



Ephesians

Part 30

Ephesians 4:1-16
Week of October 3, 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

Truth with no grace is not truth at all. Grace without truth is no grace at all.

Last week, we continued our journey through the book of Ephesians. Paul exhorted the believers in the church of Ephesus to be vigilant against those who would seek to carry away those seeking to follow after Jesus Christ. We put our eyes on God as King and Good as learn from the scriptures and grow as disciples of Jesus Christ through our constant growing into maturity. Paul's exhortation to them was that they would be on guard against the straying away from the truth of scripture and the teachings of the apostles so that they would build up into maturity. Instead, Paul exhorts the church in Ephesus to speak the truth in love as they are growing in maturity in faith.

The church in Ephesus is unique in a biblical sense, because of the sheer amount of data we have on it. Likley Timothy pastored the church in Ephesus, thus giving some context to the books of 1st and 2nd Timothy. We have Paul's letter which we have been going through. There are a few other mentions of the church in scripture. Finally, we have a section of the book of Revelation where John is addressing specifically this church. We can see how well they had grow into maturity and in unity together.

Revelation 2:1-7 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

For the church in Ephesus, they did very well with part and completely lost sight of the other. Christ, through John's vision in Revelation 2 commends the church in Ephesus for their orthodoxy. They knew the word of God and protected the faith against it. They endured the persecution of holding steadfast to the beliefs. The Nicolaitans would have been a sect of people who held to heretical beliefs and stood in contrast to the beliefs of the Christians. Yet, for all their dedication to the truth, God had this against them, they depart from the love that had been their foundation at first. While they may have been accurate in their beliefs, they lost the love of God moving in and through them. Biblical commentators have described them as having a loveless orthodoxy. They understood the truth of God with their heads but neglected the transformation of God with their hearts. Like the church in Ephesus, as we grow in maturity of faith and centering our attention on God's Kingship and Goodness must seek to draw the church together in the unity that is Jesus Christ.

Speaking The Truth in Love

- *Ephesians 4:16 "Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way..."*
- Many times, we have sought to pit truth and love against one another, thinking that one cannot exist in the presence of the other. We can either be truthful or we can be loving. So we withhold the truth in hopes of not hurting someone.

- Holding both truth and grace simultaneously is an act of maturity in a person. Growing in our spiritual walk in Jesus Christ means we hold tightly to truth and grace in the same hand.
- There are two ditches here that we need to be cautious as we mature in our faith. Remember, Paul is using some medical and sickness themes throughout this chapter in Ephesians 4, and our maturity isn't just a growing up but a healing of the brokenness of our lives and restoring our hearts to better reflect and abide in the person of Jesus Christ.
- Truth Without Grace Is No Truth At All
 - Truth without grace is no truth at all. It takes a message and while it may be correct, by divorcing itself from the truth of God that came in truth and love in the person of Jesus Christ, being factually correct at the expense of the people involves ignores the care for those created in the image of God.
 - You see this usually with the phrase "I'm just telling you the truth." That may be true, but are you being a jerk about it.
 - The motive of the heart is the real difference. For some, the goal is to correct a brother or sister in their theology or in their practice in love because they want to see them restored and brought back together for the sake of the believer and the body of Christ as a whole. For others, the motive is to be correct or be intellectually superior to others.
 - Not standing false teachings is commendable but if the collateral damage in stamping out of the false doctrine is the intentional wounding of the body of Christ then I would argue we may not have fully understood the truth.
 - We should be slow to call someone a heretic and expell them from the body of Christ, though there is a time to do that, and it should always be done under the banner of the Gospel to bring them to restoration, not to punish their wrong thinking or create a pariah in the process.
 - Orthodoxy and good theology is not the end goal in and of itself. I say this as someone who regularly opens theology books and thinks that theology is absolutely important. But the end goal of Christianity is not intellectual understanding or enlightenment.
 - Instead, the goal of delving in to the depths of theology, which you should do so as to not be carried away and drift away, is doxology. Good theology does not make a person a good Christian. Abiding in Christ makes someone a good Christian
 - *James 2:18-19 But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!*
 - Even the demons understand some of the truth of theology. The insanity of what they are doing understands the truth and lives in complete opposition and rebellion to it.
- Grace Without Truth Is Likewise No Grace At All
 - Now, if you heard all that and started to think "This is why I don't need to have good theology or study" then I apologize, because I have apparently said everything really poorly. We cannot be tempted to swing the pendulum in the other direction under the banner of grace devoid of truth. All that does is allow someone to continue to remain in the self inflicted bondage of their sin while hiding behind some simplistic and reductionist matra repeated over and over.
 - Grace without truth is no grace at all.
 - *1 Corinthians 13:1-3 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

