

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at [pastorpat@waukeshabile.org](mailto:pastorpat@waukeshabile.org).

**Date:** October 25, 2009

**Title:** The Consequence of an Overflowing Love: Unity - Part 2

**Text:** Ephesians 4:7-16 (vv. 1-6)

**Theme:** God has given to His Church gifted men who will be used by Him to facilitate growth in Christ-likeness that is seen by inter-body unity.

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in the Storyline of the Bible. She is determined by design to have a God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching focused on personal discipleship through intentional and systematic instruction; a Global-impacting mission that resolves to be a church planting church; and a Grace-based fellowship where disciples are invited to live under a reigning grace characterized by a Gospel-driven sanctification that celebrates a divine monergism to the Christian life.

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**Introduction:**

Most of us when buying anything new start use the item long before we read the instructions. Because we fail to read the instructions we limit the ability of the item purchased, and when things go wrong (which is a natural tendency with things) we do not know how to correct it until and unless we read the instruction manual. Recently I purchased a digital camera. It has more gadgetry than I care to know, but for me to use the camera to its fullest potential, I will have to read the manual.

We often hear what the church is to be like, but it does not always appear to live up to its ability. Part of the problem is that we do not read the instruction manual. In our present passage (4:7-16) Paul tells us how the church is to work. If we are not willing to read the instruction manual and to follow its counsel, then we have no one to blame for dysfunction than ourselves. People who always complain about the church are those who are not willing to follow the pattern prescribed by God for the church, His body.

Our present study comes from the larger paragraph of 4:1-16. In 4:1-6 we noted Paul's call to be what we are, one body universal. Because the church is His body, it only stands to reason that the body will look like the head. The descriptive noted in verses 2 and 3 are descriptions of Christ. Verses 4-6 show the reasonableness of the body's unity because there is only one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all. Here Paul sets forth the means of maintaining and guarding the unity, the church local. It is hard for me to imagine that Paul's thoughts are always universal without any direct or immediate application to the church local. The gifting of His people for the work of the ministry of unifying love is empty apart from the church local. It has meaning and value, but it lacks a depth and crispness that can only come when forged in the crucible of the church local.

Here we will note God's pattern for the maintaining and guarding of the unity secured by His person and work.

**The Storyline:**

"Let us remind ourselves that the central thought of the letter is that Jesus has brought to a disunited world the way to unity. This way is through faith in him and it is the Church's task to proclaim this message to all the world."<sup>1</sup>

**The Problem:**

I do not believe the problem we face in our Western culture is unique to us. The entire world is self-absorbed and autocratic. Yet it is our Western culture, with the quest for independence and which values the rights of the individual above that of the community, our depravity finds stimulation and exaggeration. This self-serving autonomy finds expression in the Christian life. We often fail to see the design of God within the Trinity and thus the home, the workplace, the government and the

church. We are trying to go it alone. Yet God has established the means for the church to be overflowing with love. Anything other than what God has ordered tends toward confusion.

I do not believe the Christians of Ephesus were much different than us. “[Paul] seems to be aware of disrespect for authority in the church, and counters by describing Jesus Christ as an omnipotent king who appoints in person some ministers to be respected by all his servants.”<sup>2</sup>

What I would stress is that you cannot have 4:1-6 without 4:7-16. The two are inseparably linked. It is no different than the “therefore” of 4:1 which ties this thought with the larger truth of Ephesians 1-3. To remove verses 1-6 from verses 7-16 is to commit an injustice against the text of Scripture.

What we find in our text are **the means God established to celebrate and guard the unity that the cross secured.**

