**WALK WORTHY OF YOUR CALLING**

**Ephesians 4:1-12**

Chapter 4 starts a whole new section in Ephesians. It’s the practical application portion of this letter. As we’ve seen in our study for the last month the first 3 chapters have been filled with a lot of important theology. Paul declares many wonderful truths concerning us, the church. Chapters 4 thru 6 will take all that theology and then apply it to our everyday lives. J. Vernon McGee likens the first three chapters as us being with Jesus up on the Mount of Transfiguration experiencing a spiritual high. Then he says the last three chapters are like we are coming down from the mountain and back into the real world.

So, as we head down the mountain, so to speak, and we get ready to look at how we believers, given all that Christ has done for us should then live, I thought I’d take a few minutes and review what we’ve learned thus far. Let’s see how much of the theology in Ephesians you remember.

Ephesians speaks a lot about the church. Who is the church? Who comprises the church?

When did God plan the church?

What is the primary purpose for the church?

Ephesians talks about a mystery. In Ch 1 “the mystery of His will”; in Ch 3 “the mystery of Christ,” and this mystery has been revealed to Paul to pass along to us. What is this mystery?

In Ephesians Paul uses the metaphor of the church as being a body. If we are the body, Who is the Head of the church?

What does Paul say our spiritual condition was before we got saved?

Fill in the blank: My salvation is a \_\_\_ of God (not a result of works so that no one may boast)

Paul mentions 2 key elements of salvation in Eph 2:8: “For by grace [God’s love toward us] you have been saved through faith [our belief in Jesus].”

Eph 2:10 says that we are God’s workmanship, His masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for what?

Eph 2:14 talks about Jesus being our peace. Who is it we now have peace with?

Several times in Ephesians Paul mentions that he is a prisoner. Who does he consider himself to be a prisoner of? He mentioned this in Ch 3 and he will mention it again in Ch 4.

OK, so there you have some of the theology we saw in the first 3 chapters. Let’s begin looking now at how we are to apply this theology to our lives both as individual believers and corporately as the church.

**READ Ephesians 4:1-12** ---- note: quarterly has us stopping at v 10. I read thru v 12 to show what Paul is talking about in v 7-8.

V 1 Paul urges believers, those of us who have been shown God’s grace thru His gift of salvation, those of us who have received every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, to walk worthy of our calling. In Eph 1 Paul prays that we would understand the hope of our calling – fully grasp all that is ours, positionally, in Christ. We don’t often view our salvation as a “calling” but it is because we have been called for a purpose, which is to glorify God by our good works and by carrying out the Great Commission. In Eph 3 Paul prays that we would be strengthened by the HS in our inner being – in our soul (mind, will and emotions) and in our spirit so that we would be filled with all the fullness of God. We’ll see in the next 3 chapters how God expects us to live – our actions and attitudes. But we can’t do any of this in the flesh. We must be empowered by the HS, to be filled with all the fullness of God.

V 2, “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.” This sounds familiar – the fruit of the spirit from Gal Ch 5 – “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” This fruit is demonstrated in the life of a Christian who is yielded to the HS. V 2 also sounds a lot like the Beatitudes from Matt Ch 5 – “blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, etc.” These inner attitudes Jesus Himself taught and demonstrated.

Paul has talked a lot in the first few chapters of Ephesians about our unity, our being one in Christ. In v 3 Paul says we should be eager to maintain this unity, “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” As I understand it, you can’t maintain something that you don’t already have. So then, the premise of v 3 is that Christian unity DOES exist in the church. Positionally we, the church, ARE unified. We ARE one in Christ. So then, it should be our goal, our desire, we should be eager – to maintain our unity. And how do we do this? Jesus told us how. By loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. In John 13:34-35 Jesus told His disciples: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” [and here’s why this is so important…] By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." So that’s how we maintain our unity – by loving one another. This is the reason why Paul says at the end of v 2 “bearing with one another in love.” In John 17:23 Jesus prayed to the Father that we might become perfectly one, so that the world may know that [the Father] sent [the Son] and loved us [the church] even as He loved Jesus. Our Christian unity, which is demonstrated by our love for each other, is our witness to the world. Our one-ness gives the world a reason to believe our message.

Paul expounds on this unity some more in v 4-6. Notice how he focuses on the Trinity – the Holy Spirit, “one Spirit,” in v 4, the Son, “one Lord,” in v 5, and the Father, “one God and Father of all,” in v 6. And intertwined in these verses Paul speaks of the unity of the church. He describes us as “one body” and how we “were called to one hope.” We have “one faith.” It is our faith in Jesus Christ alone that leads to salvation. We have “one baptism.” Our public confession of faith after we come to Christ is to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

At the very heart of church unity is what we have in common. We all came to Christ (we were all saved) the same way, by grace thru faith. And we have all received the same commission to carry the gospel message to the world. At the beginning of our study here in Ephesians I gave you a definition of the church: The church is the body of believers, comprised of people who have come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, professed Jesus as Lord and Savior. The church’s primary purpose is to make disciples, to carry out the Great Commission. We can go ahead and add this to our definition: The church then is one body, having one Lord, one Spirit, one calling, one faith, one baptism, one mission. So there’s a lot that unifies us and Paul is driving this point home.

