

Background Passage:

Ephesians 3

Lesson Passage:

Ephesians 3:1-13

Focal Verses:

Ephesians 3:8-9

⁸To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things

Biblical Truth:

Preaching the Gospel to everyone and fellowship of the believers are the two pillars of the New Testament Church

Lesson Outline:

Paul Discusses Three Foundational Truths to the Unified Body of Christ; the Church

Discover the:

- 1 Pastor of the Church
vv. 1-3 & 8
- 2 Preaching of the Church
vv.4-9
- 3 Passion of the Church
vv. 10-13

His Unity Revealed

April 11

Background & Introduction

Verses 1 - 13 are a side-note message as Paul prepares to pray. Paul picks up in verse 14 with, “for this reason I,” as he left off in verse 1. The content he covers is so important to the church that he paused briefly to remind them of three specific elements of the church.

Many times we need to be reminded the “why” before we do the “what”. Sometimes children ask, why and parents respond, because I said so. Here Paul is avoiding the question why by the church, answering the what before he even continues with his letter.

There are two main reasons:

- 1) the content of the 13 verses are vital to the church
- 2) Paul cannot respond to the “whys” because he’s writing from a prison in Rome

Paul begins by writing,

“For this Reason I”

Now we ask, “for what reason Paul?”

He then continues and describes three specific principles for the church to doctrinally comprehend before engaging in the practical matters of Ephesians.

The church is established upon three doctrinally sound principles wrapped up in unity. One mind and spirit in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christians, Christ followers, we are in the family of God, the body of believers, the church. Family members seek to have fellowship with one another in love and seek to reach out and bring others into the family through marriage. The church is the bride of Christ. As the church grows in number the family grows. This demands a high level of awareness to the possibilities of unification problems.

ILLUSTRATE = the “in-law” syndrome.

Some individuals never accept in-laws. Years can go by and a brother will stay at odds with a brother-in-law over the simplest things. The issue is that these two selfish driven individuals have chosen not to accept each other as family. Maybe the reason is socioeconomic, maybe it is cultural, maybe you can’t even place a finger on it. In the world, marriage doesn’t necessarily mean family.

*In God’s Kingdom, being married to Christ through His blood means family.

This Holy Spirit power brings us all together in unison under His Lordship and there are no “in-laws”.

This is what Paul was reminding the church in Ephesians 3.

Today we will see three doctrinal foundations to the church, the unified body of Christ.

We will discover the:

1. Pastor of the Church vv. 1-3 & 8
2. Preaching of the Church vv.4-9
3. Passion of the Church vv. 10-13

1. PRAY specifically and consistently for your pastor. (I Timothy 2:1-2)

2. Give freely of time, talents, and spiritual gifts so that the pastor can direct the affairs of the church—rather than the pastor doing the entire ministry alone. (I Timothy 5:17)

3. Give cheerfully and liberally to God to provide for the physical and material needs of your pastor's family. (I Timothy 5:17-18)

4. Refuse to listen to or spread gossip about your pastor. (I Timothy 5:19, bold added. See also Proverbs 17:4)

5. Lovingly and privately correct your pastor when there is sin and offer grace on issues of style and preference. (Matthew 18:15)

6. Do everything in your power to make sure your pastor flourishes in family Relationships: spouse and children. (I Timothy 3:5)

7. Obey and submit to the leadership and oversight of your pastors/elders. (Hebrews 13:17)

The unity of the church is revealed through the administration of pastors following God's own heart.

First let's discover the

1. Pastor of the Church vv. 1-3 & 8

READ Ephesians 3:1-3 & 8

The church of the living God, Jesus Christ is a very large family. This family lives all across the face of the earth. Therefore, can never be led by one person, rather by many who have been called and set in place by God Himself. These people are called the pastors, shepherds, overseers, elders, and a host of many other terms each meaning specific things, but the commonality is leader of the flocks, God's family. Today we will refer to the man God calls to lead a specific church as the lead minister, a pastor.

The term pastor is used only one time in all of Scripture and is found in Jeremiah 17:16. Here we find Jeremiah, the prophet to the nations, praying to God asking His Almighty to show favor to him as he has continued faithfully in God's way of the pastor as opposed to the self-seeking pastors discussed throughout the book of Jeremiah.

In these passages from Paul (Eph 3) we see that:

First = A pastor is bound by Christ Jesus to his calling. (v1)

Paul was a prisoner by Nero in a Roman prison, but he himself acknowledged that he was actually a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of the lost world.

