

Ephesians 4 (Conrad Bowman) (February 2006)

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Ephesians 4.

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.

And that refers to the awakening or quickening of your spirit by the Holy Spirit that enlightened you as to the presence and position of the Church and actually brought you into a nearness to that body and then joined you to it. That's the calling to which you have been called.

With all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love.

In the sphere of love, and this is *agape*, which is love of the will, you will to love someone with *agape* love. It's source love. Love that does not look for a response of any kind in order to continue to flow. So with humility – and that's not thinking so much of yourself. And gentleness – that's dealing with someone else in the language and in the manner and a temperament that they can understand. With patience – which means you'll take as long as you have to take in order to communicate with that other person. You'll show forbearance with one another – and that gives you the sphere, the sphere of your operation as Christian – you are to deal patiently with all of those in the Body of Christ, and you are to deal with them because you love them.

You're going to be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

This is a very important point of doctrine. When God the Holy Spirit calls you into the Church, He calls you into the Body, He awakens you – He makes your human spirit in you alive, so that the Spirit of God has a spirit within you with which to communicate. And you accumulate the things you know of God in your spirit. Store them in your mind where they are available for recall. Now, that is the relationship you have to the Spirit. The bond of peace refers to the ground of peace. You together with every other believer, stand before God, in relationship to Him as a child of His, a child of the Father, and you stand there with no action whatsoever being contemplated against you. Every debt, every

claim that sin has made on you has been satisfied, and paid by the death of Christ. So you stand in the relationship of peace with God. That's something we share as believers. Everyone of us stand on that same ground of peace. Peace is the glue that holds us together. That's the bond of peace in the Spirit. We're unified by the Spirit by being put on the ground of peace where every believer shares the same ground.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling.

In other words, when you were called by the Spirit, and you responded by accepting the price that Christ paid for you, and in faith you accepted the gift He offered you, which was salvation and the faith to believe it. So the Spirit takes you from where you are, moves you onto the ground of peace, and then unifies you with one body. Now the body that He unifies you with, in truth is that hundred and twenty Galileans in the Upper Room, who were the first who were baptized by the Spirit. That's the baptism of the Spirit. That's when the Church was formed. So, when you're taken and put into one body, you're put into that same body with that hundred and twenty Galileans in that Upper Room on the first Pentecost. And, you were put in union with them. Just as every believer since then has been put in union with them. That means that we're one, huge single body, the Body of Christ, the Body of believers. So, there is one body, which is the Body of Christ still on earth, the Bride of Christ, there's one Spirit, and that's the Holy Spirit – "just as also you were called in one hope of your calling." And, we all share the same hope. Because we're in Christ, we have one hope. What that hope is – the hope of His glorious appearing – his blessed appearing. We're looking forward to the coming of Christ to claim us as His own. To take us in the Rapture of the Church, which is the end of this Age, to take us into the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. That's the destination of that one calling. There's one Lord, and one faith, and one baptism. And the one baptism is that singular baptism into the Body of Christ, that those hundred and twenty Galileans experienced when the Spirit descended on them on the first Pentecost. That is the one baptism, and we all share in that one baptism. He takes us there the moment we believe. There's one Lord, and that's the Lord Jesus. There's one faith, and that's the faith of the Father that's a gift to you, "not of works, lest any man should boast, but by grace that we are saved by faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God." So, there's one faith, and that's the Father's faith given us, there's one Lord, that's the Lord Jesus, and there's one baptism, and that's the baptism of the Spirit.

There's one God and Father of all [and that's the Father] who is over all and through all and in all. [because we're all related to Him]. But to each one of us ["but" introduces a contrast – where we were talking in the previous verses about what we all share in common, now the "but" introduces a contrast]. To each of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. [Each one of us have received a gift from God, and that gift is the gift of service]. Therefore it says [now here's God's individual work in us] Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE TO HIMSELF A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN."

