

Ephesians 4:1-16

Today's message is about the Church. This is not boring but exciting! God has called you to Himself and He is the head of the church. You are part not only of the family, but you are a member. You do not only belong but you have a unique function!

These days we are very individualistic minded. We believe that our faith is our own and we can practice it as we wish. God knows better and He knows the only way you can be fulfilled and fulfill your calling is to be in communion with other believers. In His grace and wisdom, He has called you into His family – His church and to share in all the privileges, gifts, blessings and calling.

Paul gave his life to the church, both in serving the church, as well as paying the ultimate price on behalf of the church

So far in Ephesians Paul has taught us how God loved us and made provision to deal with our sin debt by offering His son Jesus on a cross. He saved us by grace and seated us with Him in heaven in order to bless us with the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. We got told that all barriers of our origin, or race or status have been removed and that we all are part of one body and fellow citizens of heaven with the saints and members of the household of God!

Ephes 3: 14For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, **15**from whom every family^c in heaven and on earth is named, **16**that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17**so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18**may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, **19**and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, **21**to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Paul is so pumped by the wonderful truths he has just shared and he wants us to not only share in it, but fully experience that, not only for our own sake, but also for the sake of the Church and ultimately for everyone God has called. He knows that we cannot do it, but he has faith that God can do way more through us if we are filled with the love and fullness of God.

Today's text deals with how we become an effective God glorifying church. First we individually have to have accepted Christ as our savior and received the Holy Spirit to work powerfully in our inner being. Only then can we experience the love of Jesus we need to become an effective member and a God honouring church.

God gives us the Holy Spirit to work powerfully in us in order for us to bring Him the glory through the church. All the glory needs to go to him, not to our church or our leaders or members.

What is the church? Jesus has called the body of believers on earth his church and also his body. This image demonstrates that the church is a living organism and Christ is the head from where all the directions come and we are each a member of the body and needs to function well for the body to function well. He has tasked the church to do His work on earth till the day He comes back. Individual churches are part of the global church. Each church has to be surrendered to Jesus as head, teach and obey the Bible and be led by the Holy Spirit in order to qualify as truly part of His church. Just calling yourself a Christian Church does not make you a truly part of His body unless you adhere to His criteria.

Mat 16:16 Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” **17** And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. **18** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock^b I will build my church, and the gates of hell^c shall not prevail against it. **19** I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed^d in heaven.”

The church is established on confession of faith that Jesus is God and the Christ redeemer. Jesus will protect it and do His work on earth through it. People will come into His kingdom through the church. Satan will not overcome the church.

Mat 28: 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^b the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The mission of the church is to make disciples of all nations and to baptize them. Not by ourselves, but with Jesus.

This passage of Ephes 4 starts with therefore. Which means that all the wonderful amazing truths about our salvation and blessings Paul has taught us up to now, must lead to the next steps! The first 3 chapters inform us about the how God has called us into this amazing relationship with Him, not be our doing but purely by grace out of love. Now He wants us to know this all has a purpose and we have a calling. Christianity is not a selfish religion we indulge in for ourselves.

Paul puts an emphasis on this reminding the readers that he is in chains for the sake of the church and he is prepare to endure it as long as they do not miss out on the fullness of God!

The first thing he mentions is that you and I and the church each have a calling from God. I hope that is not new to you, but I want you to look at your calling and our calling afresh today.

Rom 8: 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,^h for those who are called according to his purpose. **29** For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. **30** And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Our calling is very sacred and is for a very special purpose. When God calls you for a purpose, he predestines you for salvation, by providing justification for your sins. He then starts the process of conforming you to the image of His son in order for you to be able to fulfill your purpose. Once you are able to glorify God in your purpose He called you to, you will also experience His joy and blessings as well as receive the crown of glory when you meet Him in heaven.

Ephes 3: 8To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, **9**and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in^b God, who created all things, **10**so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. **11**This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, **12**in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

Dear brothers and sisters we have received the greatest mystery and knowledge in the universe and it is our obligation to make known to the world this essential wisdom of God. We have to make the world see the ultimate glory of God and bring non-believers in to experience the unsearchable riches of Christ. Everyone is seeking for this but, most of the time in the wrong places.

Brothers and sisters is the world around you aware of the reality of God because of you or us?

