

Ephesians 4:1-16

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 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 grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."

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

ESV

IF A PERSON HAS BEEN "...created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them," (2:10) how does that person know how to walk? The last three chapters of Ephesians, along with other Scripture, tell us how to walk. Spiritual maturity comes in the unity of the Spirit, the unity of faith, and the unity of the body.

1. THE UNITY of the SPIRIT

4:1-6

Paul considered himself a prisoner for, or because of, the Lord. He encouraged (exhorted) believers to demonstrate the genuineness of their calling (regeneration). This manner of life (walk) involves more than wearing a four pound cross around your neck and boasting about your faith.

Lowliness, gentleness, long-suffering, and bearing with one another need little explanation, but they need a lot of exercise.

The "unity of the Spirit" involves objective truth. What is "objective" truth?

The so-called ecumenical movement is based on compromise. The late Malcolm Muggeridge commented on a meeting of the World Council of Churches by saying, "They agreed on almost everything because they believed almost nothing."

What is the "hope of your calling?" Based on what evidence?

There is one Lord. In a day of "roll your own" religion, it is popular to allow that all religions are acceptable, you just pick one that suits your lifestyle and that doesn't interfere with your bosom sin too much. The Bible teaches that there is only one Savior and only one Way and He is the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is one faith. If there is to be unity, there must be faith based on common doctrine. Scriptural faith is not some undefined faith.

There is one baptism. This must be the baptism of the Holy Spirit in regeneration. If water baptism is meant, then the thief on the cross that trusted Jesus and millions of others who were not baptized in water cannot be included here.

God is the Creator and source of all things. He sustains His creation. Yet, does each of the "alls" in this verse mean the same thing? He is only the Father of the elect. The context is the church; therefore the "alls" refer to all the church.

2. THE UNITY of the FAITH

4:7-13

Every believer has been given a gift or gifts. The purpose of your gift is to serve the church. Not everyone has the same gift, but every saved person has at least one gift from the Spirit.

Paul refers to the Old Testament to show that the Christ would manifest Himself by giving gifts. This Christ descended (as the Sent One of God) and ascended.

Enoch and Elijah were taken up into heaven, but Christ first came down and then, after His resurrection, ascended back into heaven.

Apostles and prophets died and their function was completed as the Bible came into its fullness. We still have evangelists and pastors/teachers.

Evangelists herald the Good News.

Pastors are shepherds who feed (teach) their flock.

The purpose of these gifts is to equip the saints (believers) for the ministry and to edify (build up) the body of Christ (the church).

The idea is to "grow up," or mature, in Christ.

The apostle Paul used the phrase:

He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?

Where does that phrase, the lower parts of the earth, come from?

Psalm 139:1-16

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.

- O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*.
- 2** You know my sitting down and my rising up;
You understand my thought afar off.
- 3** You comprehend my path and my lying down,
And are acquainted with all my ways.
- 4** For *there is* not a word on my tongue,
But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.
- 5** You have hedged me behind and before,
And laid Your hand upon me.
- 6** *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me;
It is high, I cannot *attain* it.
- 7** Where can I go from Your Spirit?
Or where can I flee from Your presence?
- 8** If I ascend into heaven, You *are* there;
If I make my bed in hell, behold, You *are there*.
- 9** *If* I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
- 10** Even there Your hand shall lead me,
And Your right hand shall hold me.
- 11** If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me,"
Even the night shall be light about me;
- 12** Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You,
But the night shines as the day;
The darkness and the light *are* both alike *to You*.
- 13** For You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother's womb.
- 14** I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made;
Marvelous are Your works,
And *that* my soul knows very well.
- 15** My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
- 16** Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were written,
The days fashioned for me,
When *as yet there were* none of them.

David says in Psalm 139 that the womb is the "lowest parts of the earth." The Incarnation of the Son of God means that God becomes man; He descended to the "lowest parts of the earth," i.e. the womb of the virgin.

3. THE UNITY of the BODY

4:14-16

Spiritual infants are tossed about like a small boat in a storm. They fall for the latest fad and fake because they haven't armed themselves with the truth. There are plenty of false prophets ready to take their attention and their money.

The pastor/teacher will see to it that the truth is spoken in love. When we all strive to walk worthy of the calling, we will see the church function as Christ intended.

RIGHTEOUSNESS IN CHRIST

Ephesians 4:17-32

¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰ But that is not the way you learned Christ!— ²¹ assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. **ESV**

IT IS DIFFICULT TO LIVE the Christian life in today's culture. The attitude of many of the people we work with and may even live with is abject selfishness.

It was not any easier for the people that Paul is writing to in Ephesians. Their paganism was well defined. When people speak of values we need to question their source. The Greeks valued selfishness and strength over other people. Gentleness and long-suffering was, to the pagan, weakness.

1. TWO WAYS of THINKING ABOUT LIFE

a) The Pagan Mind-Set: Abandon It 4:17-19

The mind here is the intellect, not the will or the emotions. The pagan is futile (vanity) in his manner of thought. He necessarily comes to the wrong conclusions because his premise is wrong. They are past feeling (callous), not just insensitive as some translations have it.

Verses 18-19. How can you better explain the acceptance of abortion on demand, infanticide, euthanasia, and suicide as an option? Welcome to the U.S.A. Our country was founded on solid Christian values. Our corrupt lawmakers, judges, and apathetic church have produced the one of the most pagan societies in the history of the world. "Yes sir, we've got trouble right here in River City."

b) The Christian Mind-Set: Adopt It 4:20-24

How do you learn anything? You must study the subject and practice. Have you learned tennis (or any other such example)? How did you learn it? Have you learned Christ?

The only way to escape the pagan mind-set is to replace it with the mind of Christ. In order to do that, you have to make an effort. Christian values and a Christian walk are not acquired by osmosis.

2. TWO LIFESTYLES: Off with the Old! On with the New! 4:25-32

The renewed mind is the result of regeneration. Now the believer is able to think thoughts like God. Not only that, but the believer is able to overcome sin. If you are failing at the Christian walk, who is to blame?

Quit lying!

Be angry! It's okay to be angry at sin. Jesus got angry. Anger itself is not sinful. Just be sure of its object and your motive.

Quit stealing!

Quit talking filthy.

There are some positive examples as well. If God in Christ has forgiven you, you have no excuse not to forgive one another.

This is how you put on the new man.

This is part of maturing in Christ.

This is typical of a believer's walk.