



# Ephesians

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**...from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:16**

The words “from whom” are speaking of Christ from the previous verse –

“...but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head— Christ— <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies...”

It is from Christ that “the whole body” finds its source, its growth, its strength, and its direction. This whole body is said to be “joined and knit together by what every joint supplies.” However, this is not a really great translation of these words. The Greek says, “every joint of supply.” The sustenance is not from the joints (what every joint supplies), but is from Christ through each joint of supply.

Each person who fulfills a role within the church does so based on what Christ has given them, not based on what they have as independent of Christ. This is the idea which is later given in Colossians 2:19 –

“...and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.”

As Christ supplies, so that nutrient is passed on through the joints “according to the effective working by which every part does its share.” What the Lord provides is given in order to be effectively worked out through the various parts of the body. Those who are evangelists should evangelize; those who are preachers should preach; those who are teachers should teach; and etc.

Two things should be noted concerning this. First, there are those who have abilities, but who use them in inappropriate ways. Women teaching men is prohibited in Scripture. If a man comes to Christ through the teaching of a woman preacher in a church, it cannot be said that the end justifies the means. The disobedience of this “preacher” cannot be regarded as “effective working.”

Secondly, many have been given the abilities to work effectively within the body. However, if they do not employ what they have been given in an effective manner, it cannot be said that they are working effectively. In other words, free will and proper adherence to God’s word are considerations of what is being said here. Only when the two are correctly aligned can it be said that the work is truly effective. Only then can it be said that each is doing their share.

When those things are properly on display and effectively being worked out, it “causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” It is true that the body may have grown through the preaching of a female from the pulpit, but it cannot be said that it was “for the edifying of itself in love.”

Adherence to God’s word is a demonstration of love. Failure to adhere to it is a demonstration of selfish intent. That selfish intent is more harmful than one might at first realize. As an example, should a man come to the Lord through the preaching of a woman, and later he realizes that his conversion was based on another’s disobedience, true harm actually results in several ways which can be easily thought through. Thus, rather than edification, there is confusion; rather than love, there is bitterness.

There can be no true “holding fast to the Head” in disobedience. It is also lacking when someone neglects to exercise the gifts which they have been given.

Life application: There can be no true love in an action which is willfully disobedient to God’s word because God’s word is an extension of who God is. Jesus explained this in John 14:15 – “If you love Me, keep my commandments.” Keeping the commands of the Lord, in proper context, demonstrates love for the Lord. Let us put aside both laziness and pride and strive to be obedient to the word. This is showing love for Him.

**This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, Ephesians 4:17**

In verses 4:1-3, Paul began a practical application for our Christian walk. That was then laid aside for the next 13 verses as he moved into a doctrinal analysis of the unity of the various parts which make up the church. With that complete, he now reverts back to his practical application of what our spiritual walk should entail.

“This I say, therefore” is stated as a summary thought concerning that doctrinal analysis of the previous 13 verses. The structure is:

- 1) Walk this way (verses 1-3)
- 2) Message of unity of the various parts (verses 4-16)
- 3) Based upon verses 4-16, you now know the reason that you should walk this way.

To bolster his proclamation, he next says, “and testify in the Lord.” He is speaking as the Apostle to the Gentiles with the authority of the Lord Jesus. He is “in the Lord” in a unique position which allows him to speak with authority concerning these now-saved Gentile believers. All of this is for the practical application of their life-walk based upon the inserted comments in verses 4-16. Those words were given to show them that they were not aliens to the covenant, but they are included in it; they were not outside the house of God, but they are a part of it; they are not servants within the family of God, but are rather sons through adoption.

Paul notes to them that because of this unity, “you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk.” They had been accepted into the family of God; they were now a part of the living temple of God; and they were members of the covenant community with full rights and benefits to be derived from this standing. Their Christian life was to be a pilgrimage and a journey in this world. Thus, they should not be like the other Gentiles who were outside of what God is doing in the church. The others walk “in the futility of their mind.”

