

Eph. 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Paul again identifies himself as a prisoner of the Lord; he is in prison because of his ministry in obedience to the Lord.

“Therefore” – Based on the what I’ve told you about the mighty God you serve and the power available to you in Christ through the Holy Spirit (as explained in the previous chapters)....

Paul is pleading with this body of believers to live in a manner appropriate to “your acceptance of God’s invitation of salvation and the work God has set you apart to do (my translation).”

Eph. 4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Eph. 4:3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Paul not only urges the believers to give evidence of their profession, he instructs them regarding their attitude as they serve. They should serve with...

- Lowliness – This is a reference to humility. It’s a reminder that every part of the body is important to the effectiveness of the testimony and ministry of the church; no one should have a sense of self-importance or consider his/her contribution to be more valuable than another.
- Meekness – This word makes reference to humility in combination with gentleness. Gentleness adds the aspect of being friendly and showing consideration for those with whom you are serving.
- Longsuffering – This speaks of being patient and not easily provoked. As with each of these attributes, it is a matter of a choice and determination. They are not natural tendencies for most of us.
- Forbearing one another in love – This is reference to enduring one another because you have chosen to love one another. None of us is perfect. We all require forbearance from others from time to time because of the clash of different personalities. We need to recognize each other’s differences and strive to set them aside when serving in ministry.
- Endeavoring to promote unity of Spirit and peace in the body – This is an acknowledgement that it requires earnest effort to maintain unity through the Holy Spirit by maintaining calm and order while serving with common purpose—obedience to the Lord.

Eph. 4:4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

Eph. 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Eph. 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Paul is driving home the point that the body of believers is one in the Spirit. Though it has many parts, we become one in Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit in each believer—another one of those impossible to understand truths about God. We each accepted God’s invitation of salvation by faith being confident of our future in His presence.

This is another one of those sections of scripture that identifies us as “intolerant” concerning our faith. There is only one Supreme Being, one God—not many. There is only one faith, one body of truth. There is only one true baptism for the believer—one that gives a public declaration of your acceptance of Jesus as Savior and Lord. Again, there is only one God, one parent or Creator, and He is positioned unique from all of creation—above “all,” through “all,” and in “you all,” a specific reference to the believer. He is the supreme in authority (above all) the Creator (through all, the causal agent) in reference to all creation. Only the believer, however, is privileged to have God’s presence “in” us through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Rom. 8:9-11 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. **Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.** And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Eph. 4:7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Christ has graciously gifted every believer with a specific measure of grace to be effective in ministry in the body of Christ according to the determination of the Holy Spirit. This was at the heart of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians as detailed in chapters 12-14.

1Cor. 12:7 & 11 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.... But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

Eph. 4:8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

Eph. 4:9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?

Eph. 4:10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

Paul makes a reference to Psalm 68 with verse 8.

Psa. 68:17-19 The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *even* thousands of angels: the Lord *is* among them, *as in* Sinai, in the holy *place*. **Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men;** yea, *for* the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell *among them*. Blessed *be* the Lord, *who* daily loadeth us *with benefits*, *even* the God of our salvation. Selah.

This is a hard section that drove me to searching through translations, word studies and commentaries for help. Some made comparison to a victor in battle sharing the spoils of victory. This made sense to me. When Jesus ascended to heaven after the resurrection, He had conquered death and sin. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul described it as follows:

Col. 2:14-15 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his

cross; *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Jesus identified the Holy Spirit as our Gift from Him and the source of our gifts of grace.

Luke 11:13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

And, in fact, He stated that the Comforter, or Holy Spirit, could not be given until He returned to heaven in victory.

John 16:7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

“he led captivity captive” – I have always understood this to mean that he took those who were held captive, so to speak, in Abraham’s Bosom or Paradise, until the time that Jesus rose victorious from the grave to heaven with Him at that time. This makes sense to me with the reference to descending into “the lower parts of the earth,” which I again equate to Paradise, as the place where those who had died in faith were held and where He too stayed for those three days and nights after His burial. It was the man Jesus that descended into the place of departed spirits, and it was the man Jesus that was resurrected from the grave through the Father.

