

**SERMON: To The Glory of God's Grace- Unity & Diversity & Power in the Church
through Men**

GOOD Morning OIC & Welcome to Father's House

Today, we will continue in the Book of Ephesians, Holy Spirit inspired and written by the Apostle Paul. This is a Letter to the Ephesians, and, after the printing of the Holy Bible, to all churches that are part of Jesus' Bride. Last week we saw how Paul instructed the Ephesians, therefore all Christians; that Christ's love surpasses human understanding and recreates the Inner Man by Holy Spirit. This week we learn how God creates Unity in the Church while using Diversity of Gifts in the people Jesus calls. These Leaders need more power, as God requires more of them, for their offices. So He also empowers them more than other Christians for Leadership. Leaders guide and equip Jesus' Sheep for service in the Church.

Now let us read further in The Book of Ephesians in Chapter 4:

(Ephesians 4.1) *I As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.* Paul reminds his audience, the Ephesians and any other Gentile Christians, that his imprisonment for their sake gives him the right to instruct them on how to live. As we saw in **(Ephesians 3.13)** *....my sufferings for you, which are your glory.* Now, if he stopped at verse #1, it would seem a large or tall order or command, that is, *to live a life worthy of the calling you have received* without further instruction.

But Paul teaches how to do this in **(Ephesians 4.2)** *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.* The original Greek for *completely humble* means more clearly, **lowliness or humility of mind, modesty.** Thus of the synonyms from the Greek for *completely humble* : **lowliness or humility of mind, modesty; I think modesty agrees closest with what Jesus taught.** As also written by the Apostle Paul in **(Philippians 2.3)** *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,*

Whenever I preach about humility I am concerned to avoid what is *false humility* or *self abasement*. This attitude borders on hatred of self. All Modern societies with so much information and deification of both technical machines and human abilities, has many people struggling with *self hate*. The Japanese society also has an even stronger sense of personal worth that is based on not

making mistakes. This encourages self-hatred. Remember Jesus said of the Greatest Commandment in **(Matthew 22.38-39)** *This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: "Love your neighbour **as yourself.**"* Also, in this Letter Paul says in **(Ephesians 5.29)** *After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church –*

Yet, there is something else in **(Ephesians 4.1)** that deserves a second look: *I urge you to live a life worthy of **the calling you have received.*** Paul is not referring to the new career path onto which Jesus may have led newly Born-Again Christians. The Ephesians, as all Born-Again Christians, have already been called and *received **Son-ship from God! Thus, this calling is to become Sons of God!***

We have been called: 1) in **(Romans 1.6)** *to belong to Jesus* ; 2) in **(Romans 1.7)** *to be His holy people*; 3) in **(Romans 9.26)** *"Children of God"* ; and in **(Galatians 4.6-7)** *Sons of God*, " 6 *Because you are **His Sons**, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.'* 7 *So you are no longer a slave, **but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.**"* This is vital to a Christians "**Strategic Self-Importance**" while submitting to modesty in serving others for Jesus name sake! We we are already in Heavenly Realms or Places as in **(Ephesians 1.1)** with one foot on Earth and another in Heaven; a great stretch so to speak. We are here also instructed by Paul in **(Ephesians 4.1)** *to live a life worthy of the calling you have received* and in **(Ephesians 4.2)** *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.* And at the same time be conscious that God is insulted if we think of ourselves as **anything less** than already "**Children of God**" and already "**His Sons.**" This is also**Another Great and Glorious tension.**

Pastor Bruce, how can I balance **modesty** and **confidence that I am a Son of God** so that I can *to live a life worthy of the calling* in **(Ephesians 4.1)**? **Good Question?** Only Jesus, humble and yet, at the same time, Omnipotent God in the Flesh, did this perfectly. But we can follow in His footsteps with CONFIDENCE. Several years ago I read about the term "**Strategic Self Importance**" from a Minister who had struggled with self-abasement. I found it helpful in this tension between humility or modesty, and God's infinite importance in His heart for every one of His Children. God has a plan and strategy for your Life, and you are Important to Him to fulfill it. { I will be teaching this in more detail on Wednesday Nights Bible Study Series: *Finding Your Calling.* }

TAKEAWAY #1

A Christian need not hate himself in order to love and serve others. God is pleased to cause us to mature to be confident that we are “Sons of God!” Jesus showed us the manner to have Confidence in Son-ship yet modesty and humbleness in service. We cannot simply choose to follow His example, we must choose and then pray and ask God to create in us His *Strategic Self-Importance* in our lives. Then we can show the world how Jesus sets us free for true modesty in service to others.

