



Ephesians

Part 29

Ephesians 4:1-16
Week of September 26, 2021

Before Connect Group

- Read Ephesians 4:1-16
 - Watch the sermon by going to <http://switzerlandcommunitychurch.org>
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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." (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, 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.

Ephesians 4:1-16, ESV

Sermon Notes

God is glorified as the church stands in unity with one another and fends of the attacks of the enemy with loving grace.

Throughout our walk through Ephesians, Paul has spent a great deal of the first half of the letter discussing and laying down the foundational understanding of the life of the Christian being for the glory of God. The Gospel is the foundation for all the life of the Christian and for the one who would come after Him. We labored through the understanding of the person of Christ and the proper place of the Gospel because, at the core of our understanding of our life should be the life that we are intended to reflect; Jesus Christ. The temptation when going through scripture, especially for the western American church is to jump to the application and simply say "How do I do this?" But the Gospel is not something we do or a box we check off. The Gospel declares the glory of Jesus Christ who shapes us, transforms us, and molds us into the person that God has designed us to be.

Yet, from the beginning with Adam and Eve, sinned and rebelled against God, marring the image of God and separating us from Him. Now, our hearts have been twisted by the darkness of sin and our natural inclination is to drift away from the Gospel. When we first come to Christ, we are spiritual infants who constantly seems to wander away from what we know is good and right. Like children, when we first come to Christ, we have not yet fully arrived at maturity, but we come to maturity through our gradual forming and shaping of ourselves to be more and more like Him.

- Paul, in talking to the church in Ephesus, does not offer a specific theological threat they should be wary of, but just that they should be vigilant against theological as it leads to spiritual immaturity.
- *Genesis 3:1-3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"*
- Eve, in all fairness, did not set out to doom humanity in that moment. In fact, she had merely been immature in your faith, choosing to twist the word of God into saying something beyond what it said. She had been tossed around by the waves and the winds and carried, passively, into the hands of sin and destruction.
- The serpent, however, did exactly what Paul warns us against in the second half of verse 14 with the intention deceit and craftiness to intentionally lead Adam and Eve astray.
- Guys, please do not read this and think you are off the hook on this either. Genesis tells us that Adam was simply just standing by watching the whole events occur.
 - As an aside, men, you absolutely have what it takes to stand up and lead your family, your community, in spiritual maturity. Not in some male chauvanstic way but in a way that is God honoring. We are wired differently to be the Spiritual head and to love as Christ loved the church, by being willing to lay our lives down for for the sake of others. Until we arrive at that place of leading the charge and bringing people to spiritual maturity alongside us, we will always, always be unfulfilled in all we do.

The Slow Drift of Our Hearts

- *Ephesians 4:14 "tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine."*

- Some of our immaturity comes from simply drifting off into places that we had no intention of being in the first place.
- Usually, this drifting is good natured in general and seeks to explore the truth of the faith. I'm not going to discount that sometimes this drift occurs just as we are exploring the realm of our understanding.
- Yet, as Paul in Ephesians 4 describes this process, this is largely a passive process. The verbs are passive. We are being carried. This word carried contains subtext of being carried as a sick person.
 - Last week, Joseph mentioned that the word for equipping is similar to a setting of bone in place.
 - Keeping in this medical theme, the sick person is simply drifting along and being carried as one would carry a sick person. When we put people on a hospital gurney, they have very little agency in their decisions but are being pushed along by things that seem to be beyond their control.
 - As a child, we have experienced this phenomenon when we go to the beach. Our parents give us the proper and safe depth that we can go and we, being children, promptly forget about everything they said and head straight out to the best waves that are way bigger than we can manage. Then, after time, we turn towards the beach and realize that, in our immaturity, in our infancy and childishness, we have drifted way far down the beach. We didn't intent to do so, but the waves and the current simply pushed us over time.
- As we are growing in our faith, many of us, in our spiritual immaturity are whipped around in the same manner as the child in the waves as we are drawn from various theological and church based thoughts.
 - These often appeal to our senses rather than rely on the truth.
 - It tells us what we want to hear while simultaneously assuming that we won't bother to check the truth of what we are saying since the knowledge feels positive and likable.
 - *Jeremiah 6:13-14 For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace.*
 - Where Jeremiah came proclaiming the truth that judgment was coming, the false prophets proclaimed a peace that would not come and the rulers and people preferred the false peace of the false prophets and paid the penalty from it.
 - *2 Timothy 4:3-4 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*
- Theology that appeals to vanity.
 - This passage in 2 Timothy reveals a great deal about the inclination of our hearts and the slow gradual drift that carries us away. While not many of us set to become heretics or abandon sound theology, the vanity of our hearts with those who would willingly twist the word of God to appeal to those sense.
 - The prosperity Gospel is one of the prime examples of that type of preaching. It speaks to our desire and our understanding that God wants to bless us and reduces it to a mere financial blessing.
 - The problem is that for many of these, they sound right at first glance and because it appeals to our own sense of self-fulfillment, self-actualization, and self-affirmation we do not stop to question.
 - In reality, the Gospel calls us to die to the self and come alive in Jesus Christ. We crucify the flesh so that we might come alive by grace through faith in the works of Jesus Christ on the cross.