1Cor. 15:20-22 But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

1Pet. 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Even after reading some differing views, this still makes the best sense to me— but I am open to the Spirit’s instruction.

“He that descended is the same also that ascended” – Paul is emphasizing that it was the same Jesus Christ who had performed miracles and taught His disciples for three years, was crucified and buried, the resurrected Savior, that ascended to heaven in victory. (1/11) Jesus in fact talked about His burial and resurrection.

Matthew 12:38–40 “Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

“that he might fill all things” – I think this might be a reference to the eternal Kingdom of God in which everything will be filled by Him and He will have no enemies.

Eph. 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

“he gave” – referring back to the gifts mentioned in verses 7-8

Christ did not leave the church without leadership. Through the Holy Spirit He gifted some to be:

- Apostles = ambassadors of the gospel, messengers, emissaries—13 of whom were specifically chosen by Christ
- Prophets = speakers specifically inspired by God to share His word
- Evangelists = traveling preachers who share the gospel message
- Pastors = Those chosen to shepherd groups of believers
- Teachers = Those skilled to teach and impart understanding of God’s word

According to Wuest in his Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, the grammar for the words “pastors and teachers” is a reference to one individual, which is exactly what the phrasing and punctuation in the KJV led me to believe.

(1/11) According to 2:20—“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets....”—it would seem that the apostles and prophets are responsible for laying the foundation, and the evangelists and pastor/teachers are responsible for building upon that foundation.

Eph. 4:12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Eph. 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

In these verses Paul gives the purpose for these special giftings.

- For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry – This speaks of complete preparation or being fully equipped to labor or work hard in service to the Lord.
- For the edifying of the body of Christ – This makes reference to improving the quality and strength of the temple formed by the body of believers.

When I first read through this section, I assumed there were three points, but as I looked up the words and put it all together, it made better sense to understand their purpose as two-fold.

These purposes go hand-in-hand with the purpose given for other gifts administered through the Spirit.

1Cor. 14:12 Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

All gifts from the Spirit are to be used to edify the body of believers. When the body of believers is well trained, well prepared, healthy, strong and eager to serve, it will follow naturally that the gospel will be shared, people will be saved, and society will be served to the glory of God.

How long will these special positions of gifting be needed? “Till we all come in the unity of the faith...unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” In other words, until this mortal puts on immortality and this corruptible becomes incorruptible.

Eph. 4:14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Eph. 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

God never intended us to stay spiritually immature. He has raised up mature men in the faith and positioned them in ministry to provide the spiritual foundation and instruction necessary for our spiritual growth. He wants us to be alert and aware to the deceitfulness of the enemy through clever and cunning false teachers. God’s anointed and appointed servants will speak the truth in love as they seek to encourage and edify the believer according to the truth of God’s word.

I think this is a very important truth that needs to be recognized and diligently pursued by every child of God. We need to spend time in the scripture daily with a focus and intent to become familiar with the truth presented there. When the seed of truth from God’s word is planted in our being, the Holy Spirit can then nurture the growth of that seed and provide the instruction needed to protect us from those who would pervert its truth. The key is in the attitude of our heart. If we spend time in the Word seeking to know more about God, our hearts are more likely to be ready to “hear” with spiritual ears. If we place ourselves at the mercy of those who present themselves as teachers of the word and don’t take the time to seek the word ourselves to see if their teaching measures up, we will more often than not be led astray from its truth. Paul commended the Bereans for their careful discernment of the truth.

Acts 17:10-11 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

I think it is also important to note that we are to speak the truth in love—not in condescension or with a “holier than thou” attitude. We are to hate sin, but love the sinner.

Eph. 4:16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

“whom” = Christ

It is only “in Christ” that those in the body of believers find unity and purpose as an integrated whole. I liked the wording from the CJB.

Under His control, the whole body is being fitted and held together by the support of every joint, with each part working to fulfill its function; this is how the body grows and builds itself up in love.

