

## Bible Study Guide: Week of 5-29-2023

1. Read through the passage below
2. Read my notes and commentary
3. Read the questions at the end and ponder or discuss with others

Pastor Andrew

### Ephesians 4:1-16

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

<sup>7</sup>But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. <sup>8</sup>Therefore it is said, 'When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.'

<sup>9</sup>(When it says, 'He ascended', what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup>He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) <sup>11</sup>The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. <sup>14</sup>We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

**I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.**

Paul was writing this letter to the church at Ephesus from a prison cell. Paul was imprisoned numerous times and wrote Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon from prison. The fact that their founder and pastor was in prison makes Paul's plea all the more personal and desperate when he says, "I beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called." They would have been highly motivated to grant any request Paul made from prison. His status as "prisoner *in* the Lord," however, involves more than physical imprisonment. He is also bound to do the work Christ has called him to do no matter the cost. In vss. 2 and 3 Paul describes the way in which the Ephesians are supposed to live. They are to be humble and gentle, patient, and working hard to love one another and remain unified and peaceful. He underscores the importance of this unity in vss. 4-6, where he uses the word "one" seven times!

**<sup>7</sup>But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. <sup>8</sup>Therefore it is said, 'When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people.'**

**<sup>9</sup>(When it says, 'He ascended', what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? <sup>10</sup>He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.)**

In vss. 8-10 Paul interrupts his own flow of thought. He begins in vs. 7 to discuss the gifts Christ has given through the Spirit. He quotes (sort of) Psalm 68:18, which also mentions gifts being given. He then uses vss. 9-10 to switch focus to another idea from Psalm 68:18—that of Jesus' descent and ascent. The idea seems to be that in his suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension, Christ went as deep and as high as anyone could go in order to "fill all things."

<sup>11</sup>The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. <sup>14</sup>We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup>But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

In vs. 11 he picks up on the theme of gifts introduced in vs. 7, continuing that line of thought. Similar to his list of gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul insists that these gifts are for the good of the whole church; the whole body of Christ. They are intended to lead the church into greater unity, faith, knowledge, and maturity. Evidently there were some among or around the Ephesians who were trying to deceive them and Paul urges the Ephesians to work together to mature beyond those who would trick them or lead them astray.

#### **Discussion/Reflection Questions:**

- 1. What role does the Holy Spirit seem to be playing in this passage?**
- 2. Who or what do you think tries to trick or deceive the church in this day and age?**
- 3. Check out this resource to explore your spiritual gifts further:**

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