That verse refers to this. When Christ went into the grave, crucified, buried, into the grave He went. There in the grave He announced to those who were in the Sheol, He announced His victory over sin, over the sin nature, and over death. And that grave hosts of captives, that's all the Old Testament saints, that were held, as He told the thief, in Paradise – which is the same as Abrahams Bosom – He held them all captive. He took them captive to Himself. When He was resurrected, He took them out of the grave with Him. They were seen by many on earth. And then when He ascended on the fortieth day – ten days before Pentecost – when He ascended on the fortieth day, he took that host that had been held captive in the grave – they were captive to Himself – He led them to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb with Him. When He went, they went. That's where the Old Testament saints are. They're not there as the Bride of Christ. They're there as the friends of the Groom.

Now this expression [in verse 9], "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is He Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.

And that speaks of the ascension of Christ. The same Christ that went to the cross, and died as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. That same Christ, who was the Lamb of God of Israel, became our Savior and the Savior of the entire world. He came and presented Himself – when He did in His earthly ministry – and that's what the Gospels are all about – He came and presented Himself in the Gospels as the eternal Son of God. As the Only Begotten Son of God. He presented Himself to Israel as Messiah, the Promised One, the Redeemer, the Kinsman Redeemer who was authorized according to Law to pay the debt – the sin debt – of all of Israel – those who could not pay their own debt.

So, He came in that regard to present Himself first to Israel, because He came first to His own. At that point, He told those people as He walked among them, that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. And that's exactly what He meant. The Kingdom of Heaven is where the King is. The King at that time was walking among them. So the Kingdom of Heaven was right there. The question is often asked, if they had accepted Him as King, would He have established the Kingdom at that time? Well, it's a moot issue. They didn't accept Him as King. They wanted to have a king who would come in power. And reign. And deliver them. And deliver them to a perfect kingdom over which He ruled, and over which they ruled. They were looking for a different king than He presented Himself as. He was presenting Himself with humility, and gentleness, and patience, and forbearance, and love. That's not what they wanted. What they wanted was a strong-armed king. So, they rejected Him as the King He was. Therefore, He was crucified, and they abandoned Him to that. The Law demanded that He be crucified as the perfect sacrifice. Until the perfect sacrifice was made, the Law would still stay in effect. Once that perfect sacrifice was made, the sinless One, crucified for the sins of the many, then the Law was satisfied. It had no further claim to make on any man.

So Christ comes, and presents Himself as Israel's Messiah. They rejected that. And, in rejecting that, they rejected their King. He was driven outside the camp, and outside the camp of Israel He was slain. He was crucified. Now, when He was crucified, He then was placed into the grave. He descended, in His soul and in His Spirit, into the grave. And, in the grave, He addressed those in Abraham's Bosom – the Old Testament saints that were waiting for Him – He announced His victory over sin and over death. And, He led them captive to Himself and took them with Him out of the grave. And Abraham's Bosom now exists no more. It's empty. They've all been taken to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

When we die, or when we reach the end of this Age, we will be resurrected. Or, we who are alive at the end of it, will be translated at the Rapture of the Church. The dead in Christ will arise, we who are alive will be caught up together with them in the air, Christ will be descending from the Marriage Supper to claim His Bride, and He'll take His Bride back to the Marriage Supper. After that event, the events of the Tribulation Period and great distress are going to follow here on earth for all those that are left here. Then the Marriage Supper is taking place in Heaven. He led those Old Testament saints who were believers – He led those with Him at that particular time, and they're there also. Now, He ascended in order to occupy His rightful throne. It's important to know that the Church, who

is in union with Christ now, will still be in union with Christ then as His Bride. Realize that the Marriage, wherever He is, they will be also.

Now, after that takes place, after that ascension takes place, and the descent of the Spirit on Pentecost,

He gave some as apostles [some among men He gave as apostles], and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastor - teachers, for the specific purpose of the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the Body of Christ.

