

GOD ABOVE ALL

A STUDY IN EPHESIANS

**above all,
maturity**

Ephesians 4:1-16

ephesians 4:1–16

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”

ephesians 4:1–16

(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God,

ephesians 4:1–16

to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so 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. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 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.

therefore

- What follows is only true because everything Paul has already said is true.
 - You have been blessed with every spiritual blessing.
 - You are chosen, redeemed, adopted, holy
 - The father is uniting everything in Christ.
 - You can know this because the Spirit has sealed you
 - God wants you to know Him and His immeasurable riches
 - We have access to power because Christ is seated far above every other power or authority
 - The father has put all things under the feet of Christ

therefore

- What follows is only true because everything Paul has already said is true.
 - You were once dead in your trespasses
 - God's rich mercy saved you by making you alive
 - Coming alive was nothing you have done, but by grace
 - You are seated with Christ in the heavenlies
 - This means we can walk in the good works God has called us to
 - He has broken down the barriers that divide his children
 - You are being built up as the temple of the Lord, Christ lives in you.

therefore

- What follows is only true because everything Paul has already said is true.
 - God revealed his divine mystery to His apostles and prophets
 - The mystery is that anyone can become the temple of God with faith in Christ
 - The existence of the church puts the devil on notice
 - We have access to God like never before
 - You can be strengthened by the Spirit and comprehend the power and love of God
 - God can do more than you can imagine

therefore

- Live like you believe all of that!
 - v.4:1: *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,*
 - v.4:2–3: *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

unity

- The problems come when we try to define our unity outside of the Spirit.
- When we get sidetracked from the mission of the Kingdom of God, then we turn our swords on each other.
- We find unity in the Spirit because the Spirit produces His fruit, and His fruit is unifying.

unity

- There is unity, but there is also diversity.
 - *v.4:4–7: There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.*
- While we remain united, we can celebrate the diversity of gifts given to us.

the victorious Jesus

- v.4:8–10: Therefore it says,
 “When he ascended on high he led a host of
 captives,
 and he gave gifts to men.”

(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

the victorious Jesus

- Psalm 68 is a Psalm about a divine warrior king triumphing over demonic entities.
 - References to Bashan
 - Direct reference to a demon in v. 21
- This follows the theme in Ephesians of God being above all principalities and powers.

the victorious Jesus

- Christ descended to preach victory to the rebellious angels from Genesis 6.
 - **1 Peter 3:18–19:** *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison,*

the gifts of leadership

- *v.4:11: And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,*
- Any attempt to take the first two of these gifts and say that only those gifts from this list have ceased does not originate in the text itself.
- These gifts are all functioning in the church today by God's design for the equipping of the body.

prophets

- 1 Corinthians 14 tells us that we should all pursue prophecy, prophecy edifies and builds up the church, and can lead people to Christ.
- Prophecy is the human report of a divine revelation.
- Paul tell us to not despise prophecies (1 Thess. 5:20) and test each “word” that is given.

apostles

- Apostles are “sent ones” to build the foundation for churches and church structures.
- These “little a” apostles do not carry the same authority as the original Apostles, who were taught directly by Jesus.
 - We see other people called apostles in the NT.
- Church planters, missionaries, or people leading a new move of Christ to a new area are those exercising apostolic gifts.

evangelists, shepherds, teachers

- Evangelists are those that make known the redemptive message of the gospel.
- Pastors are the shepherds that pay extra attention to the care of the sheep.
- Teachers clarify and make relevant (without diluting) the truth of the Bible.

maturity

- **v.4:13:** *until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,*
- We will be growing in unity, knowledge, and maturity until we are just like Jesus.

maturity

- *Hebrews 5:11–14: About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

maturity

- *v.4:14: so 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.*
- People will try to deceive you and lead you away from the truth of Jesus.
 - Paul warns about being led astray by those outside the church, and inside the church.
- Do not get spiritual ADD.

maturity

- The call to maturity should cause two reactions:
 - Discomfort
 - You are not perfect. God needs to change you.
 - To become mature you might have to battle.
 - Comfort
 - God wants to change you because He's not finished with you.
 - God knows exactly who you are right now and still calls you son or daughter.

maturity

- *v.4:15–16: Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 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.*
- Everyday you pursue God you are becoming more and more like Jesus.

reflection

- Do you attempt to define Christian unity outside the gospel?
- How is God calling you into greater maturity in Him?
- Does it comfort or discomfort you that God is not finished with you?