

Letters come from a friend a longed for communication of the old school.

Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus a letter not one with chapters and verses but a letter.

If you have never done so then I would encourage you to read through one of Paul's letters in its entirety as a letter, Ephesians is a good one to go through as it contains much that is encouraging and challenging.

We are going to take a small look at one section, so I will set the scene for you for our section today.

So with that in mind let us pray and come to God's word.

If you have your Bibles would you turn to Ephesians chapter 4 we will be reading verses 1-16.

Ephesians 4:1-16

### *Unity in the Body of Christ*

**4** I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

<sup>7</sup>But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. <sup>8</sup>Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people."

<sup>9</sup>(When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended<sup>a1</sup> into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup>He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) <sup>11</sup>The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. <sup>14</sup>We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. <sup>2</sup>

In love we have unity in love we have growth and are built up in love. Agape self giving, love, the highest of the categories of love in the ancient world! It is this love that God the Father has for us, it is this love that propelled Jesus to cross for our sins it is to this love that the Spirit calls, equips and sends.

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

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<sup>1</sup> Other ancient authorities add *first*

<sup>2</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version\*](#). (1989). (Eph 4:1–16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

<sup>3</sup> making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

We have here an appeal, an urgent and insistent appeal to live a life worthy of the calling, which is the calling of the gospel. For those who are in Christ those who have been brought from death to life, through the saving blood of Jesus Christ, chosen to be on the team in the family of faith. Who have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms, chosen from before the foundation of the world, saved sanctified, redeemed, reborn and regenerated are here urged to live a life consistent with all that Christ has done, and is doing in and for them. Not only for them individually but also and more importantly how we are to live together in community in the church. This being the specially ordained gathering of God's people.

If ever you are wanting an outline of what Jesus has attained for us, of who we are in Christ and then what and how we are to treat one another then this short letter to the Ephesians is one worth spending time pondering and studying.

It is an age old question one which Jesus talked about which you can read about in the gospel of John. The prayer of Jesus' that his disciples would be one as he and the Father are one. That unity of the gospel that unity of faith that sees Christians being one with believers all around the world, of this time and also of other times and places.

So the appeal holds true to us here in this place and this time as it was for Ephesus or for Europe, Asia, America, Australia.

We are called urged in fact to maintain unity making every effort to attain the unity of the Spirit. In humbleness gentleness and patience bearing with one another in love.

Why do we so desperately need this unity?

Is it not because God Himself in his threefold being is in constant unity? Is it not due to the fact that in Christ we have joined that union? Is it not because this is the essence of the call of Christ, the unity of the body of Christ.

Because Jesus prayed that his disciples would be as united as one as He and our Heavenly Father were one, after his ascension did not the Holy Spirit come upon the church in power and give it union with one another and with God.

Christ' death on the cross gives us the ability to be truly united to one another as no other action can, for in it we have forgiveness of our sins, and we are made right with God, reconciled to Him, and in turn we are to be reconciled to our fellow believers our brothers and sisters in Christ! Is it not written that we cannot claim we love God whom we have not seen if we do not love our brother whom we have seen? This theme of unity of oneness in Christ Jesus our Lord infuses the New Testament. It becomes one of the marks of the church that through Jesus we who have been far of from God, dead in our trespasses and sins, aliens to the promises of God, strangers to the covenant of God, have now been brought near, been included, chosen and made new in Christ and are being formed into a new body a new ekklesia in Christ for His glory. In light of all that Christ has done the immeasurable riches and grace he has poured out for us is it any wonder that Paul urges us to maintain that unity which has come at such a price.

Richard Wumbrand was known to say that in prison in communist Romania there was no place for theological differences among those imprisoned for Christ' sake. That there in that place among others whom Christ had died for and on whose account they were in prison there was unity regardless of denomination and background.

Yet unity does not come easily does it? It is not always easy to live in unity nor is it always easy to work through issues which can threaten our unity especially when we are well off and at ease. Unity is a grand ideal and on the surface one that we can easily give our ascent to. Of course we strive to be united but it is not our fault, if only they would see some sense and admit they are wrong and I am right then we could all get along! Isn't that the way it works?

Of course not. Unity cannot be manufactured in the abstract it has to come down to and be worked out in the nitty gritty of daily life!

Unity flows out of what Christ has done is doing and will do, it is found in the unity and oneness of the gospel itself.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. <sup>3</sup>

It is in that and from that oneness that the unity of the Spirit that bond of peace flows, it is a gift of grace a gift of God!

And it is worked out in our daily lives.  
How?

We are not left alone to think up how it will be worked nor in the places it will be worked out. Paul spends most of the rest of the letter telling us. Nice of him really, it is like God was wanting to spell it out for the church at Ephesus and for us here in this place and time

It is to be worked out in the church, the home the workplace, really it is to be worked out in all of our lives. Following Christ does not end at the church door, it does not stop at our property boundaries, it is not laid aside when we enter into our workplaces, following Jesus encompasses all of life! There is not one sphere of our lives which it does not impact and so it must!

It must impact all of our lives, for the call of God is for all of us not just this sphere or another but all. Just as God the Father is above and in all!

So how then?

First sphere that Paul tackles is the that of the church. It is practical and all encompassing, it is a brief yet telling outline of the purpose of the church, how it is run and for what purpose.

<sup>7</sup> But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. <sup>8</sup> Therefore it is said,  
"When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive;  
he gave gifts to his people." <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version\*](#). (1989). (Eph 4:4–6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

<sup>4</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version\*](#). (1989). (Eph 4:7–8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

What we have in Jesus, what we have has been given to us and it is all of grace! In other words it was not due to our work, our mana, our ego, our money or position it was all of grace, it is gift. He gave gifts to his people. Note especially that it is each of us was given grace, each of us was given gift. No one was left out no one was missed out or fell through the cracks in the distribution of gifts, Each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift!

There is not room for us to say, we missed out, that the grace of God in Christ somehow was not big enough to include me! Each of us, was given grace, it was grace that saved us, raised us from death to life, grace the revealed God's love in Christ to us, grace that offered us freedom from sin, grace that drew us into God's presence in Christ, grace.

What was that grace in this first instance in this sphere of the church?

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.<sup>5</sup>

Leadership in the church comes as a gift from Christ, and it is for a specific purpose, it is so that the whole body of Christ that is everyone including those with these specific gifts can be built up and come to full maturity.

There are in the various lists around twenty different 'gifts service gifts' that are used in the New Testament

The purpose of these gifts:

to be used for others, in particular to be used in the church the body of Christ.

We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version\*](#). (1989). (Eph 4:11–13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

<sup>6</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version\*](#). (1989). (Eph 4:14–16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.