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Ephesians 4:1-16 "For the Sake of the Body"

Opening Prayer

Welcome to our church service today. As Psalm 118:24 states – "This is the day that the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." It is good to see all of you here on this the Sabbath day of our Lord and in His house.

For the past three weeks we have dealt with Ephesians and the doctrine of its teachings. The basic idea of Ephesians is that God's eternal plan is being worked out through Christ and His body, the Church. When a person believes in Christ, he or she finds new life and safety. God planned this all along and has given to the believer everything that he or she needs to live out the Christian life – but- it is the believer's responsibility to use the resources that God provides. Today, we begin the second part of Ephesians which deals with its teachings and its ethics.

We will be reflecting back on our text from today to bring out Paul's points in his letter to the Ephesians. These same points hold true for us today as believers. The part of ethics in his letter focuses on the four charges to the people. It is this first charge – to promote the church's unity – that will be the theme of today's sermon. Chapter 4 is divided into two parts. The first part deals with Unity (Verses 1-6) and the second part with Diversity in Unity (Verses 7-16). Simply stated, Paul is telling us how we should live as members of the Church. (All that we do is for the sake of the body. Let us now begin to see how this unfolds for us.)

In Verse 1, Paul is exhorting us on how to live. With this we see that spiritual rank imposes moral obligations on us. As members of the body of Christ, we must exhibit behavior that enables us to share our Savior's glorious destination. Verse 2 – here it states that we need to manifest the Christ like qualities of humility and forbearance – to love one another and to be patient and to overlook their faults. These two virtues were never highly esteemed in the great pagan world before Christ came.

As we look at Verse 3 – along with these two virtues must go an eagerness to "maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". It is the unity that the Holy Spirit creates which Paul has in mind, not mere similarity of outlook among people. Paul has not appealed for unity. He tells us this seven times in Verses 4-6. This gives us a sevenfold battlecry of Christian unity and the religious basis on which this unity rests.

Verse 4 talks about the unity of the Church and deals with three areas – one Body, one Spirit, and one Hope. This is our holy fellowship-life-giving spirit – and one goal on which our hope is set. Verse 5 – Here we have the three parts to Christian unity in Christ – one Lord, one Faith and one Baptism. The first of these – one Lord – gives us one Savior to be worshipped and adored. Next we have one Faith which is our pledge or confession of trust in Him. Lastly, we have one Baptism which is one rite of initiation into his fellowship. Verse 6 gives us our unity with God – one God and Father of us all who is above all and through all and in all. We know that there is one Father who created everything and we exist in Him. And there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom God made everything and through whom we have been given life. As we conclude part one, Paul has made his point for Christian unity. As we move on to Part 2 – verses 7-16 – Paul talks about the diversity in unity that we all have.

Verse 7 – We as members of Christ’s body have different offices, so to speak, but each in its own way contributes to the church’s destined unity. The first sentence in this verse sets the theme. Each Christian has his or her particular gift of grace from Christ. Simply put in words – all of us have been given gifts to employ in building up our Church unity and to be a blessing to others. In reading the July issue of *Guideposts* magazine, I came across this quote “God gave you gifts and the only way to bless others is to use them”. So – what are you waiting for? Is this not a word of encouragement for the Christian who may imagine there is nothing he or she can do?

Verse 8 – This tells of His gifts given to men. Think of your life and the lives of others that you know – we see ourselves and others with their gifts and talents as they use them in daily living. These are God’s gifts to us – what we do with them in His honor and to His glory is our gift back to Him. Simply stated – everything we have comes from God – it is not ours – but – it is ours to use to bring honor and glory to God and to do so in Christian unity, compassion and love. You were blessed to be a blessing. Please do so! Yes, it is said that we all fall short of the glory of God... and we do! However, isn’t it wonderful through our loving God and His son, Jesus Christ, that we have been given undeserved grace and a wonderful sacrifice for our salvation from sin, death and evil in His beloved Son – Jesus Christ.

Verses 9 and 10 – This means that Christ has compassed the universe – from its depths (Hades) to its heights (Heaven) in order to pervade the whole of it with His Being.

Verse 11 – Paul now brings us back to his main theme – the varying gifts of the exalted Christ to men. God gave Christ to be the Church’s Head and in turn Christ has given ministers to the church to serve it in various ways – different gifts and abilities were given to men to serve in various capacities.

We see in Verse 12 that Christ did this for the equipment of the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ. Remember, God doesn’t seem to call the equipped; rather, He equips the called. The sense here is that Christ gave these gifts in order to equip His people for the work of serving. What is the goal of equipping the saints? It is the building up of Christ’s Body – the Church. Here is where we come in. Shortly after the offering, we will be singing. “let us talents and tongues employ” – well – we all have talents to employ. What better way to build up Church unity than by using our various talents and gifts here at St. Timothy. We do have many capable and able people within our congregation. Each and every one of us has something to offer and employ.

God desires that we move them from “Serve Us” to Service”!! It is not for the few to do so much of the work here in our Church, but the many here to do their part to make the work easier to get the job done. Many hands make the job at hand go faster and more quickly and for the most part more efficient. (Last year many of us volunteered at the Day Care Playground to put down the rubberized chips to walk on. With all of the help at this time we were done in about 15 minutes.) So what does God require of you – Micah 6:8 – to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk with your God.

The goal of upbuilding the church in Verse 13 is the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. When we have a common loyalty to the Savior with lives which are lived by faith in the Son of god who loved them – this is the supreme end in view. When this comes to pass, the church will have attained “mature manhood” and “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”.

Verse 14 – we need to be strong and staunch adherents to the faith in which we were raised, believe, and live by – not to be swayed by anything or others who may question our beliefs or say that they have the answer. God and Jesus are our Foundation and Salvation. Many will come in my name to say they are the Messiah – beware of these false prophets.

Verse 15 – Paul in this verse is saying that by “living in the truth”, that is by the Christian revelation and missing no chance of maintaining it in a spirit of Christian love – is what he means. This is the way for the body (which is the Church) to grow up into its Head – Jesus Christ. All that we do is for the sake of the body.

Verse 16 – Paul now summarizes his charge to us in this last verse. Each of us, you and I, contributes to the growth of the Church by receiving and passing on the life drawn from Christ the Head. The secret of St. Timothy’s successful growing depends on each part (you and I) working properly (together in Christian harmony, unity and service) and on its building itself “in love”. This is where our congregation can find “food for thought”. Care to join me for dinner? Reservations are being accepted! Let us pray.