### **Questions:**

1. What are verses 7-13 addressing?
2. Through what channel is this unity to be accomplished?
3. In looking at verse seven what is the grace given that all enjoy?
4. Should we consider the “grace” and “gift” as meaning the same thing?
5. What is the “measure of the gift of Christ”?
6. What does v.7 mean?
7. What idea is being expressed in v.8?
8. What is verse 11 doing?
9. What are the gifts that were given?
10. Do these gifts still survive in today’s church?
11. How can we tell which ones have survived?
12. Is the gift of Pastor/Teacher one, or are they two distinct gifts but inseparable in the Pastoral office? Why were the gifts given?
13. How is a perfected body manifested?
14. Are the three elements listed in v.12 three distinct purposes or out workings of each other?
15. Do the verses suggest a time of completion?
16. Notice the phrase, “unto a perfect man” and “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”. Are these statements in parallel?
17. So what is a perfect saint?
18. What does it mean to be Christ-like?
19. What is vv.14-16 describing?
20. What are those marks?
21. If these are the marks of a perfect saint, then why is the church not perfected?
22. How do we accomplish both?
23. Why does Paul place this paragraph in the flow of his letter?
24. What is Paul hoping for?
25. Can the church be visibly one apart from the pattern set forth by God?
26. What should the elders of a fellowship be “doing”?
27. What should the saints be “doing”?
28. What structures or attitudes need to change within this local church?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

**To Know:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to know the means God has appointed to celebrate and maintain unity with His body, the church.

**To Choose:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose to follow the means God has appointed.

**To Feel:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in the wisdom of God for the celebration and maintaining of unity with His body, the church.

**Outline:**

I. The call to be what we are: one body universal (vv.1-6).

I. The means to be what we are: the church local (vv. 7-16).

In 4:7-16, Paul works from the broad principle (4:1-6) to its immediate application. The entire purpose of God **to** the church and **through** the church and **for** the church is toward a stability and maturity that produces unity. When a local fellowship lacks visible unity it is because of theological error. And it is not always who is right and who is wrong but rather who will or will not honor the pattern set forth by God for the celebrating and guarding of biblical unity. God gave the Holy Spirit in general and individual gifting in particular for the purpose of strengthening the parts for the purpose of producing unity. This is what the one new man, the household of God, is to look like.

There is a “you” in Paul’s thoughts, but the “you” must be placed in the “we” of the Church. Individualism and the elevation of the individual are contrary to the thoughts of Paul. The “saint, son and daughter” are never separated from the “family.” This becomes apparent in 5:22-6:9.

A. The provision for unity (vv. 7-11)

“The gifts that Jesus gives are part of the great story of what he has achieved.”<sup>3</sup>

1. The provision is inclusive (v.7)

Christ has provided a gift, which is sufficient for each individual, and each of the parts contribute to and is for the unity of the body. God does not give the gift of bitterness or crankiness or negativity. Those are works of the flesh and do not contribute to body unity or reflect a unifying love.

Listen to how Peter describes this idea in 1 Peter 4:7-11.

<sup>7</sup> “The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer. <sup>8</sup> Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> Be hospitable to one another without complaint. <sup>10</sup> **As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.** <sup>11</sup> Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Pet. 4:7-11).

I do not deny the oneness of the body universal, but again I never struggle with my place in the body universal because it has no tangible impact on me. If we dismiss all of Paul's language to the church universal, then we remove the "bite" from it. What I struggle with is my place in the body local and within the larger community of believers within my city, my county, my region, and my state. I would encourage you to stop thinking for just a moment about how you might impact the world and start thinking about how you might use your gift to impact your local church. It is first in the church and then to the world. Here is something else I find of interest: First Corinthians 12-14 compliment the thought contained here and elsewhere in the New Testament in so far that each individual has a gift from God that is to be celebrated. Yet within this "charismatic community" there was notable confusion. Paul reminds his audience in Corinth that this "chaos" is not what God designed (1 Cor. 14:33).

"for God is not [a God] of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 14:33).

"Not of confusion (ou--katastasias). God is not a God of disorder, but of peace. We need this reminder today. As in all the churches of the saints, orderly reverence is a mark of the churches. This is a proper conclusion of his argument as in 1Co 11:16."<sup>4</sup>

Yet how does the working of that individual gifting show itself in the local body so that there is order and not confusion? How do we guard what we have and keep everyone from doing "what is right in their own eyes?" Listen to how this "real time" truth impacts us in this local church. God because of grace gives us gifts so that His love would be manifested in us and through us to those around us. God will show us the means of celebrating and maintaining the unity He secured by the cross in verse 11.

