

**UNIT 5 EPHESIANS LESSON 7****ETHICS****“FIRST CHARGE : TO PROMOTE CHURCH’S UNITY”****STUDY PASSAGE: Ephesians 4:1-16**

Paul now commences a new section on ethics. The "therefore" reminds us that this ethical teaching is the inescapable consequence of behaviour arising out of the doctrinal teaching he has just concluded. The Christian faith differs from all other religions in a unique sense because it unites the spiritual and the practical. The Christian message is that God is both "out there" apart from me, as well as in me, working out his will in the world.

**THE WORTHY LIFE**

Consider the calling to which we have been called (v1). Read through the first three chapters again and make a list; eg

Called to be saints - 1:1

Called to be faithful - 1:1

Called to be in Christ with all the blessings that entails - 1:3-14

and so on.

What kind of life should be led that will be worthy of such a calling? In 4: 2,3 each of the words Paul uses is concerned with our relationships with other people, and so we can say that of fundamental importance in Christian living is our relationships with other Christians, and other people generally. The most conspicuous characteristic of a Christian should be the quality of his relationships.

The four virtues that will govern our relationships are: "humility, gentleness, patience, love".

Paul brings this concept of the worthy life to a conclusion by urging them to show zeal in maintaining the unity of the Spirit (v3). How much shame has been brought to the name of Christ over the years because Christians have not heeded this plea? The way to maintain the unity which the Spirit has given to us, as the result of the work of Christ, (see 2:11-18) is to live in peace, by humility, gentleness, patience and love.

**THE REALITIES OF CHRISTIAN UNITY - Verses 4-6**

There is little need for anyone to remind Christians of the diversity amongst them. Racial, national, social and educational differences are but a few. But the unity that we have as Christians over-rules all these.



This unity can be seen to exist in three aspects, viz:

1. The expression of our life in Christ v4

This is, that we live by one hope, in the one body, indwelt by the one Holy Spirit.

2. The incorporation of our life in Christ v5

We are incorporated into Christ through our faith commitment to the Lord, as confessed in our baptism.

3. The source of our life in Christ v6

The God and Father of us all, who is above all, through all, and in all.

### **THE GIFTS OF CHRIST AND THEIR PURPOSE - Verse 7**

Thus far, Paul has dealt with the virtues we will zealously seek in order to maintain the unity of the Spirit, and the realities of unity on which the unity of the Spirit is based. Now he goes on to show us that the diverse gifts and the diverse ministries that Christ gives to the Church, are for the purpose of achieving unity.

### **THE GIVER - Verses 7-11**

The variety of ministry in the Church is due to the sovereign favour of Christ. This Christ is the same Jesus who once lived in Galilee etc. (ie the lower parts of the earth), the one who conquered by His resurrection (Colossians 2:15) and the one who now fills all (1:2). In verse 8, Paul is quoting from Psalm 68:18.

Notice that once again, Paul stresses that the gift which leads to a ministry, this time an office in the Church, is an unmerited favour, or grace (v11).

### **THE GIFTS - Verse 11**

Some read this to mean that the gifts were to the Church and were apostles, teachers etc. However, it seems to make more sense of following the quotation "... He gave gifts to mankind", to understand that Christ has given various gifts to various people to enable some of them to be apostles, prophets etc. He gives gifts to people, and he gives gifted people to the Church.

There is no need to insist that we should have this complete list of Church ministries exercised by different people today. Indeed, by definition of the word "apostle" as one who had seen Jesus and who was appointed to be a witness of the resurrection, it is impossible to have apostles now. On the other hand, we can notice the principle that Christ utilised differences among his people to bring a complete ministry to his church, and that we can expect that these ministries will still include those with an itinerant responsibility as the apostles, prophets, and evangelists had, as well as the local settled ministry such as exercised by the pastor teacher.



### **THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFTS - Verse 12**

The purpose of the gifts to the Church is to achieve unity. This unity will be achieved as:

1. The saints equipped.

The saints are equipped for the work of ministry. This means that the "ministers" have the task of ensuring that the members of the church are fit to carry out their duties in the church.

2. The body is built up.

The unity achieved is "the unity of the faith". This is not so much the unity of a common set of doctrinal beliefs, as the unity that is a consequence of our common commitment to the one person, Christ.

It is also the unity that is a consequence of our knowledge of the Son of God. Our relationship with Him involves our relationship with each other.

Along with such unity will be our maturity as Christians.

### **THE RESULTS OF UNITY - Verses 13-16**

The results of this unity and maturity will be both negative and positive.

Negatively, we will be saved from being deceived by false teachers (v14).

Positively, the church, of which we are members, will be a growing church (v15, 16), growing both in size and in love.

#### **QUESTION 1:**

Read through the first 3 chapters of Ephesians and make a list of what we are called to (as suggested at the start of this lesson).

#### **QUESTION 2:**

According to v7, who has received a special gift? What is Christ's gift to us? (note that the word gift is in the singular). What do you conclude is the message to each of us in this statement?

#### **QUESTION 3:**

In verses 8-11, Paul quotes from Psalm 68:18. What knowledge about "ascending" and "descending" would have been lacking for a reader of the Psalms who knew only the Old Testament?



**QUESTION 4:**

In verse 12, Paul specifies the gifts (plural) which Christ has bestowed on the Church. Why are these jobs and responsibilities to be looked upon as gifts?

**QUESTION 5:**

In verses 13-16, the purpose of the gifts is explained as helping every Christian attain maturity. How is this maturity measured?

**QUESTION FOR GROUP STUDY:**

Paul began this part of his letter (4:1) by urging his readers to bring their lives up to the standards of their calling. What is our calling? What does this imply about our calling?