- Love is not a spiritual gift but it is the foundation of the spiritual gifts. Love is not like being an apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, or teacher but forms the backbone of that gifting and is infused in every believers spiritual DNA.
- We claim we do this one in love and acceptance of a person. We allow them to continue to walk in ways that depart from the truth of God's word and watch as they are tossed about by the winds and waves all under the banner of "They are doing them and living their life."
- Yet, this is grace divorced from truth that allows someone to continue to remained injured spiritually. We look at the disconnected joints of a person's faith and say "I don't want to offend them by saying something"
- How much do you have to hate someone to see them continue to destroy their own lives?

Christ Is The Head

- *Ephesians 4:16 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.*
- The only viable way to navigate the tumultuous waters of holding truth and grace simultaneously is to do so IN CHRIST. This is precisely why Paul spent such a profound amount of time in the letter to Ephesians to lay down the foundation of the glory of God and being in Christ because the expression of our truth and grace can only find its completion when we fully abide in Him.
- The most profound difference in our growing together needs to be to stop asking "How would I do this?" and start asking "How does God command me to do this?"
- *1 John 4:18-19 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us.*
- When Christ is the foundation of our truth and our beliefs, we find ourselves willing to endure the punishment, the pain, and the persecution so that others would come to know Jesus Christ and the body of Christ would be built into maturity, into the fullness of snapping the bone back in place.
- Christ As Servant King
 - Christ took on flesh and lived among the people who had been against Him and still He sought to save for His glory.
 - He endured the whips and pain of our sin while bearing the fullness of the consequences upon Himself.
 - He is sovereign King over all creation and He is servant, willfully bearing the fullness of the weight of God upon Himself.
 - Likewise, as a body of believers, we continue in the incarnational presence of Jesus Christ in the world.
- To grow in maturity, to set the bone of our spirituality and allow God to heal the childishness and sickness within us can only occur of our being in Christ.
 - Ephesians 1 - the focus of this chapter is that we are In Christ. Everything. We cannot expect to achieve any growth apart from the root and the connection of being in Christ.
 - *John 15:4-6 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.*
- Most of us are okay with Christ as King and the Head of the Church, until it comes to

something that conflict with our flesh.

- Time - many safeguard our time as our own. We may go to church but after that, our spiritual life has been check boxed for the week and we can go back to doing whatever we want. Now, I want to be clear, I'm not saying you should spend every waking hour at church. But you do not clock in and out of Christianity if Christ is the head.
 - There is no time in which you cease to be a follower of Jesus Christ. A person growing in maturity does more than attend church but devotes the entirety of their time to be redeemed by Jesus Christ.
 - Does how you spend your time reflect a life that has been redeemed by Jesus Christ? If you submitted to the Kingship of Jesus Christ with your time, what would that look like?
- Treasures - one of the largest idols we cling to dearest is our treasures, the things we hold deeply. When Christ becomes the King of all things and we grow into maturity as a body of Christ, even our finances are redeemed.
 - This is not a claim of "So you need to give more to church" but an honest reflect to look at your spending pattern of where you put in your treasures and the things you value the most.
 - *Matthew 6:19-21 Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*
 - Our finances will reflect the desires of our heart and can be one of the greatest witnesses of our faith. We can spend our time amassing wealth and protecting it at all cost or we can reflect the goodness and Kingship of Jesus Christ through our generosity.
 - What would change in your spending if you allowed Christ to be King of your finances? What idols would be dethroned?
- Talents - what our skills, passions, and giftings reveal about ourselves. These are the things that God placed within us for the sake of glorifying His name through His mission in the church.

