

Ephesians: Grace Changes Everything

Part 8 – Worthy of our Calling

Today, we continue our exploration of the book of Ephesians by delving into a passage that calls us to live a life worthy of our calling. In the opening verses of chapter four, Paul shifts from the theological foundations he has laid in the previous chapters to some practical instructions for living out our faith. This passage emphasizes unity, maturity and growth within the body of Christ.

Ephesians 4:1-16 *“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: 'When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.' (What does 'he ascended' mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

This passage can be divided into three main sections: the call to unity (verses 1-6), the diversity of gifts (verses 7-12), and the goal of maturity (verses 13-16). Each section provides us with profound insights into how we are to live out our calling as followers of Christ.

The Call to Unity (4:1-6)

Paul begins by urging the believers to live a life worthy of their calling, emphasizing the importance of unity within the body of Christ.

Living worthy of your calling: *"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received."* Paul, writing from prison, urges the believers to live a life that reflects the calling they have received. This calling refers to their identity and purpose as followers of Christ.

Living worthy of this calling involves aligning our lives with the values and principles of the gospel. Reflect on your own calling as a follower of Christ. Consider how you can live in a way that honours and reflects this calling. Ask God to help you align your thoughts, actions, and attitudes with His will.

Characteristics of unity: "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." Paul lists several characteristics that are essential for maintaining unity within the body of Christ: humility, gentleness, patience, and love. These virtues create an environment where unity can thrive and relationships can be strengthened. Strive to cultivate these virtues in your interactions with others. Practice humility by putting others' needs before your own, gentleness by responding with kindness, patience by being slow to anger, and love by seeking the best for others.

Keeping the unity of the Spirit: "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." Paul emphasizes the importance of actively maintaining the unity of the Spirit. This unity is not something we create but something we are called to preserve. It is a gift from the Holy Spirit, and it is our responsibility to protect and nurture it. We must make a conscious effort to promote peace and unity within our church and community. We should be intentional about resolving conflicts, fostering understanding, and building relationships based on mutual respect and love.

The basis of unity: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Paul highlights the theological basis for unity: there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all. These shared beliefs and experiences unite us as followers of Christ. So reflect on the unity we have in Christ. Celebrate the shared beliefs and experiences that bind us together as one body. Let these truths strengthen your commitment to promoting unity and peace within the church.

The Diversity of Gifts (4:7-12)

Paul transitions now to discussing the diversity of gifts within the body of Christ, emphasizing that each believer has been given grace according to Christ's apportionment.

Grace given to each believer: "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it." Paul acknowledges that each believer has been given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. This grace refers to the spiritual gifts and abilities that Christ has bestowed upon His followers. Recognize that you have been given gifts and abilities in Christ. Reflect on how you can use these gifts to serve others and contribute to the growth and unity of the body of Christ.

The ascension and descent of Christ: "This is why it says: 'When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.' (What does 'he ascended' mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)" Paul refers to Christ's ascension and descent to emphasize His authority to bestow gifts.

Christ's descent to the lower regions likely refers to His incarnation and His victory over sin and death. His ascension signifies His exaltation and His authority over all things. Reflect on the significance of Christ's descent and ascension. Consider how His victory and authority impact your life and your calling as a follower of Christ.

Gifts for Equipping the Church: "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." Paul lists specific leadership gifts that Christ has given to the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. These gifts are given to equip the believers for works of service and to build up the body of Christ. Reflect on the role of these leadership gifts within the church. Consider how you can support and encourage those who serve in these roles. Recognize the importance of being equipped for service and seek opportunities to grow and serve within the body of Christ.

The Goal of Maturity (4:13-16)

Paul concludes this section by emphasizing the goal of maturity and growth within the body of Christ.

Unity in faith and knowledge: "Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." Paul highlights the goal of unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God. This unity leads to maturity and the fullness of Christ. Maturity involves growing in our understanding of Christ and becoming more like Him by submitting more to His life within us. Reflect on your own spiritual growth and maturity. Consider how you can deepen your faith and knowledge of Christ. Seek opportunities for spiritual growth, such as Bible studies, discipleship, and personal reflection.

Stability in doctrine: "Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming." Paul emphasizes the importance of stability in doctrine. Maturity involves being grounded in sound teaching and not being swayed by false doctrines or deceptive teachings. Commit to studying and understanding sound doctrine. Seek guidance from trusted teachers and mentors and be discerning about the teachings you encounter. Ground yourself in the truth of God's Word.

Speaking the Truth in Love: "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ." Paul highlights the importance of speaking the truth in love. This balance of truth and love is essential for growth and maturity. It involves being honest and forthright while also being compassionate and caring. Practice speaking the truth in love in your interactions with others. Seek to build up and encourage others through your words. Strive to balance honesty with compassion and seek to reflect Christ in your communication.

Growth and Building Up in Love: "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." Paul concludes by emphasizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of the body of Christ. Growth and maturity occur as each part does its work and the body builds itself up in love. Reflect on your role within the body of Christ. Consider how you can contribute to the growth and building up of the church. Recognize the importance of working together and supporting one another in love.

Practical Applications:

Live a life worthy of your calling: Reflect on your calling as a follower of Christ and consider how you can live in a way that honours and reflects this calling. Ask God to help you align your thoughts, actions, and attitudes with His will. Make a daily commitment to live out your calling with integrity and purpose. Seek to honour God in all that you do and to be a reflection of His love and grace to those around you.

As you spend time reflecting on your calling as a follower of Christ, consider how you can live in a way that honours and reflects this calling. Write down specific actions and attitudes you want to cultivate in your life. Find an accountability partner who can support and encourage you in living out your calling. Share your goals and commitments with them and seek their guidance and accountability.