As Jeremiah was bound to his calling (Jer 1:4-5 = ⁴Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, ⁵"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.")

Secondly = A pastor is an overseer of what God has given which is the bride of Christ Jesus; the church. (v. 2)

The term, "stewardship" is actually *oijkonomiva* or dispensation meaning the management of a household or another's property and possessions.

Thirdly = A pastor is to walk in the Spirit of the Lord Jesus receiving His insight in how to lead the church (v. 3)

Lastly = A pastor is to walk in humility. (v. 8) Paul understood his unworthiness.

In the First Century, the flock was torn apart and scattered all over the face of the earth. Peter and Paul write to the pastors, exhorting them and explaining to them the duties they are to tend. (1 Peter 5:1-3 7 & Titus 1:5-16) There was an expectation from the flock to follow the God appointed leaders that served as the pastor. Through the biblical leading of these men, the church continued to be unified.

How about you?

*Are you following the leading of the preaching and teaching of our pastor, Pastor Traylor?

*Are you following the leading of our ministry staff?

***Pray and ask God to help you walk in submission to pastoral leadership in your life.

1 Corinthians 12

...⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.

⁵And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.

⁶There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.

⁷But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

⁸For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit,

¹⁰and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

¹¹But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

¹²For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

¹³For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴For the body is not one member, but many...

²⁶And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

²⁷Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it...

³¹But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.

The Unity of the church is revealed through a focused preaching ministry.

The second foundational truth we find that unifies the body is the:

2. Preaching of the Church vv. 4-9

READ Ephesians 1:4-9

Before Paul discussed with the church the purpose or mission for his preaching he reminded them of the mystery found in Eph 1:9, 17, 2:13, and 3:6

^{1:9}He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ^{1:17}that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. ^{2:13}But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ^{3:6}to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel

This mystery revealed is the backdrop of why unity is so important to the growth of the church. He then continues and states what the theme of preaching should be for the church as we seek to build unity among the flock.

Two Foundational Preaching Principles are found in verse 8& 9:

1) Preaching the Unfathomable (Unsearchable) Riches of Christ v. 8

This is simply the Gospel message. God is granting a way for all humankind to spend their eternity with Him in Paradise. That in itself is unsearchable. This is the incomprehensibility of God. That He would come and die on a cross for our sins so that we could have eternal life. Giving us His personal spirit to reside for an abundant life here on earth so that we will be able to help others see Him through our testimony. With the Cross we are found, with the Spirit we have abundant life.

WOW! What a Savior?...THIS IS WHAT WE PREACH!!!

2) Preaching the Fellowship with the Believers v. 9

The word "administration" is actually the term *koinonia* or fellowship. This means to share in full participation with others. We all have a stake in the church. The stake is that we want to see others come to know Who Jesus Christ is. This is accomplished through the arms, legs, eyes, ears, etc of the church. This is the unity of the saints so that God will be glorified and some will be saved.

Now the church is not just the Jewish nation. It is now the fellowship of all humankind who call Jesus Lord.

*How do we bring to light the unity of the church?

We understand 1 Corinthians 12 in the context that love (agape) is supreme.

We love one another, not as we love ourselves. We love one another the way God loves us. This is when fellowship occurs and we begin to appreciate the different passions and gifts God has freely given to His children to be used through His church.

What should we preach? The Gospel of Christ and the Fellowship of the Believers ***Discuss the impact of Hebrews 10:24-26 as it relates to the church

²⁴and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Conclusion:

So what is the unity of the church?

The unity of the church was established through the Cross of Jesus Christ.

It is that all humankind have the ability to be part of God's family and are able to receive His rich blessing on earth as well as fellowship with Him eternally in Heaven.

This unity is only through God's indwelling Holy Spirit through the believers.

There may be social or cultural biases a new Christian has to work through, but ultimately one must learn to let go and humbly and joyfully accept all of their brothers and sisters in God's family. The same way Peter accepted Cornelius' family.

We learned today that the role of the pastor is to unify the church through clear preaching on the Gospel of Christ and the working of the spirit in the fellowship of the believers. This working out in the church is passionate ministry that shines bright into the darkness of the world. This light attracts all to come and investigate the Source. And when the Source is investigated, it is clear to people, angels, and demons that Jesus Christ is Source. He is the unifying power of the church, His bride.

Background Passage:

Ephesians 3

Lesson Passage:

Ephesians 3:14-21

Focal Verses:

Ephesians 3:20-21

²⁰Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, ²¹to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

Biblical Truth:

When we pray with faith we can know that God's Holy Spirit gives us the ability to love so that people are saved and He is glorified.

