**We All Reach Unity in the Faith**

Ephesians 4:1-16

Key Verses 13

“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.”

**Introduction**



 The climax of God’s purpose, “when the times will have reached their fulfillment,” is to bring all things in the universe together under Christ (1:10). Paul repeated the words “heavenly realms” (1:3,20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) that Christian existence is not merely on an earthly plane. Nevertheless, that life is lived out on earth, where the practical daily life of the believer continues to work out the purposes of God. The ascended Lord gave “gifts” to the members of his church to enable them to minister to one another and so promote unity and maturity. May the Lord help us to grow in our faith so that we may form the community of love in Jesus Christ. Amen.

 Today’s passage may be divided into two parts. **Part 1** is about how to live a life worthy of the calling from verses 1-6, which is to keep our unity by Jesus’ virtues. **Part 2** is about how to keep the unity of the Spirit *more* practically. First, Christ gave each of us special gifts to build up the unity of the church (7-13). Second, individual Christians should grow mature so that the body of Christ can become healthy and strong (14-16).

1. Read verses 1-2. What did Paul urge us to do? (1) What does it mean to be completely humble, gentle, and patient in bearing one another? (2) How can we do this? (Php 2:5-8)

1-1, Read verses 1-2.

 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. **2** Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

1-2, What did Paul urge us to do? (1)

 ***As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.***

* Paul urged the Ephesians to live a life worthy of calling. In the past, the Ephesian believers lived a godless life, worshipping idols and pursuing their sinful desires.
* By nature they deserved God’s wrath. But God in his great love made them alive with Christ and seated them with Christ in the heavenly realms.
* Moreover, God destroyed the dividing wall of hostility and created “one new humanity” out of the Jews and the Gentiles.
* Since then they were heirs together with the Jews, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise of God.
* Receiving such amazing mercy and grace, Paul said to them to live a life worthy of the calling.
* They were the members of the body of Christ. Each individual had responsibility to build up the church as a member of the body of Christ.

1-3, What does it mean to be completely humble, gentle, and patient in bearing one another? (2)

1-4, How can we do this? (Php 2:5-8)

***Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.***

* First of all, **humility** is essential to be united. Paul added the word “completely.” Completely humble means thoroughly, totally, utterly humble.
* It is impossible to be completely humble with our own strength and effort. But to learn complete humility, we must have the same mindset of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2:5-8 reads,

 “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!”

* In those days, the word “humble” must have meant lowliness of social status as slaves.
* In the minds of many of our times, it still does have this connotation, but it is a glorious Christian virtue

Philippians 2:1-4 also reads,

 “Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, **2** then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. **3** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, **4** not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

* The opposite of humility is pride. Pride is the root of most conflict. Pride tears down Christian unity. So the Bible strongly warns proud people.

1 Peter 5:5b says,

 “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, ‘God opposes the proud but shows favour to the humble.’”

* Let us make every effort to clothe ourselves with humility toward one another and build up the Christian unity.
* Second, **gentleness.** Many people tend to assume that a gentle person is a weak person. Many want to be tough. But gentleness is true strength.
* A gentle person does not get angry easily. Even when surrounded by a heated atmosphere, a gentle person has his or her own emotions under control.
* To keep unity in the church we must learn and have gentleness.
* Third, **patience.** Patience is to endure others’ bad behaviour in the hope that they will improve. Impatient people are quick to anger and quick at giving up.
* God has been incredibly patient with us. Exodus 34:6b reads, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,”
* Patience comes from love. 1 Corinthians 13:4 reads, **“Love is patient.”** To keep Church unity we must make every effort to become patient and bear with one another in love.

2. Read verses 3-6. How can we keep unity of the Spirit? (3) What elements are necessary for unity? (4-6) What can we learn from God being one and the Father of all? (6)

2-1, Read verses 3-6.

 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. **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.

2-2, How can we keep unity of the Spirit? (3)

***Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.***

* Here Paul urges us to make every effort to keep unity. He didn’t say, “Make every effort to create (or produce) unity.” Rather, he said, “to keep the unity.”
* Jesus already destroyed the barrier, making us one in him. He brought us together and united us together as the church.
* So we are to make every effort to keep this unity. The problem is that there are some people who try to break unity.
* Ultimately breaking up church unity is Satan’s work. It is the act of challenging God who destroyed the wall and made us one.
* God brought us from various races and backgrounds. And because of that, friction can arise and inevitable. But to keep unity, we must make every effort.
* Keeping unity is the first priority in the body of Christ. Therefore, through the bond of peace that Jesus gives, we must make every effort to keep unity.

2-3, What elements are necessary for unity? (4-6)

2-4, What can we learn from God being one and the Father of all? (6)

 ***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 lists seven elements: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God.
* We cannot be divided because the triune God, the Father God, the Lord Jesus the Holy Spirit established the church.
* The triune God has been dwelling in the church and will continually lead the church.
* In their spiritual blindness, some Christians see the church as a mere human organization and try to tear it down by their slander.
* But we must know that the triune God established our church and is leading it. So we must make every effort to keep unity and live a life worthy of His calling.