Now here's the duty and responsibility that gifted men have toward the Body of Christ. And, it doesn't appear that there were any who were not gifted. All were gifted. They were gifted for the equipping of the saints. Those who were apostles, and we know who they were because they're named for us. Paul was the great apostle to the Gentiles, the Gentile Church. Peter was the great apostle to the Jews who were going to be drawn into the Church. And then the other apostles were all sent to the House of Israel. So, the House of Israel had these eleven apostles, and the Gentiles, the rest of the Gentile nations, had a singular apostle, and that was the Apostle Paul. Now, when you look at the work of the apostles, their duty, once He had ascended, and the Spirit had come – hundred and twenty Galileans in the Upper Room, included a lot of the apostles that were there also – those who were gifted as disciples of His, and were sent to the House of Israel, were also inducted into the Church through belief and the gift of faith, and they were gifted as apostles. Not all of the hundred and twenty, but the ones that were named, were gifted as apostles to the Church, and that included Peter. Now, their job as apostles, was to identify the Word of God for those that they taught and over whom they were responsible is under shepherds of Christ. So, the apostles first duty, was to pass the Word of God, which had not been written down, on to that early first generation Church. You have James involved with that. We studied the Book of James. And James' letter. And it was written to Jewish believers, or Jews, who were considering the Gospel. And James was cautioning them that the belief system that they were under in the past, was a system under the Law. And that now, as James said, you got new faith. The faith you have now is a gift of God. And that faith has to have new works to go along with it. And the works are going to be different than the works under the Law. So, don't think you can go back to your home, or your home countries, your home organizations, and take up at the Synagogue with the same things and practices you did before. New faith has to have new works. And, faith without

works is non-productive. "Dead" is the word that's used in the King James, but it means non-productive. So, the faith they had now as believers has to be met with new works. The works of believers, and here're the works. Faith, diligence, preserving the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. Because there's one body, one spirit, just as you were called and won over to your calling. We have one Lord, and one faith, and one baptism. That's the sphere in which the new works have to come with the new faith.

Now, the apostles, and the evangelists, and pastors, and teachers, and prophets are to work for the equipping of the saints to do the work of service to the building up of the Body of Christ. To aim to the maturing – building up means to lead one to maturity. So, all these gifts were given so that when those gifts were performed within the early Church for that first generation, they would lead those people to maturity in the Body of Christ. This was really important before the Canon of Scripture was put together, and that follows much later. Remember, at this time, all the letters that we're so familiar with as the New Testament were not put together yet. Now, as a matter of fact, the Gospel of John wasn't even written. It wouldn't be written for thirty years after this thing was written. Now,

The equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the Body of Christ, until we all attain [or come] to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,

The purpose of this all, as we grow up, is that we might know Him. That we might know Him. A great book written by a Covenant theologian, but a great book, is *Knowing God*, by J.R. Packer. Marvelous book. The theology is different than we would teach, but the knowledge of God, that's held by him – he's got as great touch on that. Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to a measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. Eventually, that's where our knowledge is going to take us. It's going to take us to the fullness of Christ. That's going to require our translation to heaven. It's going to require our being claimed by Christ here, and taken out of this earth and taken to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. An, in union with Him, we'll "know as we are known."

Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result [of growth, as a result of growth], we are no longer to be children, tossed here

and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine,
by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.

Now, get a grip on what this is saying. Because it says, through growth, and our doctrinal instruction, and our understanding, we should become more and more secure in what we believe, and less able to be pulled one way or the other, by men who are simply crafty in the way they present their schemes. Not led astray, in other words.

but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects
into Him who is the head, even Christ.

So, the purpose of every day, and every exchange we have with one another as believers, is so that the other person may be led into a more full relationship with Christ and in maturity with regard – more mature – in meeting of life's dilemmas.

from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by
that which works every joint, according to the proper working of
each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the
building up of itself in love.

Now notice that each time an operation is spoken of where we're serving one another, or where we're applying our gift for the benefit of one another, that small word "in love" keeps coming up. It's in the sphere of love. Everything we do, we do because we love one another. That's the mark of the Christian, as Francis Schafer said. The mark of the Christian at the end of the twentieth century was "love one another." Everything else could be faked. But love of one another cannot.

This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer as the Gentiles also walk, in the emptiness [futility is emptiness] in the emptiness of their mind [you don't walk in the emptiness of mind like the Gentiles do, but you walk in the fullness of mind that comes from knowledge of Christ] being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart.

