

EPHESIANS

Part 7 “The Call of the Church”

Ephesians 4:1-16

Sunday, September 30, 2018

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Scripture Reading

4 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. ⁸Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,
and he gave gifts to men.”

⁹(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. ¹

Almighty and Everlasting God, we thank you for the miracle of the gospel and the mystery of the church. As we look into your revealed words, may your Spirit give us eyes the calling you have gives us in Christ your Son. AMEN.

Introduction

- Words are tricky things; Solomon’s misuse of the word “specific”; My misuse of the word “fertile.”
- It is my conviction that we often misuse the word “church.”
- A building where people meet to share preferences; an echo chamber

¹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Eph 4:1–16.

- A place that hurts people - leave for a individualist spirituality or leave the faith altogether
- According to the New Testament, the church is not a brand or a building or an event. The church is the body of Christ, the temple and dwelling place of the spirit, a royal priesthood and a holy nation.
- But at its root, the church is a group of people with a calling.
- In fact, that's exactly what the Greek word for the "church" means.
- That Greek word is "ekklesia" (ἐκκλησία), which is a Greek compound word that literally means "called out."
- To understand the church you have to understand the calling of the church.
- It is a gathering. But a gathering that is summoned called out.
- But called to what? Today's text will answer that question.

Exposition

1. Called to a Manner

- "Therefore"; because of the miracle of the gospel and the mystery of the church.
- We are God's people.
- Our calling is gloriously incredible. It is a privilege that must not be overlooked. Paul is saying, "let's walk in a manner worthy of that reality."
- What does that manner look like?
- All of the descriptors of this manner are necessarily relational. Paul is talking about the relational culture that should be displayed when a church really starts taking the gospel seriously.
- Relational humility – doing nothing from a posture of pride; or puffing oneself up at the expense of putting others down. You cannot be humble and constantly be judging other people, and fill your thoughts with how they have missed the mark. All other Greek authors at the time uses this word (ταπεινοφροσύνη) negatively; only Christians viewed humility as a virtue.²
- Relational gentleness – like a good surgeon or dentist, taking care not to wound his or her patient in an unnecessary way - gentleness is not weakness, but a consideration of the other.

² "ταπεινοφροσύνη, ης, ή (s. prec.; Epict. 3, 24, 56; Jos., Bell. 4, 494, both in a pejorative sense) in our lit. only in a favorable sense (τὸ τῆς τ. δόγμα Orig., C. Cels. 6, 15, 23; ταπεινοφροσύνης σωτήριον Did., Gen. 70, 26) **humility, modesty Phil 2:3** (in dat. of the motivating cause); **1 Pt 5:5**; 1 Cl 21:8; Hs 5, 3, 7 (of humility that expresses itself in fasting; Leutzsch, Hermas 425f, n. 441). " William Arndt et al., [*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 989.

- Relational patience – pursuing peace and calmness in the midst of struggle and pain and even provocation; giving people a safe place to fail and be corrected; giving people time to grow and be transformed.
- Bearing with one another in love – letting love being the driving value; desiring and pursuing the very best for someone else, even when it means sacrificing. Always assuming the best instead of the worst of people and their motives.
- These virtues lead to unity and peace among God’s people.
- It may be helpful to think of the opposite of these virtues.
- Instead of humility we often settle for comparison or competing in a hunger games fight for validation.
- Instead of gentleness, we settle for pettiness, passive aggressiveness, sharp speech, and gossip when those don’t work.
- Instead of patience, we settle for impatience and frustration when circumstances or people don’t work on our timetable or sense of urgency.
- Instead of bearing with one another in love, we let love of self, love of preference, and “being right” that over-shadows our love of neighbor and God’s love for his people.
- These lead toward disunity, divisiveness, and drama.
- Example: Early conflict in leadership meetings and the commitment to handle conflict in a different way.
- Within God, there are three persons of the Divine Godhead who exist in a state of eternally loving and glorifying one another as one God. This, the Bible says, is the fountain and foundation of all reality.
- The oneness of God is to be modeled by the oneness of the church.
- When we love one another humbly, gently, patiently, and enduringly we are displaying the reality of God.
- The converse is true as well.
- When we live for ourselves grasping for our own glory and recognition and pride, we are going against the grain of the universe, and we are failing to show the gospel we claim to believe.
- William Barclay writes, *“To live in a manner which mars the unity of the Spirit is to do despite to the gracious reconciling work of Christ. It is tantamount to saying that his sacrificial death by which relationships with God and others have been restored, along with the resulting freedom of access to the Father, are of no real consequence to us!”*³
- Pursue this urgently, with eagerness and effort.

³ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 280.

- Our love for one another shows how much we really believe this gospel.
- They will know we are his by our love for one another.
- Unity is not uniformity.
- In fact, there is a glorious diversity of gifting in the body of Christ.