Now we see Paul instructs us in **(Ephesians 4.2)** *bearing with one another in love*. As newly Born-Again Christians I think we all expected Christians, including ourselves, to be **perfect like our Lord**. We soon find out that neither they or we ourselves are anywhere near as perfect as our Savior. All God's Children or Son's are on a vine as the Bible says connected to the Vine, to mature **(John 15.5)** *I am **the vine**; you are **the branches**. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit;*

God has His way of causing Christians who walk with Jesus, seeking to keep their relationship with Him active and therefore *remaining in me {Jesus}*, to *bear much fruit*. A miraculous result of being on *The Vine* is God's Spirit causing the result of *bearing with one another in love*. Of course, we must choose that we *love* and not *hate*! But only the Spirit of Jesus can make that miracle of Love keep happening when Christians have disagreements. This is another work of God as Jesus said in **(John 15.5)** *apart from me you can do nothing*. This miracle inside of us Christians requires our will and our prayers and God's Grace.

The next four verses in this Letter, **Ephesians 4.3-6**, reminds me of the Older Covenant Shema: *God is One*. The correct Theology that God is Three Persons in one Complex Unity in no way takes away with the powerful thought that God is One. We see this in the book of James in **(James 2.19)** *You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder. Therefore, Unity in the Church is a display of God's Nature and Character!*

(Ephesians 4.3-6): *3 Make every effort to keep **the unity of the Spirit** through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

I must repeat what I said above, a few minutes ago, regarding our responsibility to *Make every effort* here in **(Ephesians 4.3)** and *to live a life worthy of the calling* in **(Ephesians 4.1)**. Our lives will only produce the fruit we strive for, that is with prayer. **“This miracle inside of us Christians requires our will and our prayers and God's Grace.”**

TAKEAWAY #2

If you find yourself praying most of the time only after Holy Spirit convinces you of sin, you are missing the needed Prayers for Maturity. Praise God who quickly forgives us as we are under the Blood of Jesus. But, all the teaching points in the Bible, especially the New Testament, fall under the need to pray to mature regardless of sin. An all-encompassing Bible verse that shapes a maturing Christian's prayer life is in (Psalm 127.1) *Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.* In the New Testament the "house" is the Christian's Inner Man, the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

Highlighting some phrases in (Ephesians 4.3-6): *unity of the Spirit, one body {the Church}, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all,...*

A whole book could be written from these verses in Ephesians and many commentators have! The important exegesis in these four verses is: **That each and every Believer in Jesus has really experienced all of these terms of Unity in their lives in one degree or another.** The first act of outward obedience by each of us, after God's gift of Salvation, is usually to be Water Baptized. But we all share these awesome points of Unity. We should recall this when we are tested to not *keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

Paul now teaches the diversity of Leaders who are Jesus' Gifts to the Church. This sounds like arguing against the previous parts of his Letter stressing Unity. But, I will attempt to bring out or exegete what Paul, therefore God, meant in (Ephesians 4.7-8) *7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says: but (Psalm 68.18) { says: }*

*'When he ascended on high,
he took many captives
and gave gifts to his people.'*

*When you ascended on high,
you took many captives;
you received gifts from people,
even from the rebellious –
that you, LORD God, might dwell there.*

In (Ephesians 4.8) Paul is quoting (Psalm 68.18) but reversing the negative use of Victory by the Lord through warfare by His people Israel over physical enemies, *even the Rebellious.* The positive *spin* or reversal was Jesus' Spirit authorizing the original Apostles to change Old Testament Scripture to declare Jesus, the WORD of GOD, has appeared and, after His Resurrection, He introduced the coming of the Kingdom of God in men as never before! *He { Jesus } took*

many captives in the Battles of the Lord in the Older and Newer Testaments has to mean defeat of physical enemies in the Older Testament, and spiritual enemies in the Newer Testament. Thus on the Cross “took captives” when He *bruised Satan's head*. Thus fulfilling the prophetic curse God put on Satan in the Garden of Eden in **(Genesis 3.15/NASB1995)** *And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.*” I used the NASB translation here for the NIVUK says *He shall crush you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.*” Also in the Amplified Translation **(Genesis 3.15/AMPC)** *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her Offspring; He will bruise and tread your head underfoot, and you will lie in wait and bruise His heel.* As I preached in my Message on Sunday April 21, 2024 titled: **JESUS' CROSS – GLORIOUS VICTORY**, a snake with a crushed head is a *dead snake*. **How I wish the Devil were dead.** But the Bible tells the TRUTH, he is a wounded but still dangerous enemy to Christians. Jesus inflicted the wound that took Satan's power of death away from him. As written in **(Hebrews 2.14/AMP)** *Therefore, since [these His] children share in flesh and blood [the physical nature of mankind], He Himself { JESUS } in a similar manner also shared in the same [physical nature, but without sin], so that through [experiencing] death He might make powerless (ineffective, impotent) him who had the power of death—that is, the devil.* For the Christian Soldier for Christ, a Born-Again Christian, the gift of eternal Life gives him even more confidence over Satan, who no longer can exercise death as one of his weapons against anyone, especially a Christian.