Lesson Outline:

1. Prayer is the Catalyst for the Power vv. 14-15

2. The Holy Spirit is the Power v. 16

3. Faith is the Hope of the Power v. 17a

4. Love is the Outpouring of the Power vv. 17b - 19

5. His Glory is the Outcome of the Power vv. 20-21

His Power Revealed

April 18

The introduction today is actually the conclusion material of chapter three leading into chapter four.

Let's take a look for a second at the last two verses of chapter three.

These words are the transitional verses between the doctrinal theology of Ephesians (chapters 1-3) and the practical application of the theological doctrine section (chapters 4-6).

Now to Him > God

Who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask > prayer

Who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we think > passion

*According to the **power** that works within us > the Holy Spirit*

To Him > God

Be the glory in the church > He is the only glory, not man

Be the glory in Christ Jesus > only comes through the righteousness of Christ to all generations forever and ever > the power is at work for eternity

Amen > Let it be done Lord

In Eph3:14 Paul is explaining the reasons for his prayer life.

He starts out by stating, for this reason..."

The question we ask is, "for what reason?"

The reasons are three fold which we will dive into in points 2-4.

But there is a great catalyst for this ministry in the church; the catalyst is prayer.

When we pray with faith we can know that God's Holy Spirit gives us the ability to love so that people are saved and He is glorified.

ILLUSTRATE = a catalyst

a substance that causes or accelerates a chemical reaction without itself being affected

Upon accepting Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior of one's life, the Holy Spirit comes and resides as the power for the Christian.

This power comes alive when the person prays to the Father through the Spirit. The catalyst for the unleashing of the Holy Spirit is the prayer of the faithful.

You could rewrite verses 14-21 as to say:

I pray to God Who is able to exceed all of our prayer and passions, according to the power that works within us that He would grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith and that you, being rooted and grounded in love may know the love of Christ so to be filled up with God. To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

Let's discover how prayer is the catalyst that releases the power of God through love for His glory.

Romans 8:26-27

²⁶In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;²⁷ and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

DISCUSSION:

Who should pray?

All people = Acts 1:14

The sinner = Romans 10:13

What should we pray?

Praise = Hebrews 13:15

Thanksgiving = Eph 5:20

Confession = Psalm 38:18

Intercession = James 5:16

Supplication = Luke 11:3

When should we pray?

ALWAYS = 1 Thess 5:17

Where should we pray?

At Church = Luke 19:46

At Home = Matthew 6: 6

*Where NOT to pray > Matt 6
to be seen by men & women

Why should we pray?

Avoid temptation and sin =
Matthew 26:41

How do we pray?

Use the outline = Matt 6

Charles Spurgeon said,
"We should pray when we are in the praying mood, for it would be sinful to neglect so fair an opportunity. We should pray when we are not in the proper mood, for it would be dangerous to remain in so unhealthy a condition."

1. Prayer is the Catalyst for the Power vv. 14-15

READ Eph 3:14-15

When we approach God in prayer, do we realize His awesome presence? Bow the knee in reverence, respect, and fear knowing He is the Alpha and Omega, the author of our days. He is the Creator and sustainer of life. All of Creation is wrapped up in His omniscient, incomprehensible plan.

How to have a powerful prayer life:

Read Jeremiah 33: 1 - 9

We understand that God wants us to pray.

So what is prayer?

Prayer is communication with God through the Holy Spirit.

We understand that we pray to God and hear from God in specifics, not generals.

Let's read = Romans 8:26 - 27 (margin)

Discuss three instances of Powerful Prayer. These three are popular occurrences in history that shaped civilization as we know it.

1. Moses prayer for God to forgive the Israel of their sin and spare the nation from abomination

Exodus 32 (Exodus 32: 7 – 14)

MOSES PRAYED SPECIFICALLY = COUNTRY IS SAVED

2. People of Nineveh's prayer of forgiveness and second chance.

Jonah 3: 5 - 10

PEOPLE PRAYED SPECIFICALLY = CITY IS SAVED

3. Peter and John prayed a prayer of evangelism and revival.

Acts 4: 23 – 31

PETER AND JOHN PRAYED = CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT LAUNCHED

As Christians, know that God wants us to be a people of prayer.

There are some elements we find in scripture that give a good outline for our prayer life.

When we pray it is like waking up the hungry lion within us. The spirit roars and shows loud through life. When we don't pray, we allow the lion to grow silent in our own body, eventually left to go hungry and fade, ever present just not alive.