2. Called to a Ministry

- Everyone has been graced with a measure of Christ's gift.
- Christ gives gift to the church in the form of people.
- Leaders are gifts given to the church by Jesus.
- Here are a few examples of gifts in the church:
 - Apostles – those who are both sent ones and sending ones; modern apostles are include church planters and missionaries and Christian entrepreneurs.
 - Prophets – those who are truth tellers and proclaim a vision of God's future; prophets challenge the status quo and keep the church driving forward.
 - Evangelists – those who announce good news; evangelists are passionate about those who do not yet believe.
 - Shepherds – those who give care and counsel; Shepherds (or pastors) are passionate about God's people who already believe, but need help and support and leadership; shepherds track down lost sheep and seek to mend their wounds.
 - Teachers – passionate about God's understanding and communicating God's word, so that God's people truly know God and live according to his word.
 - This list is not meant to be an exhaustive list.⁴
- The focus of leadership is not to be those to whom ministry is outsourced.
- The focus of leadership is to equip the body for ministry.
- A few weeks ago a woman from New Hope Church told Pastor Bennie Anderson what she thought about the conference. She said she had never been taught stuff like this before. It began to change her paradigm about the nature of the church.
- She once thought that if only they had a leader to do better ministry the church would grow.
- She now understood the leaders have a responsibility to equip; and that members have a responsibility to be equipped and get in the game.
- Church about preferences or mission; not both.
- You need to catch a vision for your life that is all about Jesus.

⁴ “The New Testament contains five such lists (Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Cor. 12:8–10, 28–30; Eph. 4:11–12; cf. 1 Pet. 4:10–11) which between them number more than twenty different gifts, some of which are not particularly spectacular (cf. Rom. 12:8). Each list diverges significantly from the others. None is complete, but each is selective and illustrative, with no effort to force the various gifts into a neat scheme. Even together all five do not present a full catalogue of gifts.” Ibid., 298.

- We need to catch a vision of church that is all about Jesus.

3. Called to a Maturity

- Why do church leaders exist? To put on events or make bigger services? To raise more money and have bigger budgets? To be perceived as important or significant? To be everybody's personal friend?
- No. The purpose of leaders in the church is to equip (καταρτισμός)⁵ the body for ministry, so that the body⁶ can grow into maturity (i.e., Christ-likeness).
- Leaders promote maturity where there is immaturity
- Leaders promote truth where there is error
 - Speaking truth in love; this is sound counsel in conflict management
 - But the context is the church: to correct bad doctrine or false teaching with gentleness
 - But to fail to tell the truth is not love
- Leaders promote direction where there is chaos
 - The importance of focus and clarity
- Leaders promote health that naturally leads to growth
 - Health must be the goal; not growth for growth's sake
- In sum leaders, promote Christ-likeness in the body of Christ
- Discipleship
 - Includes access to information (i.e., Ministry Grid)
 - But also an embodied skill; a rhythm and a way of life
- Example of Jake Weidmann, Master Penman
 - Once a highly sought after skill that was a guarantee to success
 - Currently 12 master penmen in the world (Jake is the youngest by three decades)
 - This can only be passed down by direct apprenticeship
 - Christianity is not all that different
 - Family discipleship
 - We need all hands on deck

Conclusion

- These callings of the church are rooted in Christ
- The interesting take on Psalm 68

⁵ “καταρτισμός, οὐδ, ὁ (s. prec. two entries; as medical term [Soranus 150, 8]: ‘setting of a bone’, etc. But more gener. PTebt 33, 12 [112 B.C.] ‘preparation’ ἀύλη; cp. CMRDM 1, 121 s. New Docs 3, 70, no. 42; PRyl 127, 28; Sym. Is 38:12 ‘restoration’) ext. fig. sense (not found in ins or pap) *equipment, equipping* εἰς τι *for someth. πρὸς τὸν κ. τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας to equip God’s people* (lit. ‘the holy ones’) *for service Eph 4:12*, though *training, discipline* (L-S-J-M) deserve consideration as glosses for κ.—DELG s.v. ἀραρίσκω. M-M. TW.” Arndt et al., 526.

⁶ O’Brien, 313.

- *"You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there." (Psalm 68:18, ESV)*
- In the ancient Near East, when kings were victorious in battle, they would often times take spoil and prisoners from their defeated enemies
- This is what happened when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem
- He took treasures from the temple, and he took some of the best and brightest people of Jerusalem to serve his royal court in Babylon, like the Prophet Daniel.
- In Psalm 68 God is pictured as the conquering king with various images of the Exodus.
- *"Therefore it says, 'When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.'" (Ephesians 4:8, ESV)*
- But Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, has a slightly different take on this text.
- Here Christ is presented as the conquering king; his death and resurrection are the new exodus.
- He has defeated the power of death.
- But he is a conquering king who does not take his spoils but gives gifts to those he rules.
- We have been invite to share in his reign and his mission.
- Our job is to tell this world this king and his kingdom is coming.
- This is good news.
- May we walk in a manner worthy of this call, may we embrace our ministry, may we grow into the fullness of Christ! AMEN.

Discussion Starters for Community Groups

- 1.) In your own words, summarize the big ideas of Ephesians 4:1-16.
- 2.) Paul commands Christians to walk in "a manner worthy" of their calling. According to verses 4:1-3 what does this "manner" look like? What would the opposite of this "manner" look like?
- 3.) According to verse 7, all Christians have been graced with a measure of Christ's gift. That is, we all have a gift or gifts that we can use to bless the body of Christ. How have you seen the gifts of others be a blessing to the body of Christ? How might you be a blessing to the body of Christ?
- 4.) According to this passage, what is the job of leaders in the church? Likewise, what are some biblical responsibilities for members of the body of Christ?

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