

**CAPITAL BIBLE CHURCH
SERMON NOTES**

**May 20, 2018
PASTOR AJ Miller**

**Series: What's the church?
"One Calling"
Ephesians 4:1-16**

One Calling

Read Ephesians 4:1-16 - PRAY

This morning we will see a pivotal moment take place in the book of Ephesians. In the remaining chapters, Paul pours his efforts into describing how the church, that was purchased by Christ's sacrifice, must function in order to fulfill its calling. So far, we have seen the heavenly side of the power, privileges and beliefs of the body of Christ from an eternal perspective. From here on out, Paul discusses the earthly operations of the church, as believers in local churches live each day according to the power, privileges and beliefs that Paul has revealed prior to chapter 4. In theology we call this orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Ephesians 1-3 are the orthodoxy of the epistle, which means "correct belief" or "correct doctrine". Paul is telling us the knowledge side of Christianity and if we want to be a Christian, what beliefs make us a Christian. Ephesians 4-6 are the orthopraxy, which means "correct practice" or "correct conduct". Orthopraxy is the action side of life, its how you conduct yourself. Your orthopraxy is dictated by your orthodoxy. In other words, your actions are determined by your beliefs. What your belief is about man, God, Jesus, the Word, church, the world, sin, Satan, etc, will determine how you act and treat other people. Paul has moved us from the church's belief statements to the church's mission statements. Paul knows that gathered in the churches, both then and now, will be people from different backgrounds – people with different personalities and priorities – who must work together in order for the church to fulfill the grand calling of spiritual and cultural transformation that he has envisioned in the opening chapters of his epistle.

So how do we fulfill the calling that God has given us? The power of transformation comes from each person being humble and gentle. These individual qualities are then described in terms of the way that they will affect relationships with others. We must get ourselves aligned with God before we can get the church, as a whole, aligned with God. Paul says that the diverse believers gathered in the Ephesian church and us will fulfill their calling as each one humbly, gently, patiently, and lovingly bear with other's differences, and strive to cultivate unity and peace. Humility is the prerequisite of harmony. In other words, pulling together is the secret to the church's power. But in order for this unity to come, Paul must underscore truths that were difficult for the Ephesians to hear, and remain difficult for us today to hear, in a church of very different people.

Verse 1-2

Throughout the second half of this letter, Paul unfolds the "walk" or life of good works, first mentioned in Eph. 2:10. Now Paul doesn't say, I hope you walk, or I encourage you to walk. No. Paul says I urge you to walk. To urge someone means to try earnestly and persistently to persuade them to do something. Paul is crying out, he is exhorting to the fullest for Christians to conduct themselves according to their calling. Remember back to Eph. 1:18 when Paul tells us "having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you". What is that hope? What is that call that he has called us to? It's the Gospel. The atoning work of Jesus upon the cross. He has called us to himself and therefore we must act in accordance to what God is teaching us. Orthopraxy is determined by our orthodoxy. How we conduct ourselves is based on what we believe. If we truly believe the Gospel, Bible, what Jesus said and what we are learning from Paul, then that is how we should live our lives. People that are in Christ but live with more influence from the world and not from Scripture, diminish greatly the power of the Gospel and the importance of the church.

Verse 3-6

Look at those verses. What do you notice? The word ‘one’ is repeated 7 times. The more you study Scripture, you notice certain numbers jump out at you, 3, 7, 12, 40, 120. 7 is important because 7 represents completion or perfection. 3 of these 7 are talking about the Trinity, and 4 of them are talking about the aspects of salvation. Believers have the responsibility to maintain unity in the body of Christ. These 7 “ones” are the foundation of a unified church. Paul’s plan can be seen from the vantage point of the work of the

- one Spirit creating one body, reconciling all men into one family,
- one Lord Jesus Christ creating one hope, one faith and one baptism, and
- one God the Father bringing about one people to himself.

God’s oneness defines the church’s oneness. Just as an individual is made up of body and spirit, the apostle reminds the people that the church, despite its many different members, is one body indwelt by one Spirit as seen in verse 4. Then in verse 5 we are united in Him, we share the same testimony: one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

This verse is more about affirming what is true. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

The call to unity is not a justification for “anything goes” and “nothing really matters,” or that we can do whatever we want inside the church on our own will and power but rather it’s a calling to constantly examine our church and our traditions to make sure that they cohere with and are directed toward the truths of Scripture. By the way, justification means that your sins past, present and future are wiped clean and that you are given the righteousness of Christ through his work on the cross. While it is certainly true that justification frees one forever from the need to keep the law and commandments, that is the attitude of “Jesus paid my sin, I can live however I please.” But it is equally true that the doctrine of adoption which means that we now belong to the family of God. He is our Father, we are brothers and sisters. Adoption lays on us the obligation to keep the law and commandments. Law-keeping is the family likeness of God’s children. Jesus kept all the laws and commands and fulfilled all righteousness and God calls us to do the same. Our one calling is to be like Jesus.