Start praying in faith knowing that God will grant you everything in His power!

How is your prayer life?

ILLUSTRATE:

The spirit of God allows us to act wisely in areas that tend to trip us up. When we see the fruits that come from living in His perfect power, we must realize there is a choice to make. Pray and seek Him with EVERYTHING you are or attempt to walk life's road in your own zealous strength.

The divine "scheme of things," as Christianity understands it, is at once extremely elastic and extremely rigid. It is elastic, in that it includes a large measure of liberty for the creature; it is rigid in that it includes the proviso that, however created beings choose to behave, they must accept responsibility of their own actions and endure the consequences.

Dorothy L. Sayer: A Rage for Life.

His Power Revealed

April 18

2. The Holy Spirit is the Power v. 16

We are strengthened with His strength, which is according to His standard of riches in the inner *Eso* - (the soul or conscience) man *anthropos* - (human being).

*What are the deep trenches in your life? What fills them up?

Paul's states here that his prayers are that we would be filled with God's Holy Power, the Holy Spirit.

This means that we walk in them; We live in them.

God gives us His special power, the Holy Spirit in order to love the way we are designed to love.

Analyze how we allow the spirit to take over our lives on a daily basis:

Galatians 5:22-25 = 22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

Let us also walk in the spirit!!!

The Fruits of the Spirit are attitudes that bubble over into our actions. If we are of the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit.

Love - agape > the love of God displayed through Christ

Joy - chara > gladness

Peace - eirene > security in the Master's salvation

Patience - makrothumia > endurance, long suffering

Kindness - chrestotes > moral goodness

Goodness - agathosune > uprightness of heart

Faithfulness - pistis > conviction of the truth

Gentleness - praotes > meekness, power under control

Self-Control - egkrateia > virtue of one who masters desires or passions

These attitudes cannot be whipped up by humankind. These are fruits of allowing the work of the Holy Spirit to be at work, through prayer, in one's life.

Are you letting go and allowing God?

Specifically ask God to show you how to yield to His Spirit in your life.

-The first step is prayer

-The second is selflessness

-The third is active living

Abel

Enoch

Noah

Abraham

Etc..

Etc..

3. Faith is the Hope of the Power v. 17a

THROUGH FAITH

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

We have an assurance through the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives that God is alive and well among His children. That assurance comes from knowing His presence even when we cannot see Him. The assurance that He holds our hand and will see us through into eternity with him. Awesome HOPE!

Hebrews 11

By faith we offer God the righteous offering of our self and the first fruits

By faith we are brought into His eternity because He died for us

By faith we are able to seek Him

By faith we hear God speak clearly

By faith we are given the power to act

By faith we can walk through uncertainty

By faith we believe God will deliver because He said he would

By faith we witness miracles that bless many generations

By faith we have the ability to bless the undeserved

By faith we are given strength and wisdom in hard times

By faith we are given visions for the future

By faith we are protected for God's purpose

By faith we are called to make godly decisions and stand on what is right

By faith we can conquer our worst fears

By faith we can lead the worst of people to God's throne

By faith we can stand on the fact that God through the power of Jesus Christ is going to hold our hand into eternity.

What are you doubting God for today?

Do you not know that the same power that created the universe and sustains life, lives inside of you today?

Claim His Faith.

Love reaches for the hurt and takes bold steps without self-interest. It can accomplish unbelievable things merely because it is so void of self-interest.

Some time ago, a teenager, Arthur Hinkley, lifted a 3,000-pound tractor with bare hands. He wasn't a weight lifter, but his friend, Lloyd Bachelder, 18, was pinned under a tractor on a farm near Rome, Maine. Hearing Lloyd scream, Arthur somehow lifted the tractor enough for Lloyd to wriggle out.

Love was the real motivation. (*God was the strength*)

Calvin Miller, "Rethinking Suburban Evangelism," Leadership, 1988, p. 68

4. Love is the Outpouring of the Power vv. 17b - 19

Filled up with all the fullness of God.

ILLUSTRATE = an airplane only carries enough fuel for the flight planned. There are a host of reasons from take-off and landing risks, to fuel efficiency from the extra fuel weight and more. This is why if an international flight that leaves Atlanta is called back for a non-mechanical reason, might perform a dump and burn in order to land with less fuel on the tanks in fear of a failed landing and an explosion occurs.