## 2. The provision was prophetic (vv.8-10)

Verse 8 quotes from Psalm 68:18. The context of Psalm 68 seems to be that of war and conquest.

<sup>15</sup> "A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan; A mountain of many peaks is the mountain of Bashan. <sup>16</sup> Why do you look with envy, O mountains with many peaks, At the mountain which God has desired for His abode? Surely the LORD will dwell there forever. <sup>17</sup> The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands; The Lord is among them as at Sinai, in holiness. <sup>18</sup> You have ascended on high, You have led captive Your captives; **You have received gifts among men**, Even among the rebellious also, that the LORD God may dwell there. <sup>19</sup> Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden, The God who is our salvation. Selah. <sup>20</sup> God is to us a God of deliverances; And to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death. <sup>21</sup> Surely God will shatter the head of His enemies, The hairy crown of him who goes on in his guilty deeds" (Ps. 68:15-21).

"This Psalm describes a king's conquering return. Now comes the difference. The Psalm speaks next about the conqueror *receiving* gifts. Paul changes it to read, 'gave gifts to men.'<sup>5</sup>

What idea is being expressed in v. 8? At the ascension of Christ He led from the grave those who were in Abraham's bosom up to the third heaven where God dwells. At that point in time He gave to

those who remained gifts. In a historical context, Jesus at His ascension returns home with the spoils of war those whom He captured through conquest. He then gives to those who remained gifts from the abundance of the spoil.

Verses 9 and 10 explain the Psalmist's quote. This took place when He descended into Hades and led those who were captive up to the third heaven and thus securing for them and all future believers salvation. In so doing He gave to the present believing body 'gifts'. Gifts which announced His triumph and which enabled His church to function.

Prior to the cross Abraham's bosom and the place of torment were separated by a humanly impassable gulf (Luke 16). With the cross event, Jesus took those who were in Abraham's bosom and brought them with Him to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4 [see also "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise"]). God, in Christ has provided gifts for His church to celebrate and maintain unity.

"Here Paul shows how it happens, what God has given to the church to make it happen, and why it matters."<sup>6</sup>

"In 1:23 Christ is filled with God's fullness and Christ fills the church with that fullness. Christ's descent enabled him to gain victory over Satan, sin, and death, followed by his ascent where as conqueror he had the right to bestow gifts to the church."<sup>7</sup>

### 3. The provision is definable (v. 11)

Verses 11-16, with 125 words, make up the seventh of the eight long sentences in Ephesians.

"The central point of this portion is the distribution of gifts to the church which are given to unify the church."<sup>8</sup>

"The main point of certain people having special roles is so that every single Christian, and the church as a whole, may be equipped for their work of service."<sup>9</sup>

- What is verse 11 doing? It is describing the gifts given to those who remained behind.
- What are the gifts that were given? Those of apostle, prophet, evangelist and pastor/teacher. I have stated elsewhere that I believe based on the progression of development within the New Testament canon from Acts through the Pastoral Letters that those who have the gifting of apostle, prophet, evangelist and pastor/teacher all function as elders within local churches whether those churches are singular or plural.

Often there is significant discussion as to whether or not the various functions are still present. I believe these four or five offices are still present in the church because of the reason for their existence in the paragraph. If we do not have apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, or teachers then the result is in jeopardy.

In the early workings of the church the defining and function of these gifts were questioned as noted in the **Didache**, an early church manual written around 100 A.D. There is an element of uncertainty

as to how these gifts functioned within the local church and the larger body of Christ. Yet the purpose of the gifts was for the building up of the body of Christ.

I believe the first three gifts or offices are evangelistic and geared toward the advancing of God's kingdom outwardly through the planting of churches both locally, nationally, and globally.

"It seems then that the main function of an apostle is to establish churches in areas that have not been reached by others. They are God's messengers to open up new territories for Christ. In conclusion, the evangelists would win converts to the faith, the apostles would establish churches, and the prophets would fill in needed revelation for the perfection of the saints."<sup>10</sup>

I believe the gifting or office of pastor/teacher is for the maturing of the saints. The apostles, prophets, and evangelists are geographically short-term (i.e. months or a handful of years) whereas pastors/teachers are long-term (life time investments).