Incorporate daily devotions and reflections into your routine. Use these times to realign your heart and mind with God's will and to seek His guidance for living out your calling.

Cultivate Unity within the Body of Christ: Strive to promote unity and peace within your church and community. Practice humility, gentleness, patience, and love in your interactions with others.

Be intentional about resolving conflicts and building relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. Participate in church activities and initiatives that promote unity and inclusivity. Look for opportunities to build bridges and foster understanding among diverse groups of people.

Practice healthy conflict resolution in your relationships. When conflicts arise, seek to address them with grace, humility, and a desire for reconciliation. Use biblical principles of peacemaking, such as those found in Matthew 18:15-17 and Romans 12:18. Engage with your church community and participate in activities that promote unity and inclusivity. Look for opportunities to build relationships with people from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Demonstrate your commitment to unity through acts of service. Look for ways to serve others within your church and community and seek to build bridges through your actions.

Recognize and Use Your Spiritual Gifts: Reflect on the unique gifts and abilities that Christ has given the church through you. Consider how you can use these gifts to serve others and contribute to the growth and unity of the body of Christ. Seek opportunities to develop and use those gifts within the church and community.

Be open to feedback and guidance from others and be willing to step out in faith to serve and make a difference. Take a spiritual gifts assessment to help identify your unique gifts and abilities. Reflect on how you can use those gifts to serve others and contribute to the growth of the body of Christ.

Seek out service opportunities within your church and community that align with your gifts and passions. Be open to trying new things and stepping out of your comfort zone to serve. Find a mentor who can help you develop and use your spiritual gifts. Seek their guidance and support as you grow in your understanding and application of your gifts.

Support and Encourage Church Leaders: Recognize the important role of evangelists, pastors, and teachers within the church. Support and encourage those who serve in these roles and seek to be equipped for service through their guidance and teaching. Pray for your church leaders and offer your support and encouragement. Be proactive in seeking out opportunities for growth and service and be willing to invest in the development of others.

Commit to regularly praying for your church leaders. Pray for their wisdom, strength, and guidance as they serve and lead the church. Offer words of encouragement and support to your church leaders. Let them know that you appreciate their service and leadership. Be an active participant in your church's ministries and initiatives. Offer your time, talents, and resources to support the work of your church and its leaders.

Pursue Spiritual Maturity: Commit to growing in your faith and knowledge of Christ. Seek opportunities for spiritual growth, such as Bible studies, discipleship, and personal reflection. Be grounded in sound doctrine and discerning about the teachings you encounter. Make spiritual growth a priority in your life. Set aside regular time for Bible study, prayer, and reflection. Seek out mentors and accountability partners who can help you grow in your faith.

Join a Bible study group focused on deepening your understanding of Scripture. Study books of the Bible, specific topics, or themes that help you grow in your faith. Seek out discipleship relationships where you can learn from more mature believers and mentor others who are newer in their faith. These relationships can provide valuable support and encouragement in your spiritual growth. Spend regular time in personal reflection and journaling. Reflect on your spiritual journey, the areas where you need to grow, and the ways God is working in your life.

Speak the Truth in Love: Practice speaking the truth in love in your interactions with others. Seek to build up and encourage others through your words. Strive to balance honesty with compassion and seek to reflect Christ in your communication. Be intentional about your words and how they impact others. Seek to build others up and to encourage them in their faith journey. Be willing to have difficult conversations with grace and compassion.

Work on developing effective communication skills that balance truth and love. Practice active listening, empathy, and compassionate responses in your interactions with others. Make a habit of offering encouragement and affirmation to others. Look for opportunities to build others up and to speak life-giving words into their lives. When offering constructive feedback or addressing difficult issues, do so with grace and compassion. Seek to build others up and to promote growth and healing through your words.

Living Ephesians 4:1-16 in Daily Life

To fully internalize and live out the truths of Ephesians 4:1-16, we must integrate these principles into our daily lives. Here are some practical ways to do that:

Daily Reminders of Your Calling: Start each day by reminding yourself of your calling as a follower of Christ. This could be through a morning devotion, prayer, or reading Scripture. Let the truth of your calling shape your mindset and actions throughout the day.

Practicing Unity: Cultivate a habit of promoting unity within your church and community. Be intentional about building relationships, resolving conflicts, and fostering understanding. Look for ways to promote peace and inclusivity.

Using Your Gifts: Make a conscious effort to use your spiritual gifts to serve others. Look for opportunities to serve within your church and community. Be open to feedback and guidance from others and be willing to step out in faith.

Supporting Leaders: Be proactive in supporting and encouraging your church leaders. Offer your prayers, words of encouragement, and active participation in church ministries and initiatives.

Pursuing Maturity: Commit to growing in your faith and knowledge of Christ. Seek opportunities for spiritual growth, such as Bible studies, discipleship, and personal reflection. Be grounded in sound doctrine and discerning about the teachings you encounter.

Speaking the Truth in Love: Practice speaking the truth in love in your interactions with others. Seek to build up and encourage others through your words. Strive to balance honesty with compassion and seek to reflect Christ in your communication.

Conclusion:

In Ephesians 4:1-16, Paul calls us to live a life worthy of our calling, emphasizing unity, maturity, and growth within the body of Christ. As we reflect on these truths, let us strive to live out our calling with integrity and purpose, promote unity and peace, use our spiritual gifts to serve others, support and encourage our church leaders, pursue spiritual maturity, and speak the truth in love.

Thank you for joining me on this journey through Ephesians. Let's all focus on the insights in this passage in the coming days, so we may continue to grow in our understanding of God's love and live out the truths of Paul's powerful words with confidence and grace.