I took this time to bring out how Ephesians is a Book of Encouragement and also a War Manual to equip Christians to be more than conquerors against the devil and his messengers. After revealing the Believers position of power over Satan, with a bruised head, Paul tells how Jesus has given additional and specific and singular gifts of Power to Christians in **(Ephesians 4.8)**, *and gave gifts to his people..*

But first, Paul details the humbling that Jesus chose in obedience to the Father. In **(Ephesians 4.9-10)** **9** *(What does ‘he ascended’ mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)* The phrase *descended to the lower, earthly regions?* This seems clear in the English translations. However, some cross references for the Greek word for *descended*, *καταβαίνω* (*katabainō*) which has the meaning: *to come or go down, descend.* These verses further bring out the Deity and humbleness of Christ.

Καταβαίνω in **(Mark 1.10)** *Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending (Καταβαίνω) on him like a dove*

καταβαίνω in **(James 1.17)** *Every good and perfect gift is from above, **coming down** (Καταβαίνω) from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows*

Well, there was never a better or more good gift to men than Jesus!

A brief word on gifts. In **(Ephesians 4.8)**, *and gave **gifts** to his people, **gifts** in the original Greek is δόμα (doma). This means a present or a gift with no specific detail of the type of gift. The Bible tells us in **(1 Corinthians 8.6)** *yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. Thus every gift or δόμα (doma) that Jesus bought for us on the Cross comes **from the Father** and comes **through the Lord Jesus Christ**. Also, as above **from the Father of heavenly lights** in **(James 1.17)**. God is Trinity; therefore, the Holy Spirit actually causes the gift from above to be received inside each Christian. And, as in **(Romans 8.9)** *You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. All God's wonderful gifts come to us through Christ by the indwelling Spirit, starting with Re-Birth by Faith. **I wanted to make clear the distinction of all the Good Gifts, δόμα (doma) , that the Holy Spirit must cause within ALL Christians, from the gifts of the Spirit or spiritual gifts , pneumatikos/Greek, in (1Corinthians 12.1)** which the Spirit chooses for Christians to receive. These supernaturally experienced gifts are detailed further as different kinds of gifts, charisma/Greek. in **(1Corinthians 12.4)**. I plan to present a sermon on the Gifts as in 1 Corinthians 12 some day next year, should the Lord stay in heaven that long!***

The importance in my mind to these details on gifts from God is vital to see that God also makes sinful men recreated to be holy saints, like me and you, to be **Gifts to the Church...as we see next in (Ephesians 4.11-13)** *11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

TAKEAWAY #3

Now let us recall Jesus teaching us all in (John 15.5) *apart from me you can do nothing. Since, He is in Heaven, He is with us, as He promised, by Holy Spirit. So, fellow church laborers, whether you preach up front, teach the Bible, balance the church budget in the office, sing on the Worship Team, sit on the OIC Council, translate sermons into Japanese, welcome visitors to OIC....everything you do requires Holy Spirit's causing Jesus in you to bear fruit to the Glory of God.*

Now, the **(Ephesians 4.11) list of Ministry “offices”** are really people given by Jesus to the Church. Their specific callings require singular gifts to accomplish fruitful results. As Christians serving without specific “offices” as I listed above, they equally need the Spirit of Christ **to bring God's good results**. These Christians that fir this call, are not necessarily full time Ministers, but many times will be. I will attempt to list these types or offices for service or ministry in order: 1) *Apostles*: Paul had to realize that Jesus was not likely to appear to be seen *face to face* by more men like himself, and the first Eleven Apostles. He had to mean, thus the Spirit means, “ones sent out to proclaim the Gospel.” 2) *Prophets*: these are Christians who must have the *charismatic gift of the Spirit* to either receive a messages in the Spirit from Jesus, or interpret the Message after another member of the congregation has spoken in tongues (unlearned heavenly language). 3) *Evangelists*: Christians who are gifted to proclaim the Gospel publicly with great effect of the hearts of sinners, 4) *Pastors*: Christians called and gifted to be under-shepherds, under Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, for guiding and feeding His sheep, 5) *Teachers*: Christians who are gifted to teach the Word of God.

