

EPHESIANS 4 V 1-16 6th Aug 2017

We continue today with our series looking at The book of Acts and Paul's epistles. For those who were unable to get to Lullingstone last Sunday, Dorothy gave us our first taste of the epistles by preaching from the epistle to the Philippians chapter 2 teaching Christian truths. Today we are looking at the epistle to the Ephesians chapter 4, '**Unity in the body of Christ.**' **Building the church.**

Last week Dorothy also left us with a question, '**How will we ensure both individually and as a church that our behaviour leads people to Christ?...**' **'How will we ensure both individually and as a church that our behaviour leads people to Christ?'**

We can do that by being united in our service to Christ. What does it mean to be united. United means unified, integrated, consolidated, joined, merged, shared. So what about unity in the church. Unity is when each member of the Church is in the right position, doing the right job and for the right reason, then we might, just might win our community and influence the world for the glory of God and the honour of His Son Jesus. Indeed we will be what the Bible describes as a "healthy church."

What does a healthy church look like? When God puts His team together what shape will it take? What will your assignment be? What position will you play? Paul puts before us several characteristics of a healthy church made up of healthy Christians. I'm going to touch on just a few.

1. It is characterized by unity. 4:1-6

God desires our unity, our oneness, our working together without distraction caused by disagreement. Unity is not uniformity. Uniformity is when we look alike and act alike, and I wouldn't want everyone to look and act like me, I'm sure you wouldn't either. That is boring and not much use. Unity is when we walk together and work together with common convictions and commitments. Paul says "There is one body". Unity does not just happen, we have to work at it. Instead of concentrating on what divides us we should build on what unites us; one body, one spirit, one future, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God. Let us enjoy the way, we as members of Christ's body, compliment and encourage one another. A church will not grow if all that folk hear is what is wrong with the church.

2. *There must be a oneness of humility (behaviour). 4:1-3*

Verse 2 "Always be humble and gentle".

In 1 Peter ch 5 vs 5 & 6 "And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for

"God opposes the proud,
but gives grace to the humble."

⁶ Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time".

We can all learn from these instructions in Ephesians and Peter. Respect each other, both old and young alike, try and understand each other. Peter tells us all to be humble and serve one another.

Jesus came to serve and not be served, if we are to be Christ like, we should be servants to one another, that's servants not slaves.

We may worry sometimes about our status, hoping to get proper recognition for what we do, we all like to be thanked for what we do. But Peter advises us to remember that God's recognition counts more than human praise;. Humbly obey God in all you do, regardless of present circumstances, and in His good time, either in this world or the next, He will honour you.

It is through our behaviour that others will see who we are. God has plans for us, a purpose for good and not for evil. He gives us gifts to use for the growing of His kingdom. Each believer has God-given abilities that can strengthen the whole body (the church). Your special ability may seem small or large, but it is yours to use in God's service. Ask God to use your unique gifts to contribute to the strength and health of the body of believers and non believers alike.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, is a list of the gifts that God gives,

"⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

But while Paul emphasises these gifts, they are not the only gifts mentioned..

None of us are apostles, few really could take the name prophets. A few might be evangelists, pastors and teachers.

But there are other gifts with which Christ gifted the church. In other places Paul speaks about other gifts enabled by God.

Those who help others (1 Cor 12:28)

Serving (Romans 12:7)

Encouraging (Romans 12:8)

Showing mercy (Romans 12:8)

Administration (1 Corinthians 12:28)

Languages (1 Corinthians 12:29)

Contributing to the needs of others (Romans 12:8)

And remember verse 7

"However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ. That is why the scripture says, " When he ascended to the heights, he led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to His people."

We are all given gifts and we must discern what they are and build upon them to glorify God in all that we do. It doesn't matter what that gift is, for no one gift is more important than another, for we cannot earn God's love by what we do. God loves each and everyone of us the same, we don't get extra brownie points to earn extra love. God loves, God loves me, God loves the guys I see in prison the same as he loves you and me, it maybe that we recognise that, and accept His son Jesus as our saviour and not all of them do. But he doesn't love anyone of us more or less than he loves another

So let us live our lives in unity and with humility.

3. There must be a oneness of theology (belief). 4:4-6

We must be united in what we believe, again one body, one spirit, one future, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, What we believe matters. What we believe is wed to how we live. The two go together.

Doctrine matters, teaching matters, bible matters, what we believe matters. These things matter because Jesus matters.

Our unity is built on the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is built on the Apostles, who brought the gospel to us. It is built on the Bible, the only trustworthy source of Jesus' and his Apostle's teaching.

In the chapel at Rochester Prison is this notice or saying. "What you do today is important because you are exchanging a day of your life for it.....let it be for something good.

I will leave you today with the same question left us with last week .'**How will we ensure both individually and as a church that our behaviour leads people to Christ?...**

Let us cling to the Jesus of the Bible and the faith and life of the apostles, for that is the only place where Christian unity can be found.

So let us go forward as a church in unity, with humility, and a true spiritual belief.

These things matter, because Jesus matters.

Amen