

Ephesians 4:4-16

“What ever happened to the Church?”

I. Intro

II. Vs. 4-6 Seven things that unite all Christians

III. 7-10 The focus of the church

IV. Vs. 11-12 The purpose of the Church

V. Vs. 13-16 The goal of the church

I. Intro

Tonight the topic of the teaching is the “Benefits of the fellowship of a church”! There is a great mystery looking at the Church today and the first Church of 2000 years ago. Go back and read the gospels and the book of Acts and you will see something much different then today’s representation.

- Now from the outside, today’s Church would be far more impressive; the sure volume of its numbers, it’s wealth, technology and literacy are beyond measure superior.
- Yet, as impressive as the outside is on the modern Church the inside of the First century Church is beyond measure vastly superior. Take those few handful of uneducated, social outcasts that made up the followers of Jesus, walk through their testimony and you will discover that they reached their world against all odds, without any of our numbers, wealth, technology and literacy. Further more not only did they reach their world we have become part of their legacy. So my question is, “*What ever happened to Jesus’ Church?*” Listen to the testimony of the first Churches enemies as the Paul and a hand full of men came into Thessalonica, “*These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.*” Does any one here see “*Jesus’ Church*” turning the world on it’s heels? *Does our mere presence signal the unenviable reality of transformation?* Our forefathers of the faith simply were possessed with an ever-increasing measure of the presence of Jesus. Consider the Church’s enemies accusations in Acts 4:13 when they said, “*When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.*” Could it be that simple? **Yes!**

II. Vs. 4-6 Seven things that United all Christians

Paul tells us that Christians share seven things in common and with out which we would have no possibility of being a church. The truth is: What we believe always determines how we behave, these seven truth are things that lay hold of us and not that which we lay hold of.

- a. Vs. 4a “*There is one body*”: **Shared life!** It matters not your denominational there is only one body and that is the body of Christ. When asked Christians state that they are a Baptist or something like that but the truth is that is only where they meet with others to worship God. What makes the body of Christ a great thing is our unity with our diversity.

b. Vs. 4b “*One Spirit*”: **Shared power!** In Zech 4:6 we are told that it is, “*Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, Says the LORD of hosts.*” Our strength is not in numbers it is in the Holy Spirit.

C. Vs. 4c “*Just as you were called in one hope of your calling*”: **Shared confidence!** Paul lists two things that ought to give us confidence:

1. Were called: That is in the past tense and has to do with God’s calling us into a relationship with Him.

2. Your calling: This is future tense and speaks of the continual transformation into the image of Jesus. Not only does He save us but he doesn’t leave us the way He found us but changes us from glory to glory.

d. Vs. 5a “*One Lord*”: **Shared leader!** All Christians must have the same Lord there is only One to whom we must follow. Paul is very specific here as he does not say “one Savior” which is true but He is only our Savior if we have made Him our Lord.

e. Vs. 5b “*One faith*”: **Shared truth!** Paul is speaking of the “faith” to the body of scripture that makes up the essentials of what we believe. In essentials unity and in non-essentials diversity as we go back to the truth that we are all part of the same body.

f. Vs. 5c “*One baptism*”: **Shared death!** The baptism Paul is speaking here is not the manor in which it is done but what it speaks of and the Bible tells us that it speaks of His death. We have in common the death of Jesus on our behalf.

g. Vs. 6 “*One God*”: **Shared worship!** Paul lists four things about God here that comprise our worship

1. “*Father of all*”: God is the Father of all and is equally compassionate and loving.

2. “*Who is above all*”: God alone is in control, as He is above all. Now put that together with the truth that He is our Father and you will receive some great comfort.

3. “*Through all*”: This tells me that He is working through all, He is intimately caring about every thing going on in my life.

4. “*And in you all*”: Finally Paul speaks of God and tells us that He is always present and never distant.

Our riches in Christ change our nature which produces unity towards one another and that unity is centered around things we have in common all of which are our riches.