The God of all is even more clearly the Father of all who have been given the righteousness and identity of God’s own Son. This means not only that we have the Father’s affection, but also that we are brothers and sisters in Christ and should have family affection for one another. That’s the doctrine of adoption. We are part of God’s family and anyone who has been born again is also part of that family. We must remember that we are dealing with our brothers and sisters in whom our God dwells by his spirit. However much we may differ with each other, we are dealing with a child of God in whom Christ dwells. Knowing that we are of one family should cause us to honor and love one another. Each of us for whom Christ died is called to love beyond differences.

Verse 7-10

Paul explains how there is variety within the church. Not only does the apostle want those of us in the church to know that we are the same, in Christ, – and that is a good thing; he also requires us to understand that we are all different – and that is a good thing too. One way we are different is that we have different gifts. We are not all the same. Paul clearly establishes that God has gifted the leaders of the church, as we will see down in verse 11, in different ways and in different proportions – and that this is all right. Paul is referencing Psalm 68:18 – The essence of Psalm 68 is that of a military victor, who has the right to receive gifts from the people he has conquered. Paul says that the One who conquered sin and death, Christ, gives gifts to His devoted followers instead of demanding that we give him gifts.

Here we see Paul portraying to us that there are captives in Christ’s victory parade to indicate that Jesus has defeated our spiritual adversaries, making what captivated us in the bonds of sin his own captives. Sin, death,

Satan and all the demons, are now overcome by the power of our King. In this victory march our King also dispenses the gifts of his victory to his people. It's through Jesus' work on the cross and his resurrection that He has won the victory. And from that victory, He pours out gifts to his people through the Holy Spirit. When it comes to our differing gifts, 3 things can be said about them.

First, we should recognize that the differing gifts are derived from Christ's authority. Our different personalities, abilities, and experiences are gifts that God provides us so that we will bring many different talents and perspectives for building and extending Christ's church. No one has all the gifts needed for every challenge the church will face, that includes me, Pastor Bill and the elders. No one on their own can do everything that is needed to make a church fulfill its purposes. The Holy Spirit gives us different gifts for different purposes in the church. Its not my job to do everything. Its not Pastor Bill's job to do everything. Its not the elders job to do everything. That is why verse 8 says that when he ascended on high, he led a host of captives and gave gifts to men. Jesus has dominion over heaven and earth, and thus he has the authority to dispense gifts here on earth as he wishes, to whom he wishes, in the proportion he wishes, and with the expectation that we will respect his authority to dispense gifts among his people as he knows is best. The implication for us is clear: to despise another person's gift, is to disrespect Christ's authority.

Secondly, we need to recognize that differing gifts are reflective of Christ's generosity. We gain fresh and tender appreciation of the Savior and those around us when we see that the variety of the gifts is an expression of the great generosity of Jesus. Not any one of us has to do all the work of the kingdom because Christ has not given all of his gifts to any one person. God has been generous to us in taking from us the need to feel that we can or must do everything by ourselves for the church to survive. Personally, this has been very reassuring to me over the last couple weeks. Not one person can save the church; only God can but it also takes a unified church body for the fullness of a church to be realized.

And **third**, we should recognize the differing gifts are intended for Christ's purposes. The reasons for the Lord's authority and generosity in dispensing gifts become evident in the purposes of the gifts. Christ does not want us to spend his gifts upon ourselves, not let them lie dormant; we are to use them to build up the body of Christ. Failure to steward Christ's gifts is simply sinful neglect of our calling. Each gift has triple ownership: ours, the church's and God's. But the last owner is the most significant and worthy, and so it is most important that we steward these gifts for his purposes. What are those purposes? The first purpose is unity. Unity in both faith and knowledge in Jesus Christ. The second is maturity. Just like in humanity, we are born, and we grow and mature as we live. I'm 29 years old, but I don't act like I did when I was 5 years old, at least not all the time, but why, because I have grown and matured, as we all do.

When we come to Christ and are born again, that is our birthday in the Spirit. Just like we grow and mature physically, God calls us to grow and mature spiritually, in our emotions, wills, and intellect.