This “futility” will be explained in the next two verses. It is also what Paul wrote in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans, starting with Romans 1:18. He also writes about it elsewhere in his epistles. The Greek word which is translated as “futility” indicates a type of aimlessness because there is no final purpose or meaningful end. The walk of the Gentiles is a walk of nonsense because it is that of a transitory existence which ends without any hope. Paul is saying to them that in Christ, this is no longer the case.

Life application: What is a vain existence? Choose any Hollywood idol. They are handsome or beautiful; they are rich and famous; they have everything that could be desired from a worldly standpoint; and yet they have no end purpose and thus no hope. They marry and divorce with alacrity. They drink heavily and often turn to homosexuality or some other perversion, trying to fill a void which can never be filled apart from Christ. In Christ, we have our void filled. The things of this world no longer seem pleasing, and our walk is directed anew to the eternal.

How marvelous it is to know that there is more than just a temporary walk of futility, ending in oblivion.

**...having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;** Ephesians 4:18

This is a somewhat difficult verse unless the parallelism is understood. There are four separate clauses. The first and the third are connected as are the second and the fourth –

- 1 having their understanding darkened
- 3 because of the ignorance that is in them
  
- 2 being alienated from the life of God
- 4 because of the blindness of their heart

The words are speaking of “the rest of the Gentiles” of the previous verse. There is an ignorance of God which is found in the unregenerate man. This is especially so because as the ages have passed, man has lost more and more of the knowledge of God which was originally known. There was a time when a Messiah was anticipated. As the nations spread out, that knowledge was replaced with other forms of worship which were based on works rather than the anticipation of One who would restore all things.

Eventually, their understanding became darkened “because of the ignorance that is in them.” They could no longer perceive any of the things of God. If one understands that God has a plan, then they will, at least in part, trust that the plan is being worked out. However, if life is just a thing which we must suffer through, and if God is “out there” but not working a good end for all things, then the understanding becomes more and more darkened.

Every possible religious expression will come about as people make stuff up in order to satisfy the empty void of the thought of a life without hope. Muslims made up a system of submission which supposedly offers a free ticket to paradise and 72 awaiting perpetual virgins for any who die in the cause of their god. Hindus made up a system of reincarnation, and the worship of 340 million different gods. The list goes on and on. The true knowledge of God is darkened from their understanding because of the ignorance that is in them.

As a result of this, they are “alienated from the life of God... because of the blindness of their heart.” The term, “the life of God” is unique in the Bible, but it is based on the truth of Jesus Christ – a thought which permeates Scripture. In John 1:4, “the life of God” is revealed –

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

It is the promise of the Messiah that kept the ancients directed toward the life of God. They had hope in the fact that God was working out a plan. They trusted that God was just, fair, and righteous. In this, they understood that He would do the right thing. Their faith in what was coming kept them in His favor. Chapter 11 of the book of Hebrews shows us this. People from both inside the covenant line and from without, such as Rahab the harlot, understood that God had a plan. They trusted it and were deemed faithful; their hearts were not blinded to this “life of God.”

However, there were those who were, and are, alienated from it. Their hearts are blinded though a lack of knowledge. In this lack of knowledge, they cannot exercise faith in God. This is the state of those who simply live out their existence, making stuff up or following made up stuff, and perishing apart from God. It is a life of death leading to death. Paul will explain the result of such a life.

Life application: The words here follow along very well with the words of Romans 1, especially starting in verse 18. Take time to read these two passages side by side and think on how perfectly they reflect the sentiments of the people of the world. The Bible is God’s “instruction manual for mankind.” As this is so, it should perfectly reflect the world around us... and it does. Pay heed! God is speaking to us so that we can learn. In that learning, we can then have knowledge to hopefully pull others out of the blinded, hardened life in which they exist.

**...who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.** Ephesians 4:19

As we analyze this verse, think of the world in which we live. Think of those who it describes and the position they hold within our society. They will be analyzed at the end in relation to the verse.