Aren't you happy to know that God wants you to be filled and overflowing with His fuel, the power of the Holy Spirit? When we filled up with God fuel the outpouring is extraordinary love that the lost sees which results in an identification marker as one of His fruits of the Spirit in the Christian.

There is no worry of explosion...He wants us to explode with power so that the world sees you on fire for Him.

Look at 1 John 4:7-21 for a moment.

*Acknowledge that God is Love; without Him there is no possible way to love.

⁷*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.* ⁸*The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

*We only love because Jesus lives in us and we in Him. We are His body.

⁹*By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.*

*Jesus died on the Cross, spilt His blood on the mercy seat for us once and for all.

¹⁰*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

*Wake up...there is no time left to hate or dislike. LOVE is a fruit that is evident in the Christian

¹¹*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

*If LOVE is **not** evident in the human then...

²⁰*If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.*

In order to be filled up with the fullness of God, we must KNOW love. This is when you are walking in the zone, living in a passionate way touching others with Jesus Christ presence as a result of walking in His love. This is the magnet of the Gospel; Christ's love.

His Power Revealed

1 Cor 10:23-11:1

²³All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable All things are lawful, but not all things edify.

²⁴Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.

²⁵Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake;

²⁶FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS.

²⁷If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake.

²⁸But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat it, for the sake of the one who informed you, and for conscience' sake;

²⁹I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience?

³⁰If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?

³¹Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

³²Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God;

³³just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved.

¹Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

5. His Glory is the Outcome of the Power vv. 20-21

DISCUSS =

When you look in the mirror at the end of a great day, do you see you or God?

When you look in the mirror at the end of a bad day, do you see you or God?

In everything you do, do you give God the glory?

READ = 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1

Are you living by the law or in freedom?

Are you seeking the good of others rather than self?

At the end of the day, can you say to those around you, "imitate me, because I imitate Christ." "Everything I do brings glory to our Father through the strength and power of Jesus Christ working through me so that many can be saved."

CONCLUSION

Now we are back to the introduction.

Now to Him > God

Who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask > prayer

Who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we think > passion

*According to the **power** that works within us > the Holy Spirit*

To Him > God

Be the glory in the church > He is the only glory, not man

Be the glory in Christ Jesus > only comes through the righteousness of Christ

to all generations forever and ever > the power is at work for eternity

Amen > Let it be done Lord

*How great is your God?

Do you pray knowing the Creator is listening AND answering?

Are you seeking His power today?

Do you have faith in His power today?

Are you allowing His love to flow through you today?

DISCUSS:

What must change today in order to live in that confidence:

-Prayer life > is it specific and authentic?

-Power life > is the Holy Spirit at work in you?

-Faith walk > are supernatural happenings occurring around you?

-Active love > are you angry with ANYONE?

Background Passage:

Ephesians 4

Lesson Passage:

Ephesians 4:1-16

Focal Verses:

Ephesians 4:16

“from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

Biblical Truth:

We can only walk in God’s calling if we understand the magnitude of His love. To walk in God’s calling means to move towards a level we currently do not reside.

Lesson Outline:

PRESERVING THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT (1-7)

1. The ATTITUDE of unity (4:2-3)

2. The FOUNDATION of unity (4:4-6)

EDIFYING THE BODY OF CHRIST (8-16)

Paul shares 4 levels of maturity in the Christian walk:

1. Jesus Christ is the STANDARD for maturity.

2. STABILITY is necessary for maturity.

3. SPEAKING IN LOVE shows maturity.

4. UNITY is created out of maturity.

His Walk in His Calling Through Love**April 25**

*This Lesson by Eric Miracle—Minister to College and Young Adults

Outline of Chapter:

I. WALK IN HIS CALLING THROUGH LOVE (1-16)

A. PRESERVING THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT (1-7)

1. To walk worthy of our calling (1)
2. With the proper attitudes (2-3)
 - a. Lowliness and gentleness
 - b. Longsuffering, bearing with one another in love
 - c. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
3. The unity of the Spirit defined (4-6)
 - a. One body
 - b. One Spirit
 - c. One hope of your calling
 - d. One Lord
 - e. One faith
 - f. One baptism
 - g. One God and Father of all

B. EDIFYING THE BODY OF CHRIST (8-16)

1. For to each one grace was given as measured out by Christ (8-10)
 - a. As foretold in Scripture
 - b. Having ascended far above all the heavens to fill all things
2. Gifts Christ gave to His church (11)
 - a. Apostles
 - b. Prophets
 - c. Evangelists
 - d. Pastors
 - e. Teachers
3. Purpose of such gifts (12-16)
 - a. Equipping the saints for the work of ministry
 - b. Edifying the body of Christ, till we all come to:
 - 1) The unity of the faith
 - 2) The knowledge of the Son of God
 - 3) A perfect man
 - 4) The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ
 - c. That we might no longer be children...
 - 1) Tossed about by every wind of doctrine
 - 2) Tricked by the cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive
 - d. That we speak the truth in love...
 - 1) So we may grow up in all things into Christ, the head
 - 2) To cause growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love
 - a) As we are joined and knit together by what each joint supplies
 - b) As every part does its effective work in doing its share

Discussion Questions:

As a child, did you play well with others? Give an example.