Now, you remember that the word *kardia* – which translates “heart,” meant the upper organs of the body. And to the Greek, that meant the center of their thought process. So, whenever you run across the word “heart,” to get the sense of it, you’d have to substitute the English word “mind.” When they said that their hearts were hardened, it’s talking about hard-headness. Their minds were closed to other ideas. And, that closed mindedness meant that doctrinal things couldn’t get to them. Remember, it’s from Spirit to spirit, that we’re instructed by God. The Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirit in order to teach us the things that God’s wants us to know of Him. And, that spiritualness, that spiritual instruction then, is what feeds us. It’s different from soulishness. The soul of man is that part of man with which he accumulates and understands things within the human realm. The spirit of man is that capacity within man to accumulate information about spiritual things. His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, witnesses with our spirit. The outlet for that, is the action of the mind. The reaction of your mind is the way we express that. The soul feeds on soulish things, or things that make us feel good, or things that stimulate us physically or mentally. Those things are soulish things. Now, Scripture says the natural man receiveth not the things of God, neither can he know them, for they’re spiritually discerned. For the word “natural” there is “soulish.” The soulish man receives not the things of God. Neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned. What that says is, man in his natural state, in his human state, can understand human phenomena, but he can’t understand spiritual phenomena. That requires a capacity that he doesn’t have as a natural man. It has to be made alive in him again. That’s what regeneration is all about. What is regenerated in you is your spiritual life. Adam was born with a spirit, and a soul, and a body which was created for him. When he sinned, he died spiritually, and his spirit ceased to be functioning. May even have been removed. But, some people say it was taken out, some people say it just didn’t work anymore. Whichever, the net result is the same. He is spiritually dead. He has no functioning spirit anymore – ever. Well, that’s man in his fallen state. Now, when you come to Christ, and accept Christ as your personal Savior, you are regenerated. “Reborn” is the term that’s used right now. “Born again.” Well, what’s born again in you is that spirit. You are spiritually made alive, and that spirit within you then is that enablement you have to learn the things of God and to serve Him. It’s that element within you with which the Holy Spirit communicates. Now,

being darkened in your understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that’s in you, because of the hardness of their heart.

That's verse 18 of chapter 4. And it's talking about Gentiles, but it's talking about natural unbelievers

And they, having become callous [what's happening now, the hardness of your mind – that hard-headedness that keeps rejecting], have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

That describes the unbeliever who is in a hard-hearted state, a hard conscience state of being, who's from the practice of giving himself over to impurity and greediness.

But you did not learn Christ in this way.

Here's the contrast, because "but" introduces a contrast in verse 20. You didn't learn Christ by being greedy. Because when you look at believers, and you see them serving one another, you should realize that this is no way to make a living. This is the way to serve God. Greediness was not involved in it. Now you turn on a TV and you look at channel after channel of pastor or preacher on television, and the appeals for funds, and the fine lifestyles that they lead, and you get an idea very quickly that those men were motivated by greediness. Now, what does this say about the person that's motivated by greediness rather than by serving the Body of Christ and leading them on to maturity to be like Christ.

They, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

Now, regardless of how good the words sound, that greedy chasing after money gives you a clue that these people are not His at all. They're charlatans.

Because you didn't learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as the truth is in Jesus [for this purpose, "that" introduces purpose, in purpose], that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit.

Now you go back to those people that are chasing after a better lifestyle and greediness and money, and you put this reference down, you put this matrix

down, in the former manner of life for each one of us – and that former manner of life means before we became believers – you lay aside the old self. In coming out, when Christ met you, and the Spirit took you and put you on the ground of peace, the first thing you encountered was your old self, and you lay that aside. Because your old self was looking to – was looking for ways to satisfy itself. The new self, which you are, is learning from the Holy Spirit. In love, in the sphere of love. And in the sphere of love, you don't have anything on your mind but serving the Body of Christ. You're in love. When you fell in love with the person you married, or the person you intend to marry, the only thing you could think about was making them happy. Now you enjoy being with them. You adored being with them. You longed to be with them. But a whole lot of your thought processes were dedicated to what it would take to make her or him happy. That's not the way you thought as an unbeliever. As an unbeliever, you thought how can I make me happy. So, here in verse 21 and 22, we have a comparison.