The Greek for *compacted* is a reference to unity. The key to a healthy body (church) is submission to the authority of the head—Jesus Christ. In His wisdom He has assigned each believer a special purpose and gifting through which He is to minister to others in the body. Through that edification the body (church) will be made healthy and strong so as to most effectively minister the gospel and love of Jesus to others.

It's very important to note that our ministry to others in the body is to be done "in love." We are to choose to love each other in spite of our differences and annoying ways. We are to deny self for the good of the whole. We are to love others in the body just as Christ loves us—unconditionally and sacrificially.

John 15:12-13 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Eph. 4:17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

Eph. 4:18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

Eph. 4:19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

Paul is stating unequivocally that the child of God is to live a life that identifies him as different from the world. We have an eternal purpose that far surpasses any agenda resulting from the morally depraved thoughts of unregenerate men, those who identify themselves with the "god" of this world rather than the One True God. They remain ignorant and without spiritual insight because they have chosen to give themselves over to immorality and the desires of the flesh directing their energy toward whatever fraudulent practices are necessary toward attaining those desires. They are not convicted by their conscience because it has been seared to the point of being "past feeling." This is exactly what Paul was expressing in his letter to Timothy.

1Tim. 4:1-2 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; **having their conscience seared with a hot iron....**

Our lack of ability to discern is a direct result of ignorance or rejection of God's truth. Spiritual discernment of God's truth is only possible when the heart is tender and open to conviction and instruction. This is a very thought-provoking truth. God is not willing that any should perish, but He is not going to force His way into our lives. The longer we shut Him out, the more the danger that we shut ourselves out of His reach permanently. Paul was very clear in his letter to the Romans that a person can reach the point where God gives them over to their sin and desire.

Rom. 1:24 Wherefore **God also gave them up** to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts....

Rom. 1:26 For this cause **God gave them up** unto vile affections....

Rom. 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, **God gave them over** to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient....

Eph. 4:20 But ye have not so learned Christ;

Paul is declaring confidence that the Ephesians had been taught according to God's truth as declared by Christ and those whom He had commissioned.

Eph. 4:21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

Eph. 4:22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

Eph. 4:23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

Eph. 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

"heard" = Webster: to heed, accept, obey

Paul is stating that those who have "heard" the truth as taught and exemplified by Jesus understand that their lives are not to be lived according to worldly standards and teaching. They have been made new creations in Christ.

2Cor. 5:17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

As a new creation, just like a newborn babe, we have to relearn how to live. This requires concerted effort on the part of the believer. He is to choose to "put off" or do away with the sinful practices of his former life that was ruled by the flesh and "put on" or clothe himself in righteousness and holiness. Again, these are acts of choice and determination. He is also to renew or reform his way of thinking and the very essence of his being. This is not a one-step process; it is an ongoing process. Most importantly, God does not expect us to accomplish this transformation in our lives in our own strength; He has given us the Holy Spirit to empower and enlighten us as we choose to yield to His authority.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me....

1Cor. 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

1Cor. 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Eph. 4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

"Wherefore" – Because you are a new creation in Christ....

At this point Paul begins to address specific character issues that should be predominant in the lives of believers. His first admonition—Don't tell lies; speak the truth. One who has placed his/her faith in Christ Jesus has been adopted

into the family of God (chapter 1, verse 3-6), and we are to strive to obey Him and live according to the example of His Son, Jesus.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

Those who choose to characterize themselves as liars are aligning themselves with the enemy and in opposition to God.

John 8:44 Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

The more we recognize that we are one in Christ, we realize that lying not only hurts the individual, it hurts the testimony of the whole and weakens the effectiveness of the gospel message we are declaring. Whether we recognize it or not, the truth is that the world judges our Savior by those who declare allegiance to His name. Satan is no dummy. He takes great delight in every opportunity to infiltrate the “church” with false teachers and charming deceivers who pervert the word of God and get people to focus on works instead of faith, ministry over worship, experience above truth, and ritual without relationship. He knows that the leaven of sin quickly spreads and that people are easily deceived into focusing on self rather than on the God we serve.