How do you develop the ability to ‘put up with others’?

Are most of your friends unified or divisive?

How is maturity measured based upon Chapter 4?

What kind of life is worthy of your calling (v. 1)?

Do you view your life as a calling? Why or why not?

His Walk in His Calling Through Love**April 25**

*This Lesson by Eric Miracle—Minister to College and Young Adults

Background

Ephesus was located at the mouth of a river on the West coast of Asia Minor in what is now Turkey. It was an important commercial port city. Ephesus was a major population center and the capital of the Roman province of Asia. It contained a theater that was one of the largest known of all that have remained to modern times. It was here in this theater that the silversmiths led by Demetrius rioted against the Christian mission work of Paul and his companions.

Ephesus was home to a large number of Jews. They had a synagogue in the city, where Paul began his mission work (Acts 19:8). When some of the Jews had hardened their hearts against the gospel Paul turned to the Gentiles. From Ephesus the gospel spread throughout the whole province of Asia (Acts. 19:10).

Ephesians is Paul’s letter about the Church. Ephesians was written about 60-61 AD. It deals, however, not so much with a congregation in the city of Ephesus in Asia Minor, but with the worldwide Church. Christ is the head of this type of Church. The letter is seemingly addressed by Paul to Christians in Ephesus, a place where the apostle labored for well over 2 years (Acts 19:10). Yet there is a curiously impersonal tone to the writing for a community with which Paul was so intimately acquainted (Ephesians 3:2; 4:21). There are no personal greetings (Ephesians 6:23). Many therefore regard the letter as a “circular letter” sent to a number of Churches in Asia Minor.

Although Paul wrote multiple letters his letter to Asia Minor emphasized the Church itself of which Christ is the head. The first three Chapters concentrate on the Church being God’s workmanship. The last three Chapters focus on the response of the believers to God’s plan of salvation as the recipients of his grace. The believers are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, to do good works.

Introduction

The Christian church is under increasing attack from the world both here in America and abroad. Churches are being destroyed and Christians have been martyred for something greater than their life. We here in America face a different attack and it is from within the church. Among many issues that we as Christians need to work on, disunity is one of the more prevalent problems. Our propensity for division is natural to our sinful natures and this is why God inspired Paul to tell us to live in a manner worthy of the calling which we have received. An unworthy manner full of dissention is due emphatically to a lack of spiritual maturity within both leadership and lay people. In Ephesians we will take a look at the necessity for unity of the body and maturity in the Christian walk.

ILLUSTRATIONS:

Illustration #1

A policeman, when he works, is supposed to be an example of the law. He lives worthy of his profession. He doesn't steal and he doesn't cheat. He defends and upholds the law.

A doctor also is supposed to live worthy of his profession. He heals the sick. He cares for those who are ill and seeks to make them well.

Illustration #2

"Remember putting your face above a headless frame painted to represent a muscle man, a clown, or even a bathing beauty? Many of us have had our pictures taken this way, and the photos are humorous because the head doesn't fit the body. If we could picture Christ as the head of our local body of believers, would the world laugh at the misfit? Or would they stand in awe of a human body so closely related to a divine head?"

Quote from Dan Bernard.

His Walk in His Calling Through Love

April 25

*This Lesson by Eric Miracle—Minister to College and Young Adults

Main Lesson

A. READ: Ephesians 4:1-6

Ephesians 4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Earlier (3:1) Paul referred to himself as a "prisoner of the Lord for the sake of you Gentiles" (as if he were a prisoner of Jesus, not Rome) and now he refers to himself as a "prisoner for the Lord" (for the sake of Jesus and his passionate conviction for a united Jew-Gentile church). The word "urge" means "to call near", "to invoke", "to impel by force and vigor." His urgent appeal is to live a life worthy of the high calling you have received. You've received a high calling (chosen and predestined, sealed and seated with Christ) – so now, live up to your calling in four areas. To live a life worthy of the calling you've received, Paul explains the embracing of truth into 4 categories revealed in detail of Chapters 4-6.

