

GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST TO GROW TOGETHER IN CHRIST

Ephesians 4

Introduction:

The Pastoral Search Committee and the Deacons were agreed in the notion that now would be a good time for all of us to seek the Lord regarding what HE has to say about the Church – His Church –including THIS church.

- Who are we supposed to BE?
- What should be our PRIORITIES?
- What is our MISSION?
- What are we supposed to be DOING?
- How should we DO IT?
- In light of these truths,
 what kind of man should we seek as a pastor?
- Tuff to go hire a new coach for a Football Team,
 until you know what a Football Team does and
 how to do it.

Hopefully today's message, and more messages to come, will help us better understand these things,

- and enable us to move fwd as the Lord desires...
- be more faithful & fruitful as His people...
- and find the man He's prepared to be our next Pastor.

EPHESIANS 4

--contains some of the Bible's most wonderful and exciting teaching on the nature and function of the CHURCH –

- both the Church Universal
- and the Church Local.

It may also be one of the
-least appreciated
-least practiced passages in the New Testament

With the Lord's help,
May our hearts and minds be opened,
 --not only to understand,

--but also to engage,
and live, and delight in these things...

For He who calls us to them
is MORE than Delightful!! – AMEN??

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Background:

In Chapters 1-3 -- Paul has just shared
--fantastic insights
--breath-taking truths
about the Living God who rules over all,

and His truly awesome plan
to display His glorious grace
throughout all eternity,

thru the Gospel of only His Son Jesus Christ –
--thru whom He pours out on us:
every spiritual blessing
that can be given....

Through this
glorious, gracious, unstoppable plan,
God intends to bring all things
in heaven and earth
together under one Head –
even Christ –
who redeems us
by His own blood
and secures for us
the forgiveness of our sins.

Through Christ –
God saves His chosen ones -- by grace thru faith –
Making those who were dead in trespasses and sins ALIVE forevermore!! –
And with Him forever!

And raising them to unimaginable heights in Christ Jesus.

In Christ -- God is reconciling all things and all peoples to Himself,

and ALSO in Him,
all kinds of peoples are being reconciled to one another –
even Jews and Gentiles,
separated for centuries
by prejudice, pride and contempt.

In Christ – God is destroying barriers and walls of separation
--between Himself and people,
--and between groups of people themselves.

In these un-imaginable initiatives,
a Sovereign, gracious God is revealing
to all beings,
for all eternity
the immensity of His glory,
and grace, and power...
To make peace
Where there was no peace..
...thru Him Who IS OUR PEACE – JESUS CHRIST

And Listen....

The “**Master-Work**” He is creating --
for this display of His amazing glory & grace
is none other than the very people He is re-creating and elevating to glory thru the
redeeming work of His Son –
Namely---

His Chosen,
NEW Covenant People –
the Church of Jesus Christ --

That’s Right -- YOU AND ME!!!

- **WE are the MasterPiece He is creating for the display of His Glorious Grace!**

This is what Paul has just revealed to his readers,
as he begins to pen chapter 4....

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NOW IN CHAPTER 4—

**HE URGES THEM TO:
GROW TOGETHER IN CHRIST
– IN UNITY**

**THAT THEY MAY:
GROW TOGETHER IN CHRIST
– IN MATURITY**

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Paul says....

[Ephesians 4 (ESV)]
[Unity In the Body of Christ]

**1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you
to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to
which you have been called,**

As we've seen...this Calling is –
spectacular, divine,
cosmic, eternal, breath-taking...

...and it's the calling of everyone who has
been placed "IN CHRIST" by faith –
every Christian!

...Yes, even those in Gardner, MA!

...with such an amazing and gracious calling,
From the Creator of the Universe...

...What kind of response
could we possibly give other than:

-- the glad surrender of our entire lives,

--full, unreserved commitment, and ...

--The most sincere dedication and devotion we could muster

Nothing else would do....
Because ...

--Look Who's calling!
--Look what He's giving!
--Look at the PRICE its's costing Him to accomplish it!

"LORD -- WE ARE YOURS!

"SAY THE WORD!—
NO REQUEST IS TOO GREAT!

"WE YEARN
TO GIVE OURSELVES TO YOU!
"WE DELIGHT TO BE YOURS FORVER!

"TELL US WHAT TO DO!
WE LOVE YOU!!
WE ADORE YOU!!
WE ARE YOURS!!

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GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST — IN UNITY....

...Requires Christ-like character & attitudes
toward one another

-Verse 2:

"...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, "

"HUMILITY" – like Jesus Christ who humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2).

...Humility involves humbling oneself
before God and
seeing Him as Big and Worthy
of all our trust, love and obedience—

--- Jesus Always had this attitude toward the Father:

John 4:34

34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

John 5:30

30 "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

John 6:38

38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

John 7:16

16 So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.

John 8:26-29

....He who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from Him."

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... "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. ...

... He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him."

"Humility" humbles oneself before **others**,
willingly sacrificing what is rightfully ours
in order to bring good and blessing to others.
Sound familiar? – Like JESUS.

"GENTLENESS"—

--patiently enduring offence,
w/o malice or desire for revenge.
--one of the Fruit of the Spirit – which is a catalog of Christ-likeness

"PATIENCE"—

--also one of the 9 fruit listed in Galatians, belonging to Jesus,
-- and those in whom His spirit lives.

--AKA: LONG-Suffering

--because that's what it does—

--It suffers long...w/o complaining or becoming angry and bitter.

--It does so because it trusts in God who it knows really is in control:

-Gen 50:20 – "you intended...

-Rom. 8: 28— "in all things...

"BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE"--

--Enduring with someone and their shortcoming,
until the provocation is past.

--We know that can sometimes be a Long Time
--In LOVE we can do it,
--because LOVE seeks the Good of the other – just
as God does with us...
...every single day—

-always treating US better than we deserve,
-setting the example for our treatment twd one another

??--How are we doing
at living-out these Character Qualities/Attitudes IN OUR OWN LIVES?
--at home,
--on the road, everywhere...
--BUT especially here – AT CHURCH...

(personal testimony of God convicting me of lacking gentleness/respect in dealing with people online and how repentance brought fruitful interaction with non-believers)

--God's plan for eternity involves us
stepping up to the plate
and being the people He calls us to be...
...FOR HIS NAMES SAKE.

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**GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST
– IN UNITY**

**IS THE KEY TO:
GROWING TOGETHER IN CHRIST
– IN MATURITY**

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...to be continued.....