Many organizations have codes of conduct. It may start when your parents tell you that as a member of the family or perhaps your school there, is an expectation of how you behave in public, then when you become a student leader there is more of an expectation. I know for my profession, there is a high expectation of how we conduct ourselves even outside of work and we can get disciplined by our college for even a traffic violation.

Paul urges us to **“walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called”**

Well, our calling from God is above all worldly callings - we are members of His family and are His ambassadors on earth. We have to reflect His values on earth. When others observe how we walk and live, they should be able to see that we have a calling from God. Well I agree with you. You and I am not able to this very well. But God, promises to do this through us if we allow Him. Through the Holy Spirit the Bible and our family of believers, God will make us more like Jesus, as He changes not only our behavior, but our character. From God’s point of view this is sanctification, from the church’s point of view this is discipling.

This change in character is necessary for you and me not only to glorify Jesus but also for the health of the church. The evidence of this change in character is stated here in verse 2 and 3. This change in character brings **v2 humility, gentleness, patience, the ability to bear with one another in love and an eagerness to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.**

What does that look like in the church? **Humility** means that you are surrendered to God. Your will and preferences are also submitted to God and you will surrender your will and preferences for the good of the church and the honour of God. We are all different and our differences can rub one another, but in

love we need to bear with one another. Even when people sin and sin in different ways than you do, we still need to tolerate and love them.

We need to be eager to maintain the unity in the church and the bond of peace with which the Holy Spirit binds us. When we do things that breaks that bond we do not only sin against one another, but also against the Holy Spirit.

1 Pet 3: 15but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect

In all we do we first need to honour Christ and live holy lives. Jesus said: be holy because I am holy. When live holy lives, people will see that in our lives and want to share in that hope. Then we need to share our faith and the knowledge of God with them. You cannot argue someone into heaven but you can live a life that needs supernatural explanation and share with them who your hope is built on in gentleness and respect.

2 Tim 2: 23Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. **24**And the Lord's servant^e must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, **25**correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, **26**and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

We all have our own opinions and filters through what we see things. Surrender your views and opinions to God to avoid getting involved in foolish controversies that will lead to quarrels and division.

The only way we can be really gentle and true with one another is when we honour Christ as Lord as holy in our hearts. When we deal with people in love and gentleness, we give God opportunity to work and convict people of the truth. The truth will set us free from sin and bind us together in love.

Patience is a virtue it is said and it is truly so.

1 Cor 13: 4Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant **5**or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;^b **6**it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. **7**Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

In order to have patience with someone we need to love them and you also cannot be envious, proud, arrogant, rude, insisting on your own way, irritable or resentful.

Only in love can we bear with one another and with one another's differences.

These are all fruit of the Spirit and evidence that we have surrendered to the Holy Spirit and all a direct consequence of our love for God and for one another.

John 13: 35By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

When we love one another, we will be eager to maintain the unity of the fellowship and the bond of peace under the guidance of the Holy Spirit

We are intricately bound together by many ways.

We belong to **one body** – the Church of Christ and the believers at Arrowsmith. Because we are all part of the body and we all need to fulfil our function well for the body to function well.

We are controlled by **one Spirit**. So if we are all sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will all go the same way and there will not be great division amongst us. We are not a democracy. We are members of a kingdom and Jesus is our king. He is our supreme leader we need to fully trust and follow.

We have **one hope**

1 Tim 4: 10 For to this end we toil and strive,^b because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

What a wonderful hope and anticipation we have! We know that something is coming that is so glorious that even creation is groaning in anticipation. We will be set free with the whole of creation from our bondage to corruption and sin and we will receive new perfect bodies with sinless minds living in a perfect new creation! This is a strong bond that pulls us together.

We are united in all of this by our **common faith** in Jesus and His redemption and calling. We have all died to ourselves and have been raised to live for Jesus at our baptism.

Heb 11: 1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. **2** For by it the people of old received their commendation. **3** By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Faith in who Jesus really is, is the foundation of our relationship with God. This is what all the sects attack- the true identity of Christ. Without faith we lose our hope. Without faith we are not saved. Without faith we cannot please Him and we will not be in the family of God.

Rom 3: 21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— **22** the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, **25** whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. **26** It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

The only way we can become righteous, is through faith in the true Jesus Christ. He has sacrificially provided that for you, but you have to make it your own by faith.