"The noun 'pastor' is used only once by Paul. In the present context the term is best translated as 'pastor,' one who cares for his or her flock as a shepherd cares for his or her sheep."<sup>11</sup> There continues to be discussion as to whether or not the idea of pastor is separated from that of teacher. The conclusion some draw is all pastors should be teachers, but not all teachers are pastors.

Some would argue this refers only to a gift and not the office. If this is the case, then we have those with the gift of shepherding who do not have distinct flocks. Yet the issue of responsibility and culpability is something I wrestle with. As a shepherd I have a responsibility for this flock and I am culpable before God for this flock as do the other elders of this fellowship. Listen carefully to the following verses and consider the gravity in which the office is held.

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

<sup>12</sup>"But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, <sup>13</sup> and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another" (1 Thess. 5:12, 13).

"Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7).

"Obey your leaders, and submit [to them]; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17).

I understand the context of 1 Corinthians 3 to be addressing church leaders and not the individual within the church.

"It is the tragedy of a fruitless life, **of a minister** who built so poorly on the true foundation that his work went up in smoke."<sup>12</sup>

Consider the wording of 1 Peter 5:1-4.

<sup>1</sup> “Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as [your] fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to [the will of] God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; <sup>3</sup> nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. <sup>4</sup> And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (1 Pet. 5:1-4).

Clearly Peter saw elders as under-shepherds of the chief shepherd Jesus Christ. It is the responsibility of those who are pastors/elders to shepherd the flock of God by means of teaching and leading the sheep. The idea that elders do not have the responsibility to “mend nets” and “set what is broken” is unscriptural.

Our human depravity agitated by American autonomy excites some sheep to reject the role of Elder in their life, but I believe this is wrong. I do not believe you are to flutter from church to church or from Bible teacher to Bible teacher. I believe you are to plant yourself in a community of faith and under the protection and direction of elders.

B. The Purpose of the provision (vv. 12-16 [or Reason])

1. The immediate purpose: prepare for a love overflowing (v. 12)

“The word Paul uses for **equipped** is interesting. The word is used in surgery for setting a broken limb or for putting a joint back into its place. In politics it is used for brining together opposing factions so that governments can go on. In the New Testament it is used of mending nets (Mark 1:19), and of disciplining an offender until he is fit to take his place again with the fellowship of the Church (Gal. 6:1). The basic idea of the word is that of putting a thing into the condition in which it ought to be. It is the function of the office-bearers of the Church to see that the members of the Church are so educated, so guided, so cared for, so sought out when they go astray, that they become what they ought to be.”<sup>13</sup>

Friend, this requires that Elders speak the truth in love and that they say the hard thing. Sometimes when becoming aware of a problem it is easier to simply ignore it, but is this right? It is the responsibility of Elders to “equip” the saints. Sometimes this equipping is mending the net and setting a joint out of order. Either way there are aspects of shepherding that are unpleasant.

The purpose of the gifting mentioned in verse 11 is so that the saints might be equipped for the work of the ministry. What is this ministry? It is a ministry of love overflowing. Defining the ministry is secondary to what characterizes the ministry. Remember 1 Corinthians 13:1-3?

<sup>1</sup> “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am

nothing. <sup>3</sup> And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing" (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

**What you do is insignificant compared to why you do it.** If what you do is not the consequence of love overflowing first to God and then for His church, then your labor is nothing but a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

When ministry is marked by love overflowing then the body is built up. What would happen if we got serious about a love overflowing and started to build one another up instead of tearing one another down? We have a tendency to "nuts and bolts" life and over analyze it, but regardless as to what you do never forget as to why it is done.

2. The final goal: the attaining of maturity (v. 13)

This is who we are and this is where we are headed. It is the movement from who we are to where we are headed that is marked by change (and not a little pain). The "real time" outworking of this truth is where we live. The process seeks to move us from childhood to adulthood. A perfect child is still a child and we fully expect the child to move from where they are in their knowledge and behavior to that of adulthood. Those who do not transition from childhood to adulthood in their knowledge and behavior are outside of what is deemed normal progress.