3. Read verses 7-13. What did Jesus give each of us? (7) What does the quotation from Psalm 68 tell us about Jesus’ ascension? (8-10) How did Christ equip His people for works of service and for what purpose? (11-13)

3-1, Read verses 7-13.

 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. **8** This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.” **9** (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4&version=NIV#fen-NIV-29282c)]? **10** He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) **11** So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, **12** to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up **13** 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.

3-2, What did Jesus give each of us? (7)

***But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.***

* Other versions may help us to understand this verse well.

“God has given his grace to each one of us measured out by the gift that is given by Christ.” (CEB)

“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” (KJV)

“However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ.” (NLT)

* God gave each one of us a special gift to build up the church in harmonious diversity. Everyone in the church is different, unique, and special, for God gave a special gift to each person.

3-3, What does the quotation from Psalm 68 tell us about Jesus’ ascension? (8-10)

 ***This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.” 9 (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)***

* Paul explains that Christ gained the full right to give gifts to his people through his incarnation, his death, and resurrection.
* Christ, who is victorious, is the source of all spiritual gifts to his church.

3-4, How did Christ equip His people for works of service and for what purpose? (11-13)

 ***So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up***

* When we paraphrase verse 11 in reference to CEB(Common English Bible), it becomes clearer. “He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.”
* So Christ himself gave some people the gifts of witnessing, others the gift of speaking God’s words, some others the gift of taking care of people and still others the gift of teaching God’s words with conviction.”
* The purpose of Christ’s gifts is to serve God’s people and build up the body of Christ. We must not misuse our gifts for wrong purposes.
* We must not hide our gifts like a foolish man who hid his talents in the ground because of fear and laziness. We must use our gifts to build up the body of Christ.

***13 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.***

* Reaching unity among us is the first goal of God's work through the gifted offices and equipped saints.
* This is consistent according to the flow of the context in the book of Ephesians, which is fit for both the ultimate purpose of God (1:10) and the mystery of God revealed through Paul (3:6).
* Again, by clearly stating that this is a unity in faith, Paul does not command a structural or organizational unity, but a spiritual unity in common faith.
* And of the knowledge of the Son of God - When the gifted offices work right and the saints are properly equipped, there are increased intimate knowledge of God.
* In this way, as years pass by, we grow mature in accordance with the fullness of Christ, individually and also collectively as a corporate body.

4. Read verses 14-16. What happen to immature believers? (14) How much do we have to grow as the mature body of Jesus? (15) What should we do as each part of Jesus’ whole body? (16)

4-1, Read verses 14-16.

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.**15** 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. **16** 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.

4-2, What happen to immature believers? (14)

***14 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 again emphasizes here by contrasting spiritual infants with those who are mature in order to encourage us to grow in Christ.
* Spiritual infants do not let the truth take deep root in their hearts and they lack spiritual discernment.
* They are easily led astray and tossed back and forth by human ideas and false teachings. They are vulnerable to deceivers who want to use them.

4-3, How much do we have to grow as the mature body of Jesus? (15)

 ***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.***

* The mature are characterized by speaking the truth in love (15a). They are deeply rooted in both of these two virtues.
* Whenever they open their mouths, words of truth come out with love. Both are essential. If we speak the truth without love we can hurt others and cause division. But if we love without the truth, those who listen will grow spoiled.
* But when we speak the truth with love we can all grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ (15b).
* We have to grow into the head of Jesus Christ instead of growing in our own deviated way.
* Also receiving nourishment equally, each part of body can grow up and be well balanced with other parts of the body.

4-4, What should we do as each part of Jesus’ whole body? (16)



 ***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.***

* Some may think that the church is a pyramid, with the pastor at the top and others are just receiving his or her direction.
* But God wants each of us to see the church as a body, where every part does its unique share.
* Just as every part(ligament) and joint serves an essential function, each of us can supply something unique in a coordinated and effective effort to grow together.
* Paul tells us how the body of Christ grows. Christ is the source of all things the body needs and each member is related both to Christ and to the body of Christ.
* When each member does its work, the whole body grows and builds itself up in love. In this way the church becomes healthy and strong.
* This verse reminds us of Ephesians 1:22-23.

 “And God placed all things under his(Jesus) feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, **23** which is his body,the fullness of him who **fills everything in every way.”**

* Praise our Lord, Jesus Christ who is the very bodily form(expression) of God’s fullness!

**Conclusion**

We are all different. Our appearances, characters, talents and life-experiences are all different. But God called and brought us together, and formed us into one body of Christ. The church is fundamentally different from any human organization, because God brings his people and forms his church in which Jesus is its head. So the church is not merely a human organization where human beings have chosen to gather and form a ‘church.’ Rather, it is God who has brought us together here with his clear purpose. Jesus prayed (Jn 17:21) for all believers to be one, as Jesus and the Father God are one. Let us all learn how to keep unity while we appreciate diversity among us. Thank God for enlightening us with God’s wisdom!

**One word: Keep our unity in Jesus!**