

Ephesians: Lesson #37: The Building Up of the Body

Notes for Parents to Study with Their Children

For Sunday, Sept. 7th

Read Eph. 4:1-16 (a simplified explanation of the text is supplied at the end of these notes).

Memory Verse: Eph. 4:12 “For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

Walk Worthy of Your Calling

- Sometimes in the Bible it talks about God calling people. This isn't God calling us like on the phone, but its talking about God being kind enough to invite us to be saved, to be part of the church, to be His children, part of His family, and to be in Heaven with Him one day. Those are all some very important things to be called to.
- God calls us by the gospel and when you believe in Christ, repent of your sins and are baptized, you answer God's call. In doing those things you are telling God: Yes, I want to be saved. Yes, I want to be part of Your church. Yes, I want to be one of Your children, part of Your family. Yes, I want to go to Heaven.
- Since all those things God called us to be are so important, we always need to “walk worthy”. Walking worthy means to live your life in a way that pleases God instead of making Him ashamed of you.

The Lord's “Team” Has to be United

- We all know what a team is. Like in baseball, football or soccer, it is a group of players that all are different people who have different abilities and play different positions, but they are all working for one goal – to win the game. They have to work together. Anything you do as a team is hard to do if you aren't all working together.
- That same thing is true of the Lord's “team”, the church. We have to work together to get the Lord's work done.
 - We shouldn't think we are the most important, but should put other people ahead of ourselves.
 - We should be willing to yield to others. In playing as a team one player can't “hog” the ball all the time. They have to let others play. They may be good at playing, but they have to let other players have a turn.
 - We should never get mad and fight with others. A team can't win when they fight each other.
 - If someone else does something that hurts our feelings, or maybe does something we don't like, we should act right and not get mad at them.
- Working together is something everyone has to work hard at if we are going to win against the devil. You might say that the other team is the Devil's team. He would like to defeat us and keep us from doing God's will and going to heaven. He knows that if we argue and act mean to our own team, then we won't win. Don't let the Devil win. Keep the Lord's team united.

What We Have in Common

- Any time you have a team, you have a lot of different people. They look different. Some have black hair, some brown, some blonde, and some red. Some are tall and others are short. Some can play really good, and others may not be as good.
- But you also have several things in common: You all had to join that particular team. You all are on the same team. You all have the same coach. You all are there to win the game. You all wear the same uniform.
- Those in the church may be different in some ways. We might be different races. We might be different ages. We have different talents and abilities.
- But Paul tells us seven things that everyone in the church has in common.
 1. We all are in **one body**, which means one church.
 2. **One Spirit** came to reveal God's Word for us to follow.
 3. We all have one hope and that's to go to heaven.
 4. We all have **one Lord**, Jesus Christ. The word "Lord" means we have obey Him.
 5. We all are part of **one faith**. That means we follow the same truths. We all obey the same gospel.
 6. Everyone that wants to become a Christian must be baptized in water to have their sins taken away. Every one who is a member of the church of Christ has obeyed the **one baptism** that God commands.
 7. There is only **one God** who is the true God and He is our **Father** in heaven.

Jesus Gave Gifts to the Church

- We remember how Jesus ascended to God. He went up into heaven to become King. When Jesus did this He gave five gifts to help the church.
 - He gave the church **apostles**. These were the men Jesus had chosen to follow Him. Jesus told them what to teach people. The apostles could do miracles that showed that God was with them. We don't have new apostles today, but we follow what the apostles wrote to us in the New Testament.
 - He gave the church **prophets**. When the apostles laid their hands on some people to receive the Holy Spirit, God would tell these people His Word so they could teach it to others. When all of God's Word was finished, there were no more prophets.
 - He gave the church **evangelists**. The word "evangelist" means one who spread the good news, the gospel. The evangelist is the preacher that teaches us from God's Word.
 - He gave the church **shepherds**. Of course, he doesn't mean the church has people who keep sheep. Sometimes in the Bible the church is called the Lord's "flock." "Shepherds" means leaders that help take care of the church. Elders are the shepherds of the church.
 - He gave the church **teachers**. This would be like our Bible class teachers. People who study God's Word and then teach it to the rest of us.

Why Did Jesus Give These to the Church?

- Paul tells us several reasons why Jesus gave these five things to His church.
 - These will give the members of the church everything they need to serve God. They equip us. That means they provide the equipment we need. That's like when the coach brings things (like the bats or helmets) to a game to help you play.
 - All this helps us build up the church. It makes it stronger.
 - It makes us learn more about God, about Jesus and about what they want us to do.
 - It helps the church, the body of Christ to grow. Members of the church shouldn't act like children. We have to grow up. Christ gave these to the church so we would grow. God's truth taught to us in love will help us grow.
 - Christ gave us these to teach us the work we need to do. Everyone in the church should work and help out. We should all do what we can to make the church stronger and more loving.

The Church is the Body of Christ

- Paul reminds us that the church is like a body, it is the body of Christ.
- Christ is the head of the body.
- Christians are the members of the body, like the eye, the hand, the foot, the ear and so on.
- For the body to work well, every part has to work. If your eyes don't work, it's going to be hard to get around. If your foot is hurt or broken, you can't walk. If your ears don't work, then you won't understand what people are saying.
- That's why everyone in the church needs to do their part. Everyone has work that they can do.
- If we all work together and love one another, then we can really accomplish great things for the Lord.

Simplified Explanation of the Text

Keep the Lord's Church Unified

Eph. 4:1 I have told you about the special privilege God has given allowing the Gentiles to be part of His household. I have told you how both Jew and Gentile in Christ are being built up into a holy Temple for the Lord. I have told you that we must glorify God in the church. Therefore, as a prisoner in the Lord, I plead with you to walk in a way that is worthy of these wonderful things you've been called to.

2 Show humility and meekness in all your ways. Go a long time before you let yourself get angry. Out of love put up with each other and keep acting right even if they have not treated you right.

3 Be eager and diligent to guard this unity of the Spirit in the peace that binds us all together.

The Seven “Ones”

4 There is one body, one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling.

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

6 One God and Father of all, who is over all, throughout all, and in you all.

Gifts the Lord Jesus Gave the Church

7 But even though we must work for unity, we must also realize that Christ’s gracious gifts were given out to each person individually, in keeping with whatever He chooses to give.

8 That’s what the Old Testament Scripture was talking about when it said, “When He ascended on high, He captured the captives, and gave gifts to people.”

9 Now when that passage says in regard to Christ that “He ascended”, it would imply that He had first descended – coming down to this earth and then entering the grave.

10 Now He who descended (who came down) is the same one who also ascended up higher than the heavens so that He could fill all.

11 The Lord Himself gave some apostles, but He also gave some prophets, and evangelists, and shepherds and teachers.

12 He gave these in order to equip the saints to be all they should be for the job they have of serving, so that the body of Christ can be built up.

13 This will continue on until all arrive at the unity of the faith, until all arrive at a better knowledge of the Son of God, until all come to the state of a full grown man. We must grow into the maturity and completeness of Christ.

14 If we grow up to a maturity like Christ’s, we will no longer be small children tossed around by the waves, blown around by the winds of all kinds of false teachings. Those false doctrines are promoted by people who are unstable, and yet very skilled in deceiving people (kind of like a crooked gambler does). They plan how they can mislead people and have methods of confusing them about the truth.

15 But by speaking the truth in love, you will grow up in all things into Him, which is the head, Christ.

16 From Christ, the Head, the entire body joins together and all of its parts unite to work together. When each joint of the body generously supplies its part, each individual part energetically doing its work, it will cause the body to grow as it is built up in love.