The purpose of these gifts from Christ to men is given in **(Ephesians 4.12):** *12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.* This is an awesome responsibility and no one should ever simply *decide without God's frequent and faithful encouragements* to enter any of these offices without the gifting and the Call of God. Lay-workers may have many of these gifts to the Glory of God; but, other than prophecy, the operation of the gift requires a position within the local church structure. **When a Christian answers the Call to Jesus' appointment for these “offices”: Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher; he receives more power, the “Power in the Church through Men.” This must happen as God requires more from those who are so called. It is both awesome, fearful, and exciting be one called by Jesus to hold an office that really is “Power in the Church through Men.**

These Men and Women, have as their number one priority or job to *to equip his people for works of service* as written in **(Ephesians 4.12).** **His people is Jesus' People!** Their office is not to do much of the work of the church, but *to equip* others to do it. And as you might guess, that requires a lot of work! This often requires *one on one* training and discipleship. We must remember that is how Jesus enabled His Apostles to turn the world upside down in the 1st Century. The goal and desired result of the labors of these *apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers* is *that the body of Christ may be built up.* Built up is a balance, known only in completeness to God, between church growth and Christians growing into maturity. **For a church to be a healthy church, it must have a fair measure of both. Unhealthy churches all die! Sooner or later.**

TAKEAWAY #4

The Letter from the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians teaches God's desire for both Unity and Diversity in His Son's Church. Diversity here is not ethnic or all nations, but various gifts Jesus gives to imperfect men and women to build up His Sheep in number and in maturity. For a church to be a healthy church, it must have a fair measure of both, Church Growth and Maturing. Unhealthy churches all die! Sooner or later.

Now Paul paints us a picture of what a healthy church looks like in **(Ephesians 4.13)** *13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.* When people answer Jesus' call to accept their role or office in the church, God's Spirit will bring the results through their imperfect but dedicated efforts so that it truly will become **“Power in the Church through Men.”** This co-working with the Holy Spirit and each other as members of the Body of Christ puts the Local Church on the track, like a Shinkansen Train, faster and faster towards: 1) *unity in the faith,* 2) *knowledge of the Son of God,* 3) *becoming mature.* This track for progress in the church creates in all its members *the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.* This is not sinless perfection, which is only complete in Heaven, but Christ's fullness is attained as the members of the Church live from grace to grace and glory to glory!

Paul then encourages Christians to stay on this track for the positive results in **(Ephesians 4.14-15)**, *14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.*

Christianity is not a Religion, but a Relationship with God through Jesus, His only begotten Son. Yet newly Born-Again Christians begin a learning process both intellectual and experimentally as they mature in Christ. As human babes need diapers, so many young Believers seem similar with their struggles. But the influence of a Local Church on the track that Paul set, with Leaders who are sources of **“Power in the Church,”** will stabilize both young and older Christians. Paul was neither *cynical* nor *naive*. He had confronted false teaching in his missionary journeys not to mention the Jewish Christians holding onto the Traditions of Law back in Jerusalem. As he wrote in **(Ephesians 4.15)** *The cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.* This obviously can hinder young Christians, in particular, from *keeping the Faith.*

Now Paul, not one to make the great error of only telling his audience what “not to do,” gives the antidote or healing medicine in **(Ephesians 4.15)** *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow*

to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. Paul did not say: “Instead, hiding the truth to keep from hurting anybody's feelings.” Did He? Pardon my exaggeration in comparing the American and the Japanese attitudes. American Christians tend to be not careful enough when *speaking the truth in love.* Japanese Christians tend to be too careful when *speaking the truth in love.* Paul told us to try to find the “happy medium,” so to speak. **Silence among church members within the Local Church is not Golden; that is, it is not good.**

Pastor Bruce, how do I do this when I don't feel right about speaking a needed truth to a fellow Christian? May I point you back to **(Psalm 127.1)** *Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain. The house, the City, the Temple of your soul, the Local Church* all come under this Bible teaching. Keep Jesus informed of your problem! He will guide you without preventing a needed truth to be spoken.

If we Christians stay on the Growth and Maturing Track with the help of our Leaders, who have **“Power in the Church through Men”**, then “miraculously” {it will seem} as Paul said in **(Ephesians 4.15)**, *we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ..* Then, **(Ephesians 4.16)** *From him {Christ} the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

Dear OIC Saints...Yes this sounds impossible. But our God loves His Children who dare to venture into the realm of the *Impossible* according to His Word. Daring to believe God for a *more perfect OIC Church* as Paul has instructed the Ephesians seems *Impossible*, but it is not doing anything outside of the Word of God. Compassion in our hearts for a lost and dying Japan should move us to risk *Impossible* despite our “little faith.”

When a very rich young ruler chose to hold onto all his wealth and not follow Jesus, Jesus shocked the disciples in **(Luke 18.23-27)**, *23 When he {rich young ruler} heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. 24 Jesus looked at him and said, ‘How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! 25 Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’ 26 Those who heard this asked, ‘Who then can be saved?’ 27 Jesus replied, ‘What is impossible with man is possible with God.’*

Let Us Pray,

REFERENCES

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