

“Ephesians & You: A New Walk” (cont’d)

The Family of God

Ephesians 4:11-16

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Jeff: Greetings, men. We’re going to be looking today at Ephesians chapter 4. Let me just thank you for your prayers; I appreciate them. As I’m working through recovering from this concussion I certainly need them, so thank you for them. I continue to have good and bad days. Today is not such a good day. But I’m thankful to the Lord for the blessings that He gives. So let me open God’s word to Ephesians chapter 4 and let’s read together. We’ll start in verse 11 and I’ll read down through verse 16.

It says this. “And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists and the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the Head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped and each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

Well, that’s the section of text that we’re going to be looking at today. And I want us to focus on what it means to have a good gait. A gait is not a gate, something that you enter and so enter into a fenced area, but a gait or manner of walking. And that’s really what the text is focused on. It’s focused on a manner of walking. And you know as well as I do by now that the first three chapters talk to us about how God worked on our behalf so that we are now enabled to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we’ve been called. So we need to think about the manner in which we walk as believers.

I want you to think for a minute about a statement that we often hear. We often hear the statement “the church must achieve unity.” And there is a sense in which that kind of cry, that kind of declaration, is absolutely false. The church is united in Jesus Christ. The church is the body of Jesus Christ and it’s united under His headship.

Now when we cry “the church must be united,” what we’re basically saying is this. The church as the body of Christ is encountering growing pains. In other words, the church is not growing up into the body of Christ as it should, or as fast as it should, or as discernibly as it should. In other words, we see that the body of Christ is catching up to the size of its Head, Jesus Christ. And as long as it remains smaller and immature and growing, it’s always going to have its share of problems.

But that does not mean that the church is not unified. The church is unified. There is one body of Christ. Christ knows that body and they are all united in Him, collected together in Him by His eternal and divine decree.

“Ephesians & You: A New Walk” (cont’d)

However, there is a sense in which the body of Christ is engaged in a sanctification process, a growing process. And as it grows it matures into what it is. It grows up into its Head, the Lord Jesus.

Now one of the ways that we might then say this a little more accurately is that instead of saying that the church must be united, maybe we ought to be saying that the church must become what it already is. It must become the visible manifestation of the body of Christ that it already is. So it must become what it already is. And that’s nothing more than saying that the Christian must become what he or she already is.

Now that means then, as we think about it as individuals, it means that if I want to be viewed as what I already am I need to act or behave or conduct myself in a manner worthy of my calling. And the same is then true of the church. So expressions of behavior matter, not just for the individual but also for the church. The church must behave as the church. And so an expression of unity is foundational alongside of an expression of behavior from that church.

Now one of the things that I want you to notice is this. It says here that unity will be in some ways coterminous with a knowledge of the Son of God. Now I want you to think about this in terms of an objective/subjective relationship. The church in one sense knows objectively about the Son of God. It can take out its Bible and it can read what the Bible has to say about the Son of God. And if there are questions we know that there have been, for instance, Christological counsels that have happened throughout the ages, especially prior to the first 500 years of the church. And we know that those Christological counsels help us to understand what the Bible has to say about Jesus Christ, or at least how the church collectively has understood expressions of the Bible about Christ.

For instance, we know that Christ is two natures in one Person. We know, for instance, that the idea that the Docetists or the Gnostics wanted to propound, that Jesus didn’t really have a physical body but only seemed to have a physical body was wrong. So we know that not only does the Bible tell us these things about Jesus, but we know that the early church through its councils has developed what the Bible has said. And the accuracy of those councils are based upon the Bible.

But the point is that there is something that we know about the Son of God. And that’s true. But one of the things that is important for us to understand is that we can know something and not act according to it. And that’s where the subjective aspect of the knowledge comes in. In other words, there not only needs to be an objective understanding of who Christ is, but there needs to be the subjective knowledge. In other words, there needs to be my response to the knowledge that I have.

For instance, I want you to think about it this way. Perhaps somebody tells you, “Look, you need to love your wife.”

And you say, “Well, I know that.”

And he says, “Now let me make a distinction between an objective love and a subjective love. You may know you love your wife because on such-and-such a day you entered into holy marriage with her and you celebrate that anniversary yearly. These kinds of objective things you know. But do these things have a subjective reality? In other words, do you feel love for her such that when she’s doing the dishes you get up and help

“Ephesians & You: A New Walk” (cont’d)

her do the dishes? Or when she’s cleaning up a mess, do you help her clean up the mess? In other words, are you actively engaged experientially, subjectively, in a demonstration of your love for her?”