Jesus is our only **Lord!** Is He Lord of your life and our congregation?

Kyrios is the word used here in the Greek and translated as Lord . This word means master. Is this Jesus who is the creator and sustainer of the universe and died for your sins the lord and master of your life and ours as a church? We have to make sure He is! If not there is big trouble and consequences as we will see.

Firstly, we have to make sure that we know who Jesus truly is.

Col 1:15He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **16**For by^f him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. **17**And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. **18**And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. **19**For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, **20**and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Jesus is God and creator and sustainer of the universe. He is in charge and will bring everything under His rule. He is our savior and the head of the church, even our church.

We have **one loving Father** who loved us so much that He sent His only son, to suffer and die for us in order for us to have eternal life and be reconciled with Him. He is sovereign and planned and executed everything and with Jesus is in control of everything.

We were dead in our trespasses and we needed mercy, but God did not only give us mercy He also gave us grace. By grace we are saved and by grace He blesses us beyond what we can imagine..

Ephes 2: 1And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2**in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— **3**among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body^a and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.^b **4**But^c God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **5**even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— **6**and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **7**so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. **8**For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, **9**not a result of works, so that no one may boast. **10**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

By grace He gave us salvation. He took us from the bondage of sin and seated us with Him in heaven in order to bestow on us riches of His grace that is beyond our comprehension. He transformed us from

the mess we were into His workmanship for a purpose to do good works that He already prepared for us.

In order to accomplish this He also gave us gifts of service and power, not for our selfish use but for the building up of the church

1 Cor 12: 4Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; **5**and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; **6**and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. **7**To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Jesus came to earth to suffer and die for us and He returned to heaven in order to intercede for us and to prepare a place for us. Fortunately He left us the Holy Spirit, the Bible as well as the church and he gave us gifts and abilities in order for us to fulfil our mission.

Rom 12: 3For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. **4**For as in one body we have many members,^e and the members do not all have the same function, **5**so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. **6**Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; **7**if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; **8**the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads,^f with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

We are members of His body and we all have a purpose and a function in the body. We all have different gifts and we need to use it for the building up of the body. The members of the church are the ones to do the ministry of the church.

He also called some to special leadership roles in order to equip the members of the church for the “**work of ministry for building up the body of Christ**”. Yes brothers and sisters the Lord gave us **apostles** who gave us the Gospel, **prophets** to open the Word for us, **evangelists** to proclaim the Gospel to the unsaved, **teachers** to teach us how to obey the Lord and **shepherds** to guide us and care for us. These people are not to build up the church, but merely to help all of us as members of the church to do it in love.

What does building up of the church look like?

12to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, **13**until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,^e to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

The building up of the church and to come to the unity of faith depends how intimately we know Jesus. Knowing Jesus intimately, will mean that you love and cherish Him and want to be in His presence and do what honours Him. This relationship will give you spiritual maturity and will make you able to help your fellow members to come to spiritual maturity as well.

This means that we will come to all believe the truth. The unity comes from the truth. Not my truth or your truth, but the truth of God. This will give us unity in faith and knowing Jesus for who He really is. This in turn will change us to become more like Jesus as much as it is possible on earth. That will be the measure of mature adulthood or manhood in Christ.

When we have reached this full maturity, we will not be influenced by cunning false doctrine, self-centered leaders or false conspiracies, because we will know the truth and be able to speak the truth.

14so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

There are many false doctrines and false leaders and they come to you from everywhere and if you are not rooted in the real truth you will fall victim to them.

When we know the truth we have the obligation to speak the truth in all circumstances. It is not easy and has to be done on the background we have discussed which is based on the love we need to have for one another.

15Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, **16**from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Speaking the truth in love is necessary in order for us all to be able to grow up to the measure of Christ we have discussed. That might mean pointing out untruth. We need to become more like Jesus our master and Lord in every way. We have a responsibility to help one another attain this maturity.

Only when we are united in Christ in this way and each member is doing its function well can the church function well and grow and be built up in love. This will ensure the church's godliness and effectiveness and to represent Jesus in love and faithfulness. Then we can all be fulfilled and attain our goal of **"Passionately proclaiming the glory of God in Christ Jesus for the joy of all people"**

Dr. Hermann Nell, 06-07-2020