III. Vs. 7-10 The focus of the church

Vs. 7 **Focus**: Three times in this one verse Paul mentions the word “Gift” as he says, the “***gift*** was ***given*** to measure of the ***gift***”. He also tells us that “*each one*”, that is every single believer is a part of spending this “gift”. But what is the “gift”? Paul calls one the measure of the other. Take my opening statement about the differences between the first Church and the Church today and you can begin to see what our problem is, we have *lost our focus!* The gift given each and every believer is a measure of Him and we are to take what He has given of Himself to us to a world

that has not yet received the Gift! That is why Paul qualifies this with the words “to each one of us and to the measure”.

Vs. 8-10 **Power**: The word “therefor” tells us that his thought in verse 7 is connected to what he is about to say here. Paul quotes out of Psalm 68:18, which is a very vivid picture of what happened after an enemy was defeated. The conquering army would come back into their town with the shouts of a joyous victory and two things in tow:

1. Vs. 9 **Captivity**: They would bring after them those that had once defeated them behind the conquering commander. In the O.T. since there were those believers who had died prior to Jesus and were held in “*Abraham’s bosom*”, well after Jesus death on the cross and prior to His resurrection He went there and set them free from death which once held them. Here is how this works for us, Jesus has set us free from everything that once held us and we get to go out in the world and live free. You want to reach the world it’s simple, “*Out live them!*”

2. Vs. 10 **Gifts**: They would bring the spoils taken from the enemy. Isn’t that interesting that the spoils came after the defeated enemy? I personally have found that I will only enjoy more of Him to the degree I have allowed Him to defeat those things that defeat me! Notice to the words “*far above the heavens*” and “*might fill all things*”. That speaks to me about being able to enjoy life on a level that I never dreamed was possible “*far above the heavens*” or out of reach. And on a level that, “*fills all things*” or that which truly satisfies me. **The gift of Jesus is displayed in what He has done in our lives**, which is He has **defeated those things that defeated us** and **He has enabled us to enjoy that which we were never able to do so before**. Christian the gift of Jesus includes an uninterrupted supply that will keep you continually defeating that which once defeated you and keep you enjoying those things that prior to Jesus you were never able to do so.

III. Vs. 11-12 The purpose of the Church

So we can see that the early Church maintained their “**FOCUS**” and their “**POWER**” but in these next two verses we see that they understood their “**PURPOSE**”.

Vs. 11 Paul lists four specific groups of people that Jesus gave the church to keep their “focus and power on their purpose”.

A. Apostles: Governing There are really two types of “apostles” those that were the first apostles whom Jesus appointed to govern the Church and the more general type today those “sent out ones”. Today we use the word “ambassadors” to describe a person who is sent out into a foreign land to represent the interests of another. An ambassador does not represent their interest but rather that of their president and country. In the case of “The 12 Apostles” they are the “skeleton” which every other part of the body is hung on the truths which was given them is what is our structure and is the standard by we test everything else. So Jesus Himself gave His body a framework to keep it going in the right direction.

B. Prophets: Guiding Then we have those who were to speak the heart of God to His People. Some times that would be about future events but most often it was just unveiling His heart on matters that are important to Him. Today this would include those who speak the word of God by the Spirit of God in order to guide God’s people. In the realm of our physical bodies that would be like our nervous system which is that which motivates our bodies to move and function as they are suppose to. Take that which is harmful to our bodies, our nervous system sends out

warnings to stay away from extreme heat. Our nervous system also takes information given it by our brains to keep our hearts pumping and the rest of our organs working as they were designed.

C. Evangelists: *Gathering* Now we are told else where that we are all to do the “work” of an evangelist but still there are those Jesus gives who’s gifting is gathering people into the body of Christ. I kind of think evangelists are like our digestive system as they take in food assimilate it into the body and it is those broken down nutrients that feed our cells so that they can in turn reproduce. We are most familiar with the mouth with it’s teeth and saliva that breaks down food but you know there is the stomach that grinds down further the food taken in which then goes to the intestines which enables those nutrients to get into our circulatory system so that each cell can get what it needs to reproduce.