If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as the truth is in Jesus, that in reference to your former self and manner of life, you lay aside your old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

So, your human spirit within you, is going to be renewed. New life has been breathed into you. You've been reborn, and your mind now is going to be renewed. In fact, you're to

Put on the new self [that's the new creation which you are], which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness [which is *hagios* – set apart, holiness, set-apartness] in truth.

In other words, everything you are as a believer is based on truth. Because God is truth, and you've taken on His character.

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, **SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE** of you **WITH HIS NEIGHBOR** [who's his neighbor?], for we are members of one another. [So we're going to be truthful with one another]. **BE ANGRY** that's Ok, be presently angry], **AND** yet **DO NOT SIN** [or stop sinning. It's alright to be angry, to be stirred up against what you used to be]; do not let the sun go down on your anger [in other words, direct your anger towards something, but

don't stay angry at the end of the day], and do not give the devil an opportunity [and anger does that]. Let him who steals no longer steal; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good.

In 2nd Thessalonians 4:11, it says,

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life. Attend to your own business, work with your own hands, so that you might live at peace with all men.

And that description of what the Christian life is all about. It's pretty simple. But that description of what the Christian is all about is repeated for us in several places in the New Testament. And it's simple, and it's plain, but it describes the attitude of patience and forbearance that the New Testament believer is supposed to have towards those around him.

Let him who steals [as an unbeliever] steal no more [as a believer]; but in contrast let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he might have something to share with him who has need.

That's exactly the same thing that Paul told the Thessalonians.

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth.

that's control of the tongue. Very, very difficult. A habit of profanity is a difficult habit to break. Now, Paul is going to say in other places, in 1st and 2nd Timothy for instance, he said that the leader among us has to be a man who thinks soberly. A man in whom his thought processes is directed to serious and sober things. Profanity takes you away from that. Bad jokes take you away from that. You don't want to be somebody that's marked as being facetious. Childish. You want to be known as somebody who has a mature outlook on life. So,

Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth; but only such a word as is good for edification [is building up – for building up the other person] according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.

And grace is like balm. And they give grace, and that's a word that calms other people whose emotions are being stirred up. It just calms them down.

Do not or stop grieving the Holy Spirit of God.

The word "do not" really means "stop." It's an imperative command.

Stop grieving the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

And that word "sealed," the sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit, is very important. Because, what it says is, you were claimed by God as His own. And He doesn't wait until He comes to get you and takes you out of this world to make you His own, and seal you in that relationship. He does that by means of the Holy Spirit who He's given you. He has deposited Himself inside you by putting in you the indwelling Holy Spirit. That's what God the Father has done for you. And He sealed you unto the day of redemption. So from now until the very moment He comes and claims you physically as His own, you're His.

Let all bitterness therefore and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

And malice is ill-will or ill thoughts toward another person. Bitterness and anger is harboring old thoughts for old deeds beyond the moment that you can turn them loose. That's what that is. You want to turn bitterness loose. You want to turn wrath loose. You want to turn anger loose. You want to turn it, you want to let go of it, so that it can move away from you and God can move you away from it. And clamor, and slander, be put away from you, along with all malice. In contrast to that, be kind to one another. Tenderhearted. Forgiving each other just as God in Christ is also forgiven you. How's it possible that a believer can harbor ill-will against another believer? It just can't be done. Not and maintain the character of Christ. You can't do it. You can't harbor hate for another believer, as long as you're being directed by the Spirit of God. It's just not possible to do that. Because the Spirit holds no ill-will, so it's not possible for you to do so either, and claim to be led by the Spirit.

That's chapter 4, and we'll close it with this. Thank you so very much.

[This recording was transcribed on a tape recorder, and transmitted to a digital format. The earlier recordings, of which this is one, were made on a tape recorder. Some are more audible than others].