- Unity (4:1-16)
- Purity (4:17-5:20)
- Family (5:21-6:9)
- Spiritual Warfare (6:10-24)

Paul's first concern is the unity of the church. In 4:1-16 he shows two ways to maintain unity.

1. The ATTITUDE of unity (4:2-3)

4:2 "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."

Illustration 1

Paul lists five qualities of a Christ-like attitude which enable us to maintain unity.

Be completely humble – "completely" means thoroughly, totally, always humble. Humility means "lowliness" – the humble recognition of the worth and value of other people. Prior to Jesus the Greeks and Romans viewed humility as a character deficit. But Jesus exalted humility as a virtue and taught us to be like little children, to wash each other's feet to think of others as better than ourselves.

Gentleness means to be kind and tenderhearted and meek (not weak but strength under control).

Patience means to be longsuffering with people (especially those who aggravate you).

Bearing with one another refers to mutual forbearance and love embraces the preceding four). Verse 3, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace". Paul did not say "make some effort" or "make a good effort" – he said "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace". We do not create unity by believing identically.

Peace comes out of the spirit who comforts and empowers. We find peace through experiencing humility, gentleness, patience, and love.

Illustration 2

ILLUSTRATIONS:**ILLUSTRATION # 3:**

Look at the Military for example. It has one leader, it works as a unit, it moves in one direction, it receives its orders and obeys them. All those in it work well together because they have been trained to do so. Sometimes individual members of the group don't like what they are called to do, but they do it anyway for the greater good. Therefore they are able to accomplish a great deal because they act as one.

ILLUSTRATION # 4:

In March of 1981, President Reagan was shot by John Hinckley, Jr., and was hospitalized for several weeks. Although Reagan was the nation's chief executive, his hospitalization had little impact on the nation's activity. Government continued on. On the other hand, suppose the garbage collectors in this country went on strike, as they did not long ago in Philadelphia. That city was not only in a literal mess, the pile of decaying trash quickly became a health hazard. A three-week nationwide strike would paralyze the country. Who is more important--the President or a garbage collector? In the body of Christ, seemingly insignificant ones are urgently needed. As Paul reminds us, "The head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable" (I Cor. 12:21-22).

His Walk in His Calling Through Love**April 25***This Lesson by Eric Miracle—Minister to College and Young Adults

Paul's first concern is the unity of the church. Not only does Paul show the ATTITUDE of Unity

Secondly, he shows two the FOUNDATION in order to maintain unity.

2. The FOUNDATION of unity (4:4-6)

"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."

Illustration 3 (Optional)

These three verses contain the seven "ones" of Christian unity, three refer to the unity of the Godhead (One Spirit v.4, one Lord v.5, and one God and Father of all v.6), the remaining four refer to our relationship with God. Our unity is related to the unity of the unit of the Godhead. There is only one body, one hope, one faith and one baptism because there is only one God – Father, Son and Spirit. You can no more multiply churches than you can multiply Gods. You cannot split the church anymore than you can split the Godhead. Is Christ divided? If you cannot divide Christ, you cannot divide his body. In the mind of God the church is not divided. When God looks at the church he sees one big family. When we get to heaven we are not going to be divided by denomination.

THOUGHT: In essentials we have unity. In nonessentials we have liberty. In all things we have love.

What are the essentials? Ephesians 4:4-6 (One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father of all). What are the nonessentials? The nonessentials are things that fall outside the realm of the seven ones of Ephesians 4. *Romans 14:1 "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters."* In Romans 14 Paul illustrates the principle of accepting people without passing judgment using three disputable matters: diet, drink, and days – and he says in Romans 14:4 Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls.

Illustration 4 (Optional)

ILLUSTRATIONS:

ILLUSTRATION # 5:
[Make a list of all of the spiritual gifts on the board. Next encourage group discussion] by asking, “Who can tell me what spiritual gift they have off of this list?” [Allow for multiple people to share to produce a larger recognition of the body of Christ. Explain how without them we wouldn’t have someone for that specific gift. If we don’t use our spiritual gift, then we create a hole in the body.]

ILLUSTRATION # 6:
Pastor resembles a coach. He strives to equip his men for winning ball games. He endeavors to tighten up flabby muscles and to train men to play well. In addition he must also work in such a way as to get the men playing as a team. Petty squabbles and differences must be dealt with. Men must be united in spirit and working toward a common goal. Such is the responsibility of the pastor-teacher as well. Shaping up the saints and getting individual members of the body of Christ to work together harmoniously.

