

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes: Ephesians 4**

*"Living As Children Of Light"*

7/17/13

**SUMMARY**

Beginning with this chapter and proceeding through the rest of the epistle, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. Having described earlier how Jesus attained unity between Jew and Gentile through His death on the cross, Paul now pleads with them to **"walk in unity"**. With humility, gentleness, longsuffering, forbearance and love, they should be diligent to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The unity of the Spirit is then defined as consisting of one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God (1-6).

Perhaps as motivation, Paul reminds them of the gracious gifts Christ gave His church following His ascension to heaven. Such gifts included the offices of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, which are designed to equip the saints for ministry and bring the body of Christ to maturity. In this way, it should not be misled by false doctrine, but instead by speaking the truth in love should grow in Christ as each member does it share (7-16).

The last half of this chapter addresses the need to **"walk in purity"**. Contrasting how they once walked as Gentiles in licentiousness and greediness, they are reminded of the truth which is in Jesus. This truth calls upon them to put off the old man with its deceitful lusts, to be renewed in the spirit of their mind, and to put on the new man that is created in righteousness and holiness. Therefore they are called upon to put away lying, anger, theft, and all forms of evil speaking, lest they grieve the Holy Spirit by whom they were sealed for the day of redemption. Instead, they are to speak with truth and grace, work hard to help those in need, and be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving just as God has forgiven them in Christ (17-32).

**I. A CALL TO WALK IN UNITY (1-16)**

**A. PRESERVING THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT (1-7)**

**EPHESIANS 4:1, 2**

God has chosen us to be Christ's representatives on earth. In light of this truth, Paul challenges us to live lives worthy of the calling we have received—the awesome privilege of being called Christ's very own. This includes being humble, gentle, patient, understanding, and peaceful. People are watching your life. Can they see Christ in you? How well are you doing as his representative?

"We are all one body," says Paul. Unity does not just happen; we have to work at it. Often differences among people can lead to division, but this should not be true in the church. Instead of concentrating on what divides us, we should remember what unites us: *one* body, *one* Spirit, *one* future, *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* God! Have you learned to appreciate people who are different from you? Can you see how their differing gifts and viewpoints can help the church as it does God's work? Learn to enjoy the way we members of Christ's body complement one another. (See 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13 for more on this thought.)

## EPHESIANS 4:2

No one is ever going to be perfect here on earth, so we must accept and love other Christians in spite of their faults. When we see faults in fellow believers, we should be patient and gentle. Is there someone whose actions or personality really annoys you? Rather than dwelling on that person's weaknesses or looking for faults, pray for him or her. Then do even more—spend time together and see if you can learn to like him or her.

## EPHESIANS 4:3

To build unity is one of the Holy Spirit's important roles. He leads, but we have to be willing to be led and to do our part to keep the peace. We do that by focusing on God, not on ourselves.

## EPHESIANS 4:4-5

All believers in Christ belong to one body; all are united under one head, Christ himself (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). Each believer has God-given abilities that can strengthen the whole body. 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.

## EPHESIANS 4:6

God is "over all"—this shows his overruling care (transcendence). He is "in us all" and "living through us all"—this shows his active presence in the world and in the lives of believers (immanence). Any view of God that violates either his transcendence or his immanence does not paint a true picture of God.

## B. EDIFYING THE BODY OF CHRIST (8-16)

### EPHESIANS 4:8

In Psalm 68:18, God is pictured as a conqueror marching to the gates and taking tribute from the fallen city. Paul uses that picture to teach that Christ, in his crucifixion and resurrection, was victorious over Satan. When Christ ascended to heaven, he gave gifts to the church, some of which Paul discusses in 4:11-13.

### EPHESIANS 4:9

The "lowly world" may be (1) the earth itself (lowly by comparison to heaven), (2) the grave, or (3) Hades (many believe Hades is the resting place of souls between death and resurrection). However we understand it, Christ is Lord of the whole universe, past, present, and future. Nothing or no one is hidden from him. The Lord of all came to earth and faced death to rescue all people. No one is beyond his reach.

### EPHESIANS 4:11, 12

Our oneness in Christ does not destroy our individuality. The Holy Spirit has given each Christian special gifts for building up the church. Now that we have these gifts, it is crucial to use them. Are you spiritually mature, exercising the gifts God has given you? If you know what your gifts are, look for opportunities to serve. If you don't know, ask God to show you, perhaps with the help of your minister or Christian friends. Then, as you begin to recognize your special area of service, use your gifts to strengthen and encourage the church.

### EPHESIANS 4:12, 13

God has given his church an enormous responsibility—to make disciples in every nation (Matthew 28:18-20). This involves preaching, teaching, healing, nurturing, giving, administering, building, and many

other tasks. If we had to fulfill this command as individuals, we might as well give up without trying—it would be impossible. But God calls us as members of his body. Some of us can do one task; some can do another. Together we can obey God more fully than any of us could alone. It is a human tendency to overestimate what we can do by ourselves and to underestimate what we can do as a group. But as the body of Christ, we can accomplish more together than we would dream possible working by ourselves. Working together, the church can express the fullness of Christ (see the note on 3:19).