Eph. 4:26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

Eph. 4:27 Neither give place to the devil.

I really liked the CJB translation of these verses.

Be angry, but don't sin — don't let the sun go down before you have dealt with the cause of your anger; otherwise you leave room for the Adversary. I think the reference here is to “righteous indignation.” Even Jesus was stirred to anger when He observed how the religious leaders had reduced the temple to a place of business over worship and prayer. He acted with a passion and anger that was zealous of His Father's honor, yet He did not become a bitter person in the process. As we who claim the name “Christian” respond to the things in this world that anger and grieve us, we are to guard against developing a bitterness or reacting in a way that would give a wrong message to others about God's character. That's exactly the sin that got Moses into trouble and kept Him out of the Promised Land.

(1/11) Abba Father, Please forgive me for the many times I have misrepresented you before others in response to their actions or the actions of others toward me or loved ones. Please fill me with a heart of love and mercy and help me to continue in learning to die to self and submit to Your Holy spirit's leading. \

Eph. 4:28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

One who has trusted the Lord as Savior should be characterized as one who works hard at accomplishing good things. He/she should be known for the way they seek to help the needy—not for taking advantage of others.

Eph. 4:29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

One who calls himself a “Christian” should be one whose speech is good, kind and edifying. To “minister grace to the hearer” is a reference to graciousness and gratitude. In other words, our speech should declare that we honor our Savior and want to encourage others to honor Him as well. I like the point made by Wuest in his Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, “The Greek order is, ‘every word that is corrupt, out of your mouth, let it not proceed.’” In other words, every word we speak should be good and not bad; it should have value.

Eph. 4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

This whole list is full of admonitions that one would think Christians would not need to hear, but reality dictates otherwise. We who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior have been *sealed*, marked with a stamp of security and preservation, by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives within us.

1Cor. 3:16-17 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which *temple* ye are.

Since the Holy Spirit is a part of the being of every child of God, He is with us in everything we do—whether good or bad, whether it honors God or not.

Knowing this, Paul is reminding the believers in Ephesus that they should not grieve or bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the things they say, the choices they make, the things they do, or even the things they choose to meditate on.

By the way—I think it is important to note that the child of God is “sealed unto the day of redemption.” That will be the day that we receive our resurrection bodies of immortality and incorruption and get to take possession of our full inheritance as His sons and daughters (cf 1:14). (1 / 11) Once the Spirit indwells us, He is there permanently.

Eph. 4:31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

Paul continues to identify characteristics that should not characterize a child of God.

- Bitterness – This is poison (from the Greek) to the soul. Webster connects it with being resentful and a dangerous error that can draw one into apostasy.
- Wrath – The Greek equates this to the fierce passion that would lead one to kill.
- Anger – The Greek equates this to a response with the intent to punish with vengeance, and scripture is clear in stating that vengeance belongs to the Lord (Romans 12:19).
- Clamor – The Greek makes reference to shrieking and screaming. This is a depiction of someone out of control and often accompanies unbridled anger.

- Evil speaking – The Greek for this phrase makes direct reference to blasphemy or speaking evil against God. It also allows for reference to abusive language generally.
- Malice – The Greek makes reference to any kind of wickedness or depravity.

Eph. 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

In direct contrast to the character described above, the child of God is to be...

- Kind – The Greek gives emphasis to being usefully employed and doing good things.
- Tenderhearted – The Greek makes reference to one who is sympathetic and compassionate. We should be ready to show mercy and sensitivity to the needs of others.
- Forgiving – The Greek for this word comes from the root word for love and grace, charis, a divine influence upon the heart. It's a willingness to freely pardon without resentment one who has done you wrong. The example we are to follow—no less than that of God the Father Himself who has forgiven us in Christ. If He has forgiven us in Christ, we are to forgive others in the body in Christ.

I think it is also important to note that the context is specifically applicable to one's actions toward others in the body of Christ.