- In the sick condition of our heart, we are carried away by the winds and tossed by the storms into living a life that God died to draw us away from.
- Cultural Pluralism and Subjective Reality
 - We have allowed ourselves to think that we can craft reality and create the world how we see fit in our own image, when in actuality, we have been created by God higher than ourselves and cannot call into creation in the same manner than God can.
 - The criteria for what we accept becomes whether or not we agree with it and whether or not it conforms to our own worldview.
 - In doing so, though, we attempt to dethrone God as the author of all creation and the foundation of truth within Himself and turn the truth of God into something that must agree with us.
 - Our feelings dictate our willingness to accept truth
 - We judge pastors based on their ability to be compelling rather than what they say is true or not.
 - God needs to provide us with the blessings and promises of prosperity in this life and ask for conviction, but just for our neighbor.
- We want the word of God but only as long as it affirms our life and agrees with us. We want prosperity for us and but only conviction for our neighbor. It's time to call this what it is, what Paul says this is in Ephesians 4; childish and immature. A passive drifting away from the truth and safety of God's glory. It promises us the prosperity of our desires like a stranger who would lead a child away, promising what will not be delivered and leading only to destruction.
- The Need For An Objective Standard of Truth
 - *2 Timothy 3:14-17 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*
 - *Acts 20:27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. '*
 - Scripture is God's gift given to us. It is God's self-revelation of His person and purpose throughout all creation and all time for His glory.
 - As we seek to know God and the truth of God to us, we need the foundation of God's word given to us.
 - Scripture, then, is our ultimate authority of what is truth. We pattern our life after the word of God given to us, not as a means of trying to restrain us or

The Intention Drift of the Enemy

- *Ephesians 4:14 "carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness deceitful schemes"*
- Yet, for everyone who is being passively carried away, someone is taking advantage of the sickness and immaturity of another by doing the carrying. So many people have been carried away by the false understanding that there is no enemy, no devil, no satan, and no demonic schemes. We view these as contrary to our modern sensibilities that has a proper explanation for everything.
- *1 Peter 5:8-9 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.*
- To doubt there is an enemy is to not understand the Gospel. While we tend to go through

seasons and periods of doubt and being led astray, we must be willing to acknowledge that there are those whose stated goal is to lead people astray from the goodness and glory of God. Their heart has been hardened to the word of God and, whether they know it or not, they seek that people would gradually drift away from the safety of the Gospel and of God and send others to be carried away.

