share a common focus and basis of authority as bearers of Christ's message. The authority is resident in their message and spiritual gifting; as in the case of Jewish teachers of God's message (as opposed to the chief priests), none represents institutional authority in the sense of a supralocal church hierarchy, which does not seem to appear until the early second century. Together these ministers of God's Word were to equip all God's people for their ministry (4:12–16). (IVP BB)

12 **to prepare**<sup>26</sup> **God's people**<sup>27</sup> for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up  
13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, **attaining to the whole measure**<sup>28</sup>  
of the fullness of Christ.  
14 **Then**<sup>29</sup> we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by  
the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.  
15 Instead, **speaking the truth in love**<sup>30</sup>, we will in all things grow up into **him who is the Head**<sup>31</sup>, that is, Christ.  
16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as **each part**  
**does its work**<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> "Apostles" were literally commissioned messengers carrying out their sender's mission; as such, they were backed by the sender's authority to the extent that they accurately represented that commission; in the New Testament, the term applies to commissioned agents of Christ authorized in a special way (more authoritatively than others) to declare and propagate his will. (IVP BB)

<sup>21</sup> "Prophets" were spokespersons for God, whose role was known from the Old Testament and continued in the church; apostles were to prophets perhaps as prophetic judges (e.g., Samuel and Deborah) or leaders (e.g., Elijah and Elisha) were to other Old Testament prophets—with special rank and authority (IVP BB)

<sup>22</sup> "Evangelists," as proclaimers of good news (the message of Christ), were seen as "heralds," again a type of messenger. (IVP BB)

<sup>23</sup> "Pastors" were literally "shepherds" (used for overseers in the Old Testament, e.g., Jer 23:2–4), elsewhere in the New Testament identified as overseers of local congregations (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 5:1–2); they were called to shepherd God's people by declaring his message accurately (Jer 23:18–22) (IVP BB)

<sup>24</sup> "Teachers" were expounders of the Scriptures and of the Jesus tradition; if they functioned like Jewish teachers, they probably offered biblical instruction to the congregation and trained others to expound the Scriptures as well. (IVP BB)

<sup>25</sup> Shortly after Paul's time church leadership crystallized into a threefold ministry of overseer/bishop, elders and deacons. (NBC)

<sup>26</sup> "To prepare" (pros ton katartismos) is "to put right." In surgery katartismos is applied to the setting of a broken bone (BAG, p. 419). In the NT the verb katartizo is used for the mending of nets (Matt 4:21) and the restoration of the lapsed (Gal 6:1). (EXP)

<sup>27</sup> Preparing God's people means that it is the Saints job to build up and minister to the church. No clericalism here!

<sup>28</sup> He anticipates rather the coming of Christ which will consummate the cosmic unity inaugurated at the cross (2:11–22). By faith, and in our knowledge of the Son, we already participate in this unity (indeed it is given to us to 'maintain' [4:2]), but we yet wait to see it fully realized. At Christ's coming, and only then, shall we, the universal corporate church, 'form the Perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself' (NBC)

<sup>29</sup> Christ gave the leaders in the meantime to provide the direction the gospel and our hope point in. He gave them 'so that' we may no longer be trapped in the immaturity of infancy (prey to every pressure) but begin to grow up towards the anticipated maturity, that is, into the very likeness of Christ. (NBC)

<sup>30</sup> Paul contrasts the deception of heresy with the integrity of the gospel. The church cannot allow falsehood to go uncorrected, yet the truth must always be vindicated in the accents of love. "Speaking the truth" (aletheuontes literally, "trotting") is strictly "doing the truth" and may imply more than verbalization ("dealing truly" RV mg.). This fundamental concern for the truth is the secret of maturity in the church. (EXP)

<sup>31</sup> a baby's head is unusually large in comparison with the rest of its body. As it develops, however, the body grows up into a due proportion with the head (St. Paul's Gospel [London: Sheed and Ward, 1953], p. 84). Paul may not have had in mind this physiological analogy but it is instructive, nevertheless. (EXP)

<sup>32</sup> The word is really "furnishing" (epichoregia) or supply (Philippians 1:19). The choregos was the man who met the cost of staging a Greek play with its chorus. "If we want to be considered members of Christ, let no man be anything for himself, but let us all be whatever we are for the benefit of each other" (Calvin, in loc.)

