

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 4

Ephesians 4:1-16 – The Unified Growth of the Church into Maturity

Ephesians 2:11-Chapter 3 explains that Gentile believers and Israeli believers are now part of one new man. It is a new entity with unity as the main goal. In 4:1-16, Paul is emphatic about living up to this expectation; there must be no division in the church, and both Jews and Gentiles are to serve in this new administration unified by the doctrines of the apostles and prophets.

Ephesians 4:1-16 – Textual Observations

Seven sentences in these 16 verses.

1. I exhort you to live in a manner worthy of the calling.
2. There is one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.
3. The grace was given to each one.
4. It says when He ascended on high, He captured those in captivity, He gave gifts to men.
5. What is this “He ascended?” If not that also He descended.
6. The one who descended himself is also the one who ascended.
7. And He Himself gave the apostles and the prophets and the evangelists and the pastors and teachers.

Ephesians 4:1-10 – Review

Paul is not simply instructing them to live and serve in unity, he also lived it with them. His example demonstrated that it did not matter where they were from, what mattered is who they are in Christ Jesus, their qualifications as elders, and their dedication to the mission.

To walk worthy of the calling by which you were called is to have a life that clearly represents the truth of God in the Gospel. This walk is to be done while keeping in proper godly character:

Thinking of others as more important than yourself and do not thinking too highly of yourself, while remaining tranquil in every circumstance, being slow to anger. Also, bearing with one another, not out of obligation but out of unconditional, self-sacrificial desire and activity that is for the benefit of the other person. While having a sense of urgency for the preservation of spiritual unity of peace, tolerance is then being patient with others as they grow in doctrine or when they make a mistake and offend another believer. Personality conflicts should not divide if all parties are doctrinally unified.

We have a spiritual connection grounded in the truth of the Word of God. It is not a feeling that binds us but the truth. The result of solid, clear, consistent teaching is that all of us in this one body grow into maturity and speak the truth in love.

The “One” section in Ephesians 4:4-6 is emphatic about what is necessary for being unified: one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith (core doctrines of biblical truth), one baptism (spiritual, not water), one God and Father of all (referring to His attributes of sovereignty, transcendence, omnipotence, and omnipresence).

The main point of verses 7-10 is to state that when Jesus Christ ascended, He provided gifts to mankind and especially the church (John 14:16-18). Paul quotes a psalm, then explains that the psalm is Messianic, speaking of Jesus because if one ascends to heaven, he also must descend to the physical realm first.

Ephesians 4:11 – He gave...

Let's examine this sentence once again.

Subject – Verb – Direct Object – Indirect Object. Who/what is the subject in verse 11? He (in context, this is Jesus Christ). What is the verb? Gave. What was given? The apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers. To whom were the gifts given? In verse 11, there is no indirect object; we borrow the indirect object from verse 7 – to each one of us.

Literal Clunky Version –

And He Himself gave, on one hand, the apostles, but on the other hand, the prophets, but on another, the evangelists, but on another, the pastors and teachers.

There are six conjunctions in three forms in this sentence: “καί kai,” “μέν men,” “δέ de.”

“καί kai” is a very standard conjunction. 90% of the time, it is simply “and,” connecting two thoughts together (copulative). However, this can also be a conjunction that annexes two words and makes them essentially equal to one another (epexegetical or explicative).

In this sentence, the “καί kai” can be used in both ways. The first “καί kai” is obviously continuing the thought from the previous sentences, verse 7 is connected to verse 11 in both thought and with the use of the conjunction. When there are specific discussions about understanding a passage, this is the type of evidence needed to demonstrate that thoughts are connected.

The second “καί kai” can be either copulative or explicative. In other words, the final phrase “pastors and teachers” can either be understood to say that both pastors and teachers are separate offices or that pastors are teachers: “the pastors, that is teachers.”