- In the garden of Eden, Eve is being led astray by the serpent who through cunning, trickery, and deceit cause Eve to doubt not only the truthfulness of God but the goodness of God.
 - Genesis 3 Satan
- The optimist in us tends to think that everyone is simply neutral to God and will need to lean to one side or another. This, however, is not true. Mankind is born God hating and sinful, rebelling against God and seeking to get those who follow Jesus Christ to either renounce their faith or devolve into obscurity.
- The enemy has a plan and has a scheme and has people willing to do everything in their power to dissuade those who claim to follow after Jesus to doubt, question, and subsequently doubt that God is King and that God is good.
 - Did God really say is their mantra and their expressed goal is drifting away from the faith until the person become so lost that they can no longer find their anchor on the beach or where they belong and they continue to drift out to sea, never to be seen or heard from again.
- Human Cunning - dice throwing with the appearance of fair dice but in reality the process is dishonest.
 - Things appear to be fair and above board but are far from either. They present well worded objections that cause us to doubt.
 - For instance, I have heard people objecting to the miracles of Jesus Christ by saying that Jesus didn't ACTUALLY walk on water. Instead, He simply stepped on a very specific sand bar or, something I have actually heard, that turtles carried him out. We use these as ironic stepping stones to doubt and question "Did God ACTUALLY do that?" without taking time to realize that if either of these two occurrences are true, that is no less a miracle.
 - This type of human cunning often presents itself according to the standards of man, of well reasoned arguments that appear scientific.
 - To be clear, God does not contradict science or
- Craftiness In Deceitful Schemes
 - The enemy should absolutely be taken seriously. The schemes of the enemy and those who would seek to draw us away from the truth are not random occurrences but conceited expressions of a hardened heart that desires the destruction of others.
 - The enemy is not stupid but knows exactly when to strike and when to attack.
- The Need For Growth and Discipleship
 - Remember, the enemy roams like a roaring lion, using cunningness and craftiness.
 - The enemy attacks the lonely and the weak. Last week Joseph talked about the need for being equipped actually being the setting of a bone to proper place. The word for carried implies that the person being carried is sick. there is a real spiritual problem for the immature and childish believer,
 - *Luke 5:31 And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.*
 - Jesus is referring to us! We need to understand our spiritual condition is sick and needing the great physician to heal us. Furthermore, to hold steady against the attacks of the intentional drifting away means that we train and strengthen ourselves when everything appears to be fine.

- The enemy attacks when we are tired, fatigued, worn out. In our brokenness and weakness comes the craftiness of those who would seek to pick off people from the safety of the shore and push them out of sea to drift out spiritually.
- We mature in our faith during the times of rest and strength. The crisis will reveal the strength of our faith, but the discipleship and the training will strengthen us during the normal times.
- We need to get strong, to study the word of God in order to know the counterfeits when we hear it and to rest in faith in Jesus Christ no matter the circumstances.

The Role of Unity

- Ephesians 4:13 "Until we all attain.."
- For many of us, our immediate knee jerk reaction to this is to look at ourselves and determine where our personal theological drift is and look to correct our own inability. However, while personal discipleship is absolutely important for the believer, Ephesians 4 is not talking about the individual, it is talking about the church as a whole. Rather than an individualistic approach, Paul works at a sociological and community approach to spiritual maturity.
- Our temptation is to essentially do what Adam did in Genesis 3. We can see the wrong that is occurring, the spiritual immaturity as others are being willfully deceived and just stand by and allow it happen.
- There is no benefit or point if one person is theologically sound while everyone else is whisked off into spiritual danger.
- In every disaster movie, during the times when the conflict is rising, there is almost always a character who decides it's every man for themselves.
- Go Together. Grow Together.
- Our relationship with one another should point to glory of our unity in Jesus Christ.
- We share strength with one another when the other is weak.
- *Exodus 17:12-13 But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.*
- Moses' needed the strength of others to accomplish the task that God had set before him.
- Likewise, God has given the church the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Shepherds, and Teachers all with unique giftings and abilities to stand with one another.
- God is glorified as the church stands in unity with one another and fends off the attacks of the enemy with loving grace.

Connect Group Discussion Questions

- What are some of the common ways that you see our culture thrown off course from the soundness of truth and good doctrine?
- Why do people tend to be thrown off from the truth and start to grasp the allure of false theology? What does it reveal about our nature?
- Where have you experienced the gradual drift of faith away from the truth? Why should these doubts always bring us back to God?
- How is God glorified by the expresion of unity within the church? How does this reflect the person and nature of God?
- What are some of the practical ways that we can grow together in our faith as a body of Christ?

Challenge For The Week

To grow in maturity in our means we depart from the childish weakness of being tossed around by the winds and waves. Instead, we grow through intentional discipleship until our faith is expressed inward and outward.

- Take some time this week to consider some of the ways that the enemy is seeking to get you to drift away from true faith. What are some of the ways you have been tempted to take your eyes off God?
- Who has God put in your life to reveal the glory of God through your life? Who do you know who needs to hear the Gospel?