There may be some in this room that have been a Christian for 40 years but has the maturity of a 5 year old Christian. And there may be some in here that have been a Christian for 5 years, but has the maturity of a 40 year old Christian. If we are not using our gifts, if we are not studying God's Word, if we are not serving in some capacity the body of Christ, if we are not part of a Bible Study group, if all we do is come to church on Sunday morning, we are not maturing in our spiritual walk. Just like we eat food everyday to grow physically, we have to dine on God's Word, pray and serve to grow spiritually. I'm not making this up. Look at 1 Corinthians 3. Paul says "But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?" It can't be made any clearer than what Scripture just said. What I'm about to say is going to be hard to hear but we need to do an honest assessment of ourselves. Is it possible, that one reason why this church hasn't grown in 10 years is because the body of believers hasn't grown spiritually in 10 years.

Verse 11

God gave to his people certain individuals in order to help them. Here in verse 11, we see the list that Paul gives us. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. Do all these titles mean the same thing? No. Each of these titles refers to something specific.

An Apostle – These are the men that had been with Jesus and witnessed his resurrection. These were men who had been commissioned by Jesus to be the founders of the church. They brought new revelation and understanding to the church.

A Prophet – Prophets mean someone who received and conveyed special revelation from God. Their functions included predictions, exhortation, encouragement, warning and explanation. All apostles are prophets, but not all prophets are apostles.

An Evangelist – these are people especially gifted to proclaim the Gospel.

A Shepherd (also known as pastor or elder) and teacher – the two words go together to refer to a single individual who does both shepherding of the flock and instructing to the flock. Pastors and elders provide oversight, comfort, and guidance to the church. These men teach and help apply God's Word to the life of the church. Pastors and elders are crucial to building up the church and are necessary to enable believers to distinguish false doctrine from true doctrine.

Verse 12, 13

The main purpose of these people in the prior list is seen in verse 12, and that is to equip the saints, all of you in our congregation, to do ministry. The leaders are expected to use their gifts to equip God's people for works of service, and these works of service build up the body. According to Scripture, the pastors and elders primary responsibility is to equip every believer in this place to do ministry themselves. We, your elders and pastors, are here to equip you to do ministry. Help you, teach you, encourage you, develop you, disciple you, but we are not to do all of it ourselves. Elders, this is for you, we need to be equipping this church to do ministry in all facets. We need to help them, encourage them, teach them, disciple them and give them the resources they need to be successful in their ministry. That what God is telling us.

Verse 12 is a formula for church. The **first** part of verse 12 states the purpose of God's giving the church pastors and elders; (to equip the saints). The **second** part indicates the consequence of the leaders equipping the saints (for the work of the ministry). And the **third** part gives the overall result of the elders and members working together in the body (for building up the body of Christ). In this verse, all of us were just given our purpose, our mission, what we are supposed to be doing. Elders equip the saints, so that they can do ministry. Saints do ministry so that the body of Christ is built up. The ministry that God is calling you to, only you know, it's what He is laying on your heart at this moment. Each and every single one of you have a place to serve here at CBC in order to build up the body of Christ. Men's ministry, women's ministry, youth ministry, children's ministry, young adult ministry, singles ministry, married ministry, recovering addict's ministry, and any other ministry that you feel God leading you to do. If your calling is not something that we currently have, guess what, God might be calling you to start it.

Ministry is intended to move believers toward the goals found in verse 13. Maturity and unity are measured in terms of the relationship of the body to the Head, the relationship of CBC to God. The extent of our unity to each other and maturity in our knowledge of Christ reveal to us how good or how bad our relationship is with God. This is a soul-searching question for all of us. Think about it for a second, the strength of our unity amongst all of us here at CBC and our knowledge about God is measuring stick for our relationship with God.

Verse 14

When gifted people equip the church, the community of faith will show stability in doctrine and practice. Over in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul explains 4 attitudes we should have towards our brothers and sisters in Christ that are different from us and how to no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves of false doctrine, human cunning or deceitful schemes.

The **first** is not to despise other's gifts. A good deal of life's contentment comes from the realization of each person that God did not intend everyone to be just like me or just like you. The church is stronger because of the variety of people Christ has gifted by his authority, out of his generosity, and for his purposes. Jesus made some more sympathetic than others, some more enduring than others, some more adventurous than others. Some are better ramrods for organizing the efforts of many, some are better counselors for the concerns of individuals, some are better at business, some better at administration, some better with kids and youth, some are meant to be scholars, some are better in public ministries and some are better in private ministries. All are vital for the building up of the church for the fullness of the purposes of Christ. We will never be at peace in our church until we recognize that God has brought different kinds of people, with different gifts and levels of maturity, into the church not only to sanctify us, but to build up His church in the ways that only God knows are best.

The **second** attitude we need to have is not to despise our own gifts. We will never fulfill the purposes that God has for our lives if we constantly want to be something God has not designed us to be. God made you to be you and accomplish the task that He has given to you.