His Walk in His Calling Through Love

April 25

*This Lesson by Eric Miracle—Minister to College and Young Adults

B. READ: Ephesians 4:7-10

Many Christians have been infected with the most virulent virus of modern American life, what sociologist Robert Bellah calls “radical individualism”. They concentrate on personal obedience to Christ as if all that matters is “Jesus and me”, but in doing so miss the point altogether.

A big part of Christian maturity is learning to let God keep you steady. We must not be ruled by our emotions and circumstances. Once we recognize it isn’t about us, but all about God a natural transition of love, unity, and service begins to form.

Illustration 5 on Spiritual Gifts

SUMMARY: Far from undermining the fundamental unity existing between individual Christians, the diversity of spiritual gifts enhances, even necessitates unity. While in verses 1-6 the basis for Christian endeavor was unity, in verses 12-16 unity is the goal of Christian endeavor. We might call the unity of verses 1-6 positional and that of verses 12-16 practical.

C. READ: Ephesians 4:11-16

QUESTION: In verse 12 what is the ministry goal for evangelists, pastors, and teachers?

Illustration 6 (Optional)

QUESTION: In verse 13 what is the Christian and ministry goal of every believer?

SUMMARY: If the immediate goal for those as ministers or teachers is equipping the saints to minister to the needs of the body, the ultimate goal of all ministry in the church is given in verse 13 *“Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”*

ILLUSTRATION # 7:

Children will play with virtually anything they get their hands on. It's no surprise, then, that when Dutch children in the town of Barneveld uncovered an unexploded World War II artillery shell, they played with it. In fact, they had games with it for several months. That shell was still live and contained high explosives. Thankfully, the deadly plaything did not explode in the Barneveld playground.

His Walk in His Calling Through Love

April 25

*This Lesson by Eric Miracle—Minister to College and Young Adults

Paul shares 4 levels of maturity in the Christian walk:

1. Jesus Christ is the STANDARD for maturity.

The ultimate goal for all ministry in the body of Christ is maturity. The measure of that maturity is suggested by several standards in our text (vs. 13). To be fully mature is to be Christ-like. We must conclude; therefore, that complete maturity in this life is never attained. We must also realize that we should never gauge our maturity by comparing ourselves with anyone other than our Lord.

Illustration 7 (Optional)

2. STABILITY is necessary for maturity.

“As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming” (vs. 14).

The stability to which Paul referred is being so well-grounded in doctrine that we can recognize and avoid those who teach out of impure motives and by questionable methods, and reject their teachings. Immaturity is equated with instability, wavering every time some new teaching is introduced.

3. SPEAKING IN LOVE shows maturity.

“... speaking the truth in Love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him ...” (vs. 15).

It can mean ‘holding to the truth’ or ‘walking in truth’ as well as ‘speaking the truth.’ We are surely to hold or adhere to what is truth in a loving way, just as we should speak the truth in love. Neither rendering can be completely isolated from the other, since both are true.

Question: Have you ever met someone who was brash, straightforward, and didn’t hold back? While it could very well be the truth how you present it creates an atmosphere of acceptance.

4. UNITY is created out of maturity.

“Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God ...” (vs. 13a).

Our unity grows out of our mutual comprehension of those doctrines which constitute ‘the faith’ and out of our ever-increasing intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ’ (vs. 13).

NOTES:

His Walk in His Calling Through Love

April 25

*This Lesson by Eric Miracle—Minister to College and Young Adults

Conclusion

Ephesians 4 describes the essentials of the Christian faith as “one”. Unified as one whole and not individual or multiple. This is because God wants us to be one. To be unified we have to look inside for the Holy Spirit’s empowering. We must begin with humility, which comes from a proper self-awareness, awareness to Christ, and awareness to God. Humility produces meekness, which produces patience, and in turn produces love. It is only when we possess those virtues can we maintain the unity of the Spirit in peace. As a result of this we find maturity of our walk in forward motion and less continual stagnated lives.

Discussion Questions:

- As a child, did you play well with others? Give an example.
 - How do you develop the ability to ‘put up with others’?
 - Are most of your friends unified or divisive?
 - How is maturity measured based upon Chapter 4?
 - What kind of life is worthy of your calling (v. 1)?
 - Do you view your life as a calling? Why or why not?
-

THANKS to Brother Eric for sharing his heart this week. RAG