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**NOTES and ILLUSTRATIONS**

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"There are two great moments in a person's life: the moment you were born and the moment you realize *why* you were born."

—Pastor Kirbyjon Caldwell at a Willow Creek Leadership Conference

The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

—Frederick Buechner, U.S. writer and preacher (1926–)

No man should be alone when he opposes Satan. The church and the ministry of the Word were instituted for this purpose, that hands may be joined together and one may help another. If the prayer of one doesn't help, the prayer of another will.

Martin Luther, "Martin Luther--The Early Years," *Christian History*, no. 34.

Four stages of growth in Christian maturity: Love of self for self's sake. Love of God for self's sake. Love of God for God's sake. Love of self for God's sake.

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux in *The Harper Religious & Inspirational Quotation Companion*. *Christianity Today*, Vol. 34, no. 2.

Alone I cannot serve the Lord effectively, and he will spare no pains to teach me this. He will bring things to an end, allowing doors to close and leaving me ineffectively knocking my head against a wall until I realize that I need the help of the Body as well as of the Lord.

Watchman Nee, *Leadership*, Vol. 9, no. 3.

Consider a tuning fork. It delivers a true pitch by two tines vibrating together. Muffle either side, even a little, and the note disappears. Neither tine individually produces the sweet, pure note. Only when both tines vibrate is the correct pitch heard.

Richard P. Hansen, "Unsolved Mysteries,"

The following is a fictional piece of satire from *Larknews.com*:

Julie and Bob Clark were stunned to receive a letter from their church in July asking them to "participate in the life of the church"—or worship elsewhere. "They basically called us freeloaders," says Julie. "We were freeloaders," says Bob.

"Mega-Church Downsizes, Cuts Non-Essential Members," Larknews.com (September, 2006)

Julie and Bob Clark were stunned to receive a letter from their church in July asking them to "participate in the life of the church"—or worship elsewhere. "They basically called us freeloaders," says Julie. "We were freeloaders," says Bob.

In a trend that may signal rough times for wallflower Christians, bellwether mega-church Faith Community of Winston-Salem has asked "non-participating members" to stop attending. "No more Mr. Nice Church," says the executive pastor, newly hired from Cingular Wireless. "Bigger is not always better. Providing free services indefinitely to complacent Christians is not our mission."

"Freeloading" Christians were straining the church's nursery and facility resources, and harming the church's ability to reach the lost, says the pastor. "When your bottom line is saving souls, you get impatient with people who interfere with that goal."

Faith Community sent polite but firm letters to families who attend church services and "freebie events," but never volunteer, never tithe, and do not belong to a small group or other ministry. The church estimates that, of its 8,000 regular attendees, only half have volunteered in the past 3 years, and a third have never given to the church.

"Before now, we made people feel comfortable and welcome, and tried to coax them to give a little something in return," says a staff member. "That's changed. We're done being the community nanny."

Surprisingly, the move to dis-invite people has drawn a positive response from men in the community who like the idea of an in-your-face church. "I thought, *A church that doesn't allow wussies—that rocks*," says Bob Clark, who admires the church more since they told him to get lost.

Joel Kilpatrick, "Mega-Church Downsizes, Cuts Non-Essential Members," Larknews.com (September, 2006)

***Well... we'll never be a church that says, "Get Lost"... but we will be the church that says,***

We welcome and accept people wherever they are in their faith journey, and trust God to take them where He wants them to be, and on His timetable.

... and recognize that a "faith journey" is indeed a journey towards a destination...

That destination... according to the Ephesians passage... is a Body of Christ that has grown up and is making a difference...