A “μέν men” “δέ de” construction is used to draw a distinction between items in a list. They are not the same; they are not equal. The object that is associated with the “μέν men” is the one that has prominence. The offices that follow the apostles have less authority. Prophets may have similar functions, but the words of a prophet are measured against the words of the apostles. If they disagree, then the prophet cannot be trusted. The words of the apostles are authoritative.

Apostolic Authority

“ἀπόστολος apostolos (ah-pahs'-tah-lahs)” is transliterated. The word is the noun form of “ἀποστέλλω apostellō,” which means to send out (Matthew 10:5; Mark 6:7; Luke 20:19-20; John 1:6, 3:17, 6:29, 17:18, 20:21; Acts 8:14, 9:17, 10:20, 19:21-22; Romans 10:15; Hebrews 1:14).

An apostle (the noun) is “one who is sent out.” If one were to translate this word, it would be “sent one” or “the sent” or “an emissary.” There are uses of this term that do not refer to being one the “official” apostles (2 Corinthians 8:23; Philippians 2:25). Jesus Himself is called the Apostle (Hebrews 3:1)

The technical term “the apostles” is found in Ephesians, four times referring to the ones who have been sent out by Jesus Christ to establish His “ekklesia.” The first time this is used to distinguish “the apostles” from the disciples is in Luke 6:12-16. These men are also called the twelve. During the life of Jesus, these twelve were sent on various missions (Matthew 11:1; Mark 3:14; Mark 6:7). In Luke 10, Jesus also sends out 70 in

pairs to go into the towns and prepare the people for the coming of Jesus, but they are not called apostles. In the Gospels, it is clear that the twelve apostles were specifically chosen for a task. Some did similar tasks, but it was only these twelve that were called apostles.

After Judas betrayed Jesus they were called the eleven (Matthew 28:16; Luke 24:9, 33). In Acts, Matthias was added to the eleven, and once again, they were twelve (Acts 1:26, 6:2; 1 Corinthians 15:5).

It is interesting that Matthias is never called an apostle, and Paul distinguishes himself from the twelve. Likewise, there is some debate that God counted Paul as one of the twelve or if he was the thirteenth apostle. But Jesus Christ's apostles are limited to these twelve or thirteen (Matthew 19:28; Revelation 21:14).

To be recognized as an apostle of Jesus Christ, one had to have several characteristics. Let's read some texts and make some observations:

Acts 1:2-8, 2:43, 5:12, 15:6, 16:4; 1 Corinthians 9:1, 12:28; 2 Corinthians 11:4, 12-15, 12:11-12; Galatians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:5-6; Hebrews 2:1-4; 2 Peter 3:1-2; Jude 17. The apostles then are:

1. Chosen by Jesus Christ Himself
2. Directly witnessed Jesus Christ
 - a. Paul witnessed the risen Jesus Christ
 - b. Paul spent 3 years apart from the apostles being trained by Jesus Christ
3. Sent out on a particular mission
4. Attested by signs, wonders, and miracles
5. Were leaders and decided upon controversial issues being instructed by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit directly, but did not lord it over the others
6. Were authoritative, speaking on behalf of Jesus Christ, and could call upon discipline
7. Were the foundational leaders of the church; what they wrote became our Scripture. To deviate from their instruction is to deviate from God's Word.

Were there others that spoke God's Word? Did miracles? Were sent out by God? Yes, but they are not called the apostles, and they also yielded to the authority of the apostles.

The apostles were given to men (mankind) and especially to the church, the body of Christ. The apostles were used by God to proclaim the message of His truth to the world. When one responded to the message of the gospel in belief, they became part of the body and were also ministered to by the apostles to establish the church.

After their ministry, the church is established having been built upon the doctrines they wrote down, and it is this Bible that is the authority. It sounds very pious to state that Jesus, not the Bible, is the authority. But it was Jesus who gave the apostles as our witnesses so that we would believe and have an objective standard to point to and stand firm.

Because of this standard set in Scripture, the office of apostle (I believe) is closed. Anyone claiming to be an apostle must have the characteristics of an apostle or they must not be believed, and they must be avoided.