Building Up In Love

- *Ephesians 4:16 when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*
- You have a role to play in the church, in the body of Christ. God gave the church the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers so that the body could be build up and God be glorified. There is a diversity of expression but a singularity of mission; to glorify God with all we are as we link arms as a body of Christ together.
- So if Christ is the head and as a body of Christ, we are pursuing Him with one another, then our approach to correcting one another should be seeking restoration not exclusions.
- We cannot fall into the trap of thinking that our intellectual knowledge somehow better qualifies us to be in Christ than other people. We must remain in Christ, this is absolutely, true, but we should do so finding reasons to include people not to exclude them.
 - Now, let me clarify that because probably about half of you heard something I didn't say. This goes back to our truth and grace statements from before.
 - We hold dearly to the truth of God as revealed to us in His Holy Word and will not budge on anything in there. However, we also understand that we are works in progress looking to grow in our understanding of His word and His truth that our flesh

seeks to rebel against God and Good and King.

- I did not say that theology is unimportant and as long as we “love people” defined by tolerating their choices and decisions to be who they want. Love and tolerance are incredibly different. Don’t believe me? Look your spouse, significant others, or loved one in the eyes and exchange the words. “I tolerate you.”
- There is a way of growing in Christ that resembles immaturity where we seek to judge others harshly in their thoughts and theology. We jump too quickly to call a person a heretic and cast them
- Many of the church schisms throughout history could have been settled with a cup of coffee and a crucifixion of the ego.
- I have found that the more mature a Christian grows in their connect and love for the body of Christ, the less tight they hold to secondary and tertiary doctrinal debates. The joke is every pastor wants to be as smart as the freshman bible college student thinks they are.
- For me personally, at the end of multiple years of study, the main thing I learned was how little I knew and how great and glorious our infinite and Holy God actually is.
- The goal is that the body would be functioning properly on all ends. If one part of the body hurts, the whole body is impacted. Likewise, we cannot be too quick to disassociate someone from the body just like in medicine, amputation tends to be a last resort of an option.
 - The unity that comes from a diversity of nations, tribes, peoples, and languages (cf Rev 7:9) reflects the glory of God that unites us all.
 - Each of our giftings, each of our empowerments by the Holy Spirit that Christ sends as our paraclete, as our helper, to indwell within us, binds us together and spurs our growth in unity to glorify His name in all the world. God is greater than our divisions and ties and unites us all as we link arms with one another to press on in the faith.
- Too often we are tempted to treat our own sin with gracious, if not ignore it entirely, while using the much lesser sins of others to disqualify them from fellowship or even discussion.
- Not just doctrine, but in praxis. We cannot turn a blind eye to our own sin while simultaneously judging our neighbor harshly.
- Willingness to Be Honest About Our Own Sin
 - “We should be rigorous in judging ourselves and gracious in judging others.” - John Wesley
 - Waging War on Sin
 - For anyone who has experienced the hell of feeling trapped and ensared by a consistent sin, fearing the judgment of the church, we can demonstrate a grace and support with one another in dealing with sin.
- Graciousness in Dealing With The Sins of Others
 - *Matthew 18:15-17* “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.
 - The goal of this process is not to slam one another but restore one another. Furthermore, even when you get to the last resort of treating them as a non-believer, remember how Christ treated the Gentiles and the tax collectors; by overwhelming them with love and with the Gospel.

Connect Group Discussion Questions

- As Paul addresses the church in Ephesus, how does he direct them to grow in maturity with one another? What does it mean to grow in truth and love with one another?
- How does the headship of Jesus Christ in the church affect our relationship with those in the church? Outside the church?
- Which do we struggle the most with allowing to reflect the glory of God through; our time, our treasure, or our talent? Why do people tend to cling to these rather than submit them to the Lord?
- What is the difference between correcting a person in order to prove them wrong and correcting a person in order to restore them? What marks the difference between the two?
- How does the Gospel direct us to hold one another up? How does Christ act as our primary witness of the Gospel to an unbelieving world?

Challenge For The Week

As we grow in maturity, as we grow in our understanding of the faith, we must do so holding truth and love in tandem with one another.

- Take some time to reflect on what the testimony of your time, treasure, and talents speak towards. Do they reveal a life with Christ as the head or do they point to something else?
- To a world in rebellion against God, we are to act as Gospel witnesses and proclaim the truth of God. Who has God placed in your life and how has God equipped you specifically to communicate the Gospel to them?