It follows, **thirdly**, that if we are not to despise our gifts, we also are not to neglect our gifts. We disregard God's authority and generosity when we neglect the gifts he has given us. You know the phrase "if you don't use, you lose it". It is often true. People who do not steward their gifts lose the opportunity to do and be what God has best equipped them to do and be for the church. Within this one attitude, why do people neglect their gifts?

- 1) Some Christians do not understand that we are obligated to use the gifts that God gives for the building of his church. Look up Romans 12:4-8.

⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Failure to steward Christ's gifts is simply sinful neglect of our calling.

- 2) Sometimes we do not want the obligation of our gifts.
- 3) Neglect of our gifts can also be a result of our wanting other's gifts. Instead of living for the Lord's approval and purposes, we want the adoration and praise of other people around us. There is nothing wrong with wanting to excel, but there is everything wrong with not approving the way that God made you and driving yourself to excel in ways he has not gifted you. Happiest are those who discover Christ's gift and give themselves to excel in what God has made them to do – whether that is preaching or teaching or evangelizing or writing or making music or making money or giving counsel or showing hospitality or creating art – everything according to the gift that the Lord God has given you. What I am about to ask you, you need to ask yourself and have some personal reflection time. These questions have been wrapping through my head for 2 weeks. Am I doing what God has made me to be, or am I neglecting my gifts? Am I delighting to be what God has made me to be, or am I despising my gifts?

And **finally**, Paul urges us not to neglect other people's gifts. Mature leadership seeks to equip others to use their gifts for the work of ministry and to build up the body. The work of ministry is not dependent on any one of us, even those who are leaders. Our task is to equip the saints for their ministry of service and building up the church.

We who are the pastors and elders of this church have the important job of making ourselves nonessential for the doing of all the church's ministries because we are to be equipping others that their efforts will not be

dependent on us. The pastors and elders primary task is to equip others for the ministry of the church. If you hear only one thing this morning, hear this. Christ's goal and design is that the church elders would prepare the saints for ministry by equipping every person to do his or her part.

Verse 15, 16

Although each believer is differently gifted, we must all depend upon the Savior, seeking our strength in him and seeking our purpose in him. The last two verses describe a spiritual flow that we must understand. **First**, we are told that as we use our gifts to speak the truth in love, we will "grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ." The image is of a stem, leaves and branches, each exercising its function so that it grows up into a beautiful flower. The flower is the glory of Christ that he intends for us to produce as we exercise our gifts and equip others do to the same. EXPLAIN IMAGE

But in the next verse it flips. We are told that "from him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love." The image here is of the human body with all of its parts coordinated and enabled by the head, that is Christ. EXPLAIN IMAGE

The danger here is that our reflex is to try and do God's work in our own strength – to exercise God's gifts without dependence upon the Savior. The key is, before we talk about something or act upon something, we need to pray about it first. We have a deep obligation to one another – everyone must do his or her part. Each has a calling to make the body work. As important it is to have a personal relationship with Jesus, biblical Christianity never teaches that faith is just about Jesus and me. We are part of the body of Christ. You are an expression of Christ's love to others and they to you.

Paul draws on the theme of Christian love throughout this epistle because he recognizes that love, as a central characteristic of God and of Christ, is therefore essential for those united to Christ. The church community functions because we are all called to be love contributors, not just love consumers. Every spiritual community to which Christ will ever call us does not merely exist to serve us but to be served by us out of mutual love. We need each other's love. We are here together because Christ has made us one, so that our gifts will lovingly compliment each other, and together we can grow to maturity in Christ both in what we understand and in what we do. James says that faith without works is dead. If we believe but do not serve and love our fellow brothers and sisters, we missed the point. If all we do is consume love and blessings and never return love and blessings to our brothers and sisters, we missed the point of being a Christian. We grow and mature as each one does his or her part.

Conclusion

A church that faithfully speaks the truth in love will have transparent relationships where people edify and benefit one another. Although each believer is differently gifted, we must all depend upon the Savior, seeking our strength in him and seeking our purpose in him. Ultimately the church will grow up into Christ in all aspects, each part fitting together and supporting the other. Each member of the body must function properly if the body is to grow.

That's what Jesus did for us on the cross. He loved us, he served us, he went to his death to save us. But through his resurrection, we can have eternal life. Jesus said "no one comes to the Father but through me." If you feel Jesus stirring your soul this morning for the first time. If you have never committed your life to him, if you never repented of your ways, but this morning, feel the Holy Spirit making all things clear, please see me afterwards and let me know the God saved another soul this morning. I want to pray with you, I want to encourage you, I want to celebrate with you and help you in your walk with Jesus. He loves you and so do I.

Pray