

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

717 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, AZ 85203 Phone: (480) 833-7500

Series:	Ephesians		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	7		Josh Walker
Text:	Ephesians 4:1-16		
Date:	April 29, 2018 (a.m.)		

UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION: Our passage this morning begins, what many have called, the “imperative” section of Ephesians. Thus far in Ephesians, we have been in the indicative section of the letter. We have seen many wonderful truths about God’s election, salvation by grace alone through faith alone, our unity in Christ, and so on. These indicatives, or statements of fact, have made up the majority of what Paul has been driving at in Ephesians.

Now, starting with chapter 4, Paul moves from these indicative statements about who God is and who we are in Christ, to imperatives, or exhortations, about what we are to do and how we are to live in light of these truths. This indicative/imperative structure is what Sinclair Ferguson calls “the grammar of the Gospel.” This structure (of the indicative and imperative) is the basic building block of the Gospel. To misunderstand this structure is to misunderstand the Gospel. Let me explain.

An indicative within the Gospel is that we are united to Christ by faith, and then an imperative is therefore, in light of this reality, put off the old man and put on the new. If we switch or mix them up, we lose the Gospel. So, if we are to put off the old man and put on the new in order to be united to Christ, we have a works-based salvation and the good news of being freely forgiven in Christ is lost. We do not *do* to be a child of God. Rather, we are children of God, *so we do*.

Think of it this way: my son, Calvin, has a few -- very small because he is 4 -- household duties (such as clean the dinner plates off the table) to perform. It would be absurd for him to think that doing these simple tasks makes him my son. No, it is because he is my son and part of the Walker family that he does these tasks. His work flows out of and from the fact that he is my son. To reverse those would be crazy and wrong-headed.

So, as we work through these imperatives in the rest of Ephesians, never lose sight of the fact that all of them are grounded in and based on all the wonderful things we have seen that God has done and said thus far in Ephesians 1–3.

Further, as I was preparing this sermon, I found that many scholars and Bible commentators divided our text this morning into sections: 4:1–6 and 4:7–16. At first, this was my initial thought as well, but, as I dug into the text, I found it more and more important to link these two texts together. As one noted commentator explains, these two passages “should be understood [in the] larger text, which should remain in view while interpreting the smaller elements of the whole.”¹ In other words, even if you see Ephesians 4:1-6 and 4:7-16 as separate “chunks,” you cannot understand them in isolation from each other.

It is, at least in part, my aim this morning to illustrate why these two passages must be understood in connection. That is, as we will see, the unity we have in Christ, for Paul, is the basis and lifeblood for the growth we have in Christ. In our passage this morning, Paul strongly urges the church towards unity in love based on the truths of the one God, God's calling, and God's wonderful work of redemption.

In light of this, we will see two main points (with a few sub-points) in our text this morning: first, Our Unity, and, second, Our Maturity. Again, our passage this morning can be outlined as Our Unity and Our Maturity.

I. *Unity* (4:1-6)

4:1: "The admonition to live a life worthy of the calling you have received arises out of the gracious, saving purposes of God (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20), which has been presented in the first three chapters. This appeal, like other Pauline ethical 'imperatives,' is grounded in the 'indicators' of God's saving work in Christ."²

4:5: "Paul confesses that Christ is the 'one Lord.' Throughout his letter he repeatedly refers to Jesus Christ as Lord (1:2, 3, 15, 17; 3:11; 5:20; 6:23, 24). Because he refers to the Spirit in the previous verse and the Father in the next verse, there is no question that he is referring to Christ here.... The next to last statement is that there is 'one baptism.' This probably refers to the practice of water baptism and not solely to the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit.... Paul does not speak of *one* baptism here simply to maintain symmetry with each of the other 'one' statements. Nor does Paul refer to it this way to distinguish it from other competing baptismal rites.... It is also unlikely that Paul is distinguishing it from practices in the local synagogue.... The one baptism probably has more to do with that unifying experience of the solitary rite that all the believers in Asia Minor participated in after putting their faith in Jesus Christ and becoming a part of the body. The one baptism is a sign of their unity with Christ and with one another."³

II. *Maturity* (4:7-16)

4:8: "In support of his assertion that Christ bestows spiritual gifts on his people, Paul cites Ps. 68:18, which refers to God as the Divine Warrior who achieves a great victory over his enemies and ascends his holy mountain. Paul interprets the psalm christologically and sees Christ as the one who has vanquished his enemies and has ascended to heaven. This sets the stage for him to distribute divine gifts for service to every member of his body."⁴

4:13: "Christ's purpose is that Christian members shall reach maturity (4:13). With that end in view, he has prepared and bestowed gifts to be exercised by his people (4:8-12)."⁵

4:15: "*Speaking the truth in love* lays out a twofold contrast with the false teachers: the latter were presenting *false doctrine in a deceptive manner*, but over against this God's people are to grow through proclaiming the *truth in love*."⁶

ENDNOTES

¹ Baugh, S. M., *Ephesians: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary* (Lexham Press, 2016), 287.

² O'Brien, Peter T., *The Letter to the Ephesians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Eerdmans, 1999), 274.

³ Arnold, Clint E., *Ephesians: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2010), 234-36.

⁴ Arnold, *Ephesians*, 246.

⁵ Martin, Ralph, *Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon: Interpretation A Bible-Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (John Knox Press, 1991), 47.

⁶ O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 310.