3. The ultimate purpose: growing in unity (vv. 14-16)

To become theologically literate demands that we come prepared to learn each time we approach the Word of God. If we are not intentional in our time with the Word and in our handling of it we will never become theologically literate. To speak the truth in love demands a shift in our thinking. Unfortunately, we are thinking that we are here to be happy, when in reality we are here to be holy. It does not matter if we walk away with a warm fuzzy feeling, what does matter is that we are challenged by the Word of God and make the necessary adjustments in our lives. What does the adult or mature Christian or Community of Faith look like?

a. negatively: avoid instability (v. 14)

"In verse 14 Paul brings together three ideas: babies, a boat being tossed about on a stormy sea, and cunning tricksters gambling with loaded dice."<sup>14</sup> In keeping with the larger passage I referenced this idea in our last study. Continued stability and maturity happens when we plant ourselves inside of local churches and under biblical structures. Neither one takes the place of the priesthood of the believer (which means you have direct and immediate access to the Father), soul liberty (which means you must obey your own conscience) and the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Yet all three of these ideas sit inside of a community of faith and a biblical structure.

"There is only one way to avoid being blown about by the latest religious fashion and to avoid being seduced by the specious arguments of clever men, and that is by continual growth in Christ."<sup>15</sup>

To be perpetually tossed about undermines overall health. What I find interesting is the area where this instability shows itself. It is in the area of doctrine, of words, or ideas. Notice the contrasting picture in verses 15 and 16.

When we separate ourselves from a believing community of faith that affirms a biblical structure we are strongly susceptible to instability and immaturity. We all are prone to wander theologically, but God gave us the immediate and larger community of faith to push us toward stability and maturity. Because of pastoral ethics, I cannot share with you the many times I see aberrant theology in individuals who do not celebrate the unique status of the local church and the biblical structure, but I am amazed how God providentially coordinates where we are in the text with what we are experiencing in the church.

b. positively: establish vitality (vv. 15, 16)

If verse 14 accents thought, then verse 15, 16 note action. It is only as we grow in our understanding of who God is in His person and work that we overflow with the enormity of His love that translates into stability, certainty, and internal strength and growth.

There is a tremendous truth present in this passage. Many who attend church simply stop there. They do not in any notable way seek to serve the body. I do not believe in fruitless Christians, but I do believe you can use your gifting in such a way that is completely self serving and that is tragic.

“The truth of the God of love can’t be commended by loveless speech.”<sup>16</sup>

I find it interesting how the Bible marks growth and how we might mark growth. Are we a growing church? We cannot measure growth by numbers. It is pleasing to grow numerically in every area, but what if the growth takes place without love or is not a result of love overflowing? Then even “if we surrender our bodies to be burned, but do not have love, it profits us nothing.”

You love what you know. Know Him and you will love Him. And to love Him is to love the church, His body. We cannot separate the two.

### **Shepherding the Sheep:** (What’s the NEXT STEP?)

1. Is the exercising of your gift cultivating unity within the body?
2. Are you affirming the means God has appointed for the celebrating and maintaining of unity within the church?
3. You should support the elders in their desire to identify those with distinct gifting for the purpose of kingdom work through church planting.
4. If you find yourself blown hither and yon doctrinally, maybe it is because you have not yet planted yourself into a community of faith and inside of a biblical structure.
5. Let us be encouraged to take the next step and live the gospel.

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- <sup>1</sup> William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 134.
- <sup>2</sup> Markus Barth, *The Anchor Bible, Ephesians 4-6*, 452.
- <sup>3</sup> N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 44, 45.
- <sup>4</sup> A.T. Robertson's Word Pictures on 1 Corinthians 14:33.
- <sup>5</sup> William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 143.
- <sup>6</sup> N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 47.
- <sup>7</sup> Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 537, 538.
- <sup>8</sup> Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 538.
- <sup>9</sup> N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 48.
- <sup>10</sup> Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 542.
- <sup>11</sup> Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 544.
- <sup>12</sup> A.T. Robertson's Word Pictures on 1 Corinthians 3:15.
- <sup>13</sup> William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 149.
- <sup>14</sup> N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 47.
- <sup>15</sup> William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 151.
- <sup>16</sup> N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 48.