The “who” of this verse is giving a description of “the rest of the Gentiles” of verse 17 who had been alienated from God and blinded in verse 18. Paul now describes what state those actions result in. He says they, “being past feeling,” have come to a state of perversion which is the normal result of life without God. The single word, from which “being past feeling” derives, indicates the cessation of feeling pain. It is only used here in the New Testament and it is being used to express a sense of having no shame or empathy at all. The person simply ceases to care about anything morally upright.

Paul also says they “have given themselves over to lewdness.” The word translated as “have given themselves over” is used when speaking of Christ giving Himself up for the world. It is also the same word used in Romans 1:24 which speaks of God giving the reprobate up to uncleanness. When a person gives himself up to evil, then their Creator gives them over to the power of evil. It is a synergistic occurrence. There is a complete surrender on one part, and thus there is a complete letting go on the other.

This giving over is to “lewdness.” The Greek is a word which indicates “violent spite which rejects restraint and indulges in lawless insolence (wanton caprice)” HELPS Word Studies. Anything perverse and disgusting is pursued with reckless abandon. In this attitude, it becomes evident that any who do not follow their path would then be considered outside of what is now normal. Their lawlessness becomes the standard of law.

Paul next says that these people are set “to work all uncleanness with greediness.” The word for “work” here indicates a trade or a business. The immoral working of these people actually stands as their life’s work and goal. Just as a carpenter works in carpentry as his life’s means of expression, the immorality of these people stands for the very expression of who they are. It is as if they wake up in the morning and put on “uncleanness with greediness.”

The “uncleanness” stated here speaks of ritual impurity. When a person is in this state, they are unacceptable to bring offerings to God. They have become defiled and outcasts from anything sacred. It is as if they have an open and running infection, or they have been in direct contact with a corpse – the highest penalty for sin being death – and thus they are utterly defiled.

The word for “greediness” is commonly translated as “covetous.” They have and they want more. They grasp after uncleanness as if it is a treasure to be found and put on display. The NKJV says “with greediness,” but in Greek it is en (in) greediness. It is their very state of mind to act wickedly and to hunger after more wickedness.

It should be noticed in this verse that it doesn’t say they have become stupid, as if their blindness has destroyed their intellectual capacity to reason. Rather, he focuses on the moral degradation which their state leads to. This is the most dangerous place of all. They have the intellectual ability to think, but they do not use it for reason. Instead, they use it for that which is wholly perverse and which stands in opposition to God.

Having looked at the substance of the words, and having been asked to evaluate who these words describe, have any examples come to mind? It is as obvious as it could be in today’s world that those on the left, the so-called “progressives,” are being minutely described. They wantonly seek after the destruction of human life through abortion, and yet they are past feeling with regard to the murder of that life. It becomes a sensation to count the dead and then to add more to the list.

They promote every sexual vice known to man, and they force it on everyone around them. That which is wholly vile and vulgar is that which they proclaim as morally just. In so doing, they make those who follow the proper moral path to be outlaws. If their stand is argued against, they use the political and judicial process to silence their opponents.

They work their iniquity as if drinking in water, and they spew out their vile behavior in open sight of the world through movies, public displays of sensuality, and even through the use of the news media. Impurity is their state of mind and they are wholly unclean to God. And yet they continue down their path of vile behavior, being self-condemned and yet reveling in this path to perdition.

A more fitting description of those on the left could not be found anywhere in the world today, and yet Paul wrote about them over 2000 years ago. The ways and paths of man are seen at all times in those who reject God and who pursue this aberrant course of moral perversity to its logical end.

Life application: The closer you associate yourself with the “progressives” of the world, the more wicked and unclean you will become. Tying oneself into their path ultimately results in a tie which becomes harder and harder to sever. Think carefully on who you support for one reason or another, and rather look at their overall agenda. Do you stand with God? Then stand apart from those who are wholly opposed to Him.