#### EPHESIANS 4:14-16

Christ is the truth (John 14:6), and the Holy Spirit, who guides the church, is the Spirit of truth (John 16:13). Satan, by contrast, is the father of lies (John 8:44). As followers of Christ, we must be committed to the truth. This means both that our words should be honest and that our actions should reflect Christ's integrity. Holding to the truth in love is not always easy, convenient, or pleasant, but it is necessary if the church is going to do Christ's work in the world.

#### EPHESIANS 4:15, 16

Some Christians fear that any mistake will destroy their witness for the Lord. They see their own weaknesses, and they know that many non-Christians seem to have stronger character than they do. How can we grow up into Christ? The answer is that Christ forms us into a body—into a group of individuals who are united in their purpose and in their love for one another and for the Lord. If an individual stumbles, the rest of the group is there to pick that person up and help him or her walk with God again. If a person sins, he or she can find restoration through the church (Galatians 6:1) even as the rest of the body continues to witness to God's truth. As part of Christ's body, do you reflect part of Christ's character and carry out your special role in his work?

## **II. A CALL TO WALK IN PURITY (17-32)**

### **A. NOT AS THE GENTILES WALK (17-19)**

#### EPHESIANS 4:17

The natural tendency of human beings is to think their way away from God—leaving them “hopelessly confused.” Intellectual pride, rationalizations, and excuses all keep people from God. Don't be surprised if people can't grasp the Good News. The Good News will seem foolish to those who forsake faith and rely on their own understanding.

### **B. BUT AS LEARNED FROM CHRIST (20-32)**

#### EPHESIANS 4:17-24

People should be able to see a difference between Christians and non-Christians because of the way Christians live. We are to live full of light (5:8). Paul told the Ephesians to leave behind the old life of sin, since they were followers of Christ. Living the Christian life is a process. Although we have a new nature, we don't automatically think all good thoughts and express all right attitudes when we become new people in Christ. But if we keep listening to God, we will be changing all the time. As you look back over last year, do you see a process of change for the better in your thoughts, attitudes, and actions? Although change may be slow, it comes as you trust God to change you

#### EPHESIANS 4:22-24

Our old way of life before we believed in Christ is completely in the past. We should put it behind us like old clothes to be thrown away. When we decide to accept Christ's gift of salvation (2:8-10), it is

both a onetime decision, as well as a daily conscious commitment. We are not to be driven by desire and impulse. We must put on the new nature, head in the new direction, and have the new way of thinking that the Holy Spirit gives.

**EPHESIANS 4:25**

Lying to each other disrupts unity by creating conflicts and destroying trust. It tears down relationships and leads to open warfare in a church.

**EPHESIANS 4:26, 27**

The Bible doesn't tell us that we shouldn't feel angry, but it points out that it is important to handle our anger properly. If vented thoughtlessly, anger can hurt others and destroy relationships. If bottled up inside, it can cause us to become bitter and destroy us from within. Paul tells us to deal with our anger immediately in a way that builds relationships rather than destroys them. If we nurse our anger, we will give Satan an opportunity to divide us. Are you angry with someone right now? What can you do to resolve your differences? Don't let the day end before you begin to work on mending your relationship.

**EPHESIANS 4:28-32**

We can bring sorrow to the Holy Spirit by the way we live. Paul warns us against unwholesome language, bitterness, improper use of anger, harsh words, slander, and bad attitudes toward others. Instead of acting that way, we should be forgiving, just as God has forgiven us. Are you bringing sorrow or pleasing God with your attitudes and actions? Act in love toward your brothers and sisters in Christ, just as God acted in love by sending his Son to die for your sins.

**EPHESIANS 4:32**

This is Christ's law of forgiveness as taught in the Gospels (Matthew 6:14, 15; 18:35; Mark 11:25). We also see it in the Lord's Prayer—"Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us." God forgives us, not because we forgive others, but solely because of his great mercy. As we come to understand his mercy, however, we will want to be like him. Having received forgiveness, we will pass it on to others. Those who are unwilling to forgive have not become one with Christ, who was willing to forgive even those who crucified him (Luke 23:34).

<b>The Oneness of All Believers</b>	
<b>Believers are one in</b>	<b>Our unity is experienced in:</b>
Body	The fellowship of believers—the church
Spirit	The Holy Spirit, who activates the fellowship
Hope	That glorious future to which we are all called
Lord	Christ, to whom we all belong
Faith	Our singular commitment to Christ
Baptism	Baptism—the sign of entry into the church
God	God, who is our Father who keeps us for eternity
Too often believers are separated because of minor differences in doctrine. But Paul here shows those areas where Christians must agree to attain true unity. When believers have this unity of spirit, petty differences should never be allowed to dissolve that unity.	