***God is calling us to grow up... into a singularly gifted body.***

**God is calling us to grow up... into a singularly gifted body.**

*Eph 4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

**P1 – The gift of singularity – We are called to bridge the gap between profession and practice (1-6)**

1. ... as a prisoner, I urge you, to live a life worthy of the calling...
  - a. We are called to look like Christ... and sometimes we do!
    - i. (Trip showed me slideshow of franciscian brothers...)
    - ii. Humble, gentle, patient and bearing one another... an attitude of strong self restraint...
      1. humble = derogatory (like retarded)... so heavenly minded that no earthly good
      2. Gentle = controlled strength not supine weakness
      3. patient = reluctant to avenge wrongs
      4. bearing one another = (seeing each other as a "cross to bear) like Christ
  - b. Elle Page – coach helps bridge the gap between belief and what is... (utter failure v. good with hard soil)
2. ... keep the unity... there is One body, one Spirit, One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God (of all, over all, through all, in all)
  - c. One, holy, catholic, and apostolic – Creedal calling... Holy=alignment, catholic=universal, apostolic=teaching (later)
  - d. Sacramental oneness – baptism - outward symbol of unity with Christ and His Body
3. Image here is of stepping into St. Patrick's breastplate... strength through Christ before, behind, right, left, above, below, IN

**God is calling us to grow up... into a singularly gifted body.**

**P2 – We are gifted with Grace to attain the "stature" of Christ (7-13)**

1. Followers of a conquering King... giving out gifts of grace...
  - a. (read v. 8-10) Paul is quoting Psalm 68 to say, poetically in their idiom, that Christ arises as conqueror

<sup>8</sup>This is why it<sup>[a]</sup> says:

"When he ascended on high,  
he led captives in his train  
and gave gifts to men."<sup>[b]</sup><sup>9</sup>(What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions<sup>[c]</sup>? <sup>10</sup>He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

- i. Over death!
- ii. With plunder!!

- b. Grace is enhanced in Eph. >>> Image is of Conqueror who not only heroically comes out of darkest of prisons with prisoners... but also graciously giving gifts to those behind him...

<sup>11</sup>It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

2. ... the gifts... he gave some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers
  - c. Specific gifts for specific purposes – not elected offices
    - i. Apostles = those extending the message to new places (Ralph Winter)
    - ii. Prophets = tell it like it is...
    - iii. Evangelists = Apologists... connecting with pagans (Maia... Are Jesus and Adam brothers?)
    - iv. Pastor-teachers = combined office of local teaching and care

d. Overarching purpose – service to change this world!

3. Caldwell and Buechner...

"There are two great moments in a person's life: the moment you were born and the moment you realize *why* you were born."

—Pastor Kirbyjon Caldwell at a Willow Creek Leadership Conference

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**P3 – Christianity is a Team sport... not an individual relay (oxymoron!) (14-16)**

<sup>14</sup>Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup>From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

1. ... no longer infants... but growing up into Him who is the head...
  - a. Weird image... bodyless Christ... waiting for us to grow (he could use the rocks to cry out... but bets the farm on me!)
  - b. Weirder image... infants tossed on waves... Beach days... lifejackets... Caleb getting away a bit... at least they could easily find him with his yellow life jacket... WEIRD IMAGE... but accurate if we're being tossed around!
2. ... the whole body... grows... as each part does its work...
  - c. Mechanism = speaking the truth in love (TO EACH OTHER)
  - d. Martin Luther

No man should be alone when he opposes Satan. The church and the ministry of the Word were instituted for this purpose, that hands may be joined together and one may help another. If the prayer of one doesn't help, the prayer of another will.

Martin Luther, "Martin Luther--The Early Years," Christian History, no. 34.

3. Contemporary example... GenCon of ECUSA... Weird (not reality!) focused on word Ubuntu (I in you and you in me) v. Kenyan (we are... because He is)... head, gifts, together on mission...

***God is calling us to grow up... into a singularly gifted body.***

**A – Application Points**

1. Who can you bless with this information?
  - a. Do you know anyone who thinks they don't have a purpose... esp. here?
2. What do you need to discuss with your life group?
  - a. Are you even IN a small group?

- b. Do you think you could have a gift to give others?
- 3. What can we pray with you about? (What does the Spirit need to heal? What does the Spirit need to embolden?)
  - a. Embolden you to use your gifts