D. Pastors and teachers: *Guarding and Grounding* In the original Greek there is no separation in other words this is one office that is described by two functions.

1. **Pastor**: That is a term adopted from working with animals isn’t it? The pastor or shepherd had the responsibility to guard and care for his flock. It was his job to keep out anything that would harm his master’s sheep. It was also his responsibility to treat those sheep as if they were his own, part of his family. When one was sick he would care for it, when one was rebellious and causing problems he would correct it. But most often he just hung out with them day after day spent time laughing with them and crying with them.

2. **Teacher**: Paul is specific and he says that Jesus gave His church “*teachers*” instructors and not “*preachers*” or proclaimers. It is the job of a teacher to teach that which they have learned themselves. There are a lot today that “proclaim” truths to their sheep but not near enough whom instruct their sheep. Go back to Jesus words to Peter in John 21:17 and He tells Peter to “*feed His sheep*”, not proclaim truth but rather prepare a meal and feed it to them. Not, “*Hey, sheep there’s food over there!*” This is kind of like our circulatory system, which feeds, cleanses and maintains the life of the body.

Vs. 12 These four specific groups are designed to do one thing “*equip the saints*” and the equipping will produce two activities that the Church will be involved in “*the work of ministry*” and “*edifying (building up) of the body of Christ*”. The word equip is a Greek word that means “*to put right*” and was used of setting a bone that had been broken or in mending a net that had been torn. Jesus gave these four groups to keep us right on course. Some Christians may have a broken bone or a torn net, in other words they are not functioning as they were designed too and they need to be “put right” so that they will again function as they were designed. Far to many Christians today view their faith as a spectator sport, where only a few play and the rest. The Church was designed to be a place where every believer is called to be in the game. Paul lists two purposes of the church:

1. “*The work of ministry*”: **GOING OUT** First the equipping is “unto” the WORK of service. Work is something that we do outside as compared to the edifying of the body. The Church (you and I) are to go out into the world and serve. We are to take are lives which have defeated those things that once defeated us and serve the people of the world with what he has done in our lives. There is a lot of confusion in the Church today about this as many think that the primary purpose

of the Church is to get the world to come to Church. But look at Jesus' own words in Matt. 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations". Jesus told His followers to go and make and not the world to come and sit.

2. "The edifying of the body of Christ": **GROWING UP** The word here in the Greek means to "build up" and so you are to be into spiritual "body building"! It is not just the pastor's responsibility to do this it is all our responsibility to see that we all grow up, in fact it takes the whole church to do the work of the church.

The early Church knew it's purpose, it's purpose was not a building nor the budget but to take the continual transformation of the work of Jesus Christ in their lives to the world.

IV. Vs. 13-16 The goal of the church

Here is what is interesting is that no where in these final four verses will you see the goal as "evangelism" as we know it. Instead Paul says that the goal of the Church is "*till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man*". Or to paraphrase the goal of the Church is to see everyone mature in their relationship with Jesus. Paul goes on to give four evidences of this maturity:

a. Vs. 13 **SIT** "*The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*": This has to do with where we sit doesn't it? I mean our goal is maturity and maturity will be seen as become more and more like Him.

b. Vs. 14 **STAND** Second Paul speaks about maturity it terms of not being like children who are flaky as well as easily deceived. In other words maturity will be seen in our ability to stand and our stability is on the Word of God.

c. Vs. 15 **WALK** Here we see the balance of speaking truth but doing so in love and Paul says that being able to do so is a sure sign that growing up.

d. Vs. 16 **RUN** Finally Paul speaks on maturity in terms of cooperation with the other members of the body.

Evangelism is a byproduct of maturity and not the goal. Have you ever noticed that you can't learn to swim by correspondence? Church leaders need to realize that God desires to work a wonder in you and while He is doing that He is confident enough in that transformation that He wants you to display it in the world you live in.