As we come to v 7 we get into one of the most difficult passages of scripture to understand. Let’s take a look and see if we can’t unpack what Paul has to say.

READ Ephesians 4:7-8

The main point to understand is that it is Jesus who gives gifts to the church – what gifts are those? Spiritual gifts. But the way Paul explains this seems rather round about. Not straightforward, somewhat confusing.

V 8 is a quote from Psalm 68. What is Ps 68 about? It talks about God actively at work in the life of His covenant people Israel. He’s with them as they leave Egypt and march out into the wilderness. He takes them to Mt Sinai. He reveals that He wants to dwell with His people. He destroys their enemies. He cares for the righteous. He leads His people to the conquer the Promised Land. Eventually God enters the Temple. The part that Paul quotes here in Ephesians Ch 4 is right in the middle of Ps 68 where the psalmist views God as a victorious King returning from battle to Jerusalem to the acclaim of the people. He is carrying with him the spoils of battle and people who had been held in captivity by their enemies. Their now returning home again. This is the image Paul has in mind. He describes in a spiritual sense what Jesus has done for us, His church. He is our King and He has won the victory. We, His subjects, praise and glorify Him for His great victory. In turn, King Jesus gives us, His people, His church, gifts. Ps 68 presents God as a future conquering King. Paul sees Jesus as that King.

The parentheses you see around v 9-10 – it’s whole purpose – is to clarify this for the reader – how Jesus is the conquering King of Ps 68 who gives gifts to His people. Paul then goes on to explain that the gifts King Jesus gives us are spiritual gifts. That will be next week’s lesson. All I’m going to say about spiritual gifts now is what we see in v 7. Jesus gives us A gift (singular) and He gives a gift to EVERY believer. Beginning in v 11 Paul talks about these gifts in detail. Here’s what you need to understand. If you are indeed a believer in Christ, then you have been given a spiritual gift. The gift that you were given was given to you by God’s grace. You didn’t ask for it. It wasn’t on your spiritual wish list. God gave that gift, whatever it is, to you by His grace. And as we will see later the purpose for spiritual gifts is to help edify, to build up the body of Christ.

So Paul pictures Jesus as a conquering King returning to heaven after defeating Satan and giving gifts to the church, harkening back to Ps 68.

Let’s talk about what’s in the parentheses, V 9-10. Like I said this serves only to clarify for us that Paul is speaking of Jesus. It’s not part of the major discussion about spiritual the gifts. Just an aside. Apparently as Paul is writing this letter feels the need to add this to help his readers understand that he’s talking about Jesus.

So what’s all this about ascending and descending? Let me summarize for you how many evangelical Bible scholars interpret this passage. It is based on 1 Peter 3:18-20, Colossians 2:14-15 plus OT prophecies such as Ps 139 and Isaiah 44…

READ 1 Peter 3:18-20

Jesus descends from heaven to earth to carry out His mission

Jesus dies on the cross – substitution, redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, justification

Between His death and resurrection Jesus descends to “the lower regions of the earth” a reference to Sheol, Hades, to the place of the dead (parable of rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16, talks about there being 2 parts divided by a great chasm – Abraham’s bosom, aka Paradise, where the righteous are and the place of torment where the unrighteous and the imprisoned demons are kept). There Jesus makes a proclamation of His victory, His triumph over death and hell when He rises from the dead. This victory is proclaimed not only to the demons and to the unrighteous in the place of torment, but also to the righteous, to the saints in Paradise. Colossians 2 says that God “disarmed the rulers and authorities [Satan and the minions of hell] and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in Christ.” Then Jesus at some point leads the righteous with Him into the glory of heaven, to the Father. “He led a host of captives,” where they will dwell in the presence of God forever (this is the picture we see in the Book of Revelation where the saints around the throne worshipping the Lord).

The resurrection, His physical bodily resurrection from the dead

Over a period of 6 weeks Jesus appears to and gives final instructions to His church

He ascends back to heaven from Mount of Olives, Acts 1

So the point of v 9-10 is to explain that Jesus is the conquering King and that after His victory He gave gifts to men, specifically to us, the church. That’s what this passage is about. Confusing? Yes. But when you see it in its context it makes more sense. Because of Jesus’ victory at the cross over sin, death and hell, He earned the right to give gifts to His own. And next week we’ll talk more about those gifts.

Paul teaches us about our unity in Christ and how we ought to walk in a manner worthy of our calling. But then he shows us how God, by His grace, then gives us all the resources we need to be able to carry all of this out.

Jesus is our conquering King, so let’s sing “Victory in Jesus.”