There’s a difference between that objective knowledge and the subjective knowledge, or the experiential aspect of the knowledge. And the point is that when we reach a unity of faith we’ll not only have the objective aspect of knowledge, but we’ll have the subjective aspect of knowledge, because the subjective aspect of knowledge will be the behavior aspect. It will be the conduct aspect that will give visible expression to the objective knowledge we have.

For instance, you know as well as I do that some people will look at the Christian and say, “Well, he may say he’s a Christian. But he sure doesn’t act like a Christian.” Well, the church may say it knows Christ or say that it has the way of salvation. But it sure doesn’t act like the Bible commands the church to act, that kind of thing. So there’s the objective and the subjective.

And while we are basically growing up into that experiential knowledge, while we are moving along the subjective path in becoming what we already are in Jesus Christ, what we know we ought to be in Jesus Christ, we need to continually strive for stability.

And that’s important because I think that in our day and age it is so easy for us to listen to the influence of the world and say to ourselves, “Well, in order to be all things to all men I guess we need to be this to the world,” in other words, be to the world what it’s asking us to be. And that’s what Paul addresses here when he talks about that believers must not be blown about by every wind of doctrine. We need to be exceedingly careful about what we believe, but also how we act. In fact, if we believe certain things out of the Scriptures we need to act accordingly.

And when we act according to the Scriptures, we’re acting like a stable church ought to act, and not being blown about by every wind of doctrine. I mean, you men probably know about the Supreme Court decision that was made on June 15th as an incredibly destructive decision by the court. Basically what you have in that decision is this. You have sex defined now not as biologically but now sex is defined as the way a person identifies himself. And so you’ve heard the news that this is the destruction of sports for ladies, for instance. So, for instance, Dana White who runs the UFC, I’ve heard him say in the past that he’ll never allow a man who identifies as a woman to fight a biological woman, because it’s an unfair advantage. He’ll never allow that to happen in his fighting group. Well, now the law says that he must allow that biological man who identifies as a woman, he must allow him to fight other women in his women’s fight group. That’s the destruction of sports. So all these girls in high school and college who are there on scholarships because they participate in women’s sports are now going to be at an unfair advantage because men who identify as women are going to be allowed to compete for those same scholarships, and so on.

And the church may be tempted to say, “Well, this is what our culture is saying, and so we need to be loving and embracing. And we need to show a soft and loving face to this.”

And I want you men to know something. That is being blown about by every wind of doctrine. The church must stand faithfully and truthfully in the face of a lie. And for a

“Ephesians & You: A New Walk” (cont’d)

biological man to say that he’s a woman is in fact a lie; it’s just that. And I read the court decision. The majority decision is about 30-some pages; I haven’t read the minority decisions yet. But they justify their decision on the basis of wording of the past in previous laws, and so on. And it strikes me as odd that no one ever says, “Maybe this is just a lie, and that we can’t rule in this direction.”

Anyway, I digress. But I simply warn you as a church, because apparently we’re moving into an age of chaos. All you have to do is watch the news and you can see it. We’re moving into an age of chaos. And we all need to be like Psalm 112, the man who hears terrible news but is unmoved by it because he knows that God is enthroned above the circle of the earth. That’s what we need to be. And I would encourage you men to be that way. I’m encouraging myself and my family and my congregation to be the same.

But in order for this to happen we need to stand upon the knowledge of God revealed in His Son. And we need not only to know it objectively, but we need to behave accordingly. We need to follow it. And so part of that then means this. Paul says it. Part of that means we need to speak the truth. He says that in this section. We need to speak the truth and we need to speak it in love.

Now I think that’s difficult for people to do, especially when they’re in relationships with other people. And they love those people. But the question is, what it comes down to is who do you love most? What’s your priority of love? Is your priority to Christ, and is your love set upon Him, or is it for another? And so you lie to them to make them feel better. In other words, someone comes to you and says to you, “You know, I identify as a woman even though I’m a biological male.”

And what are you going to say to them? Are you going to lie to them because you love them and say, “It’s okay; that’s fine. That’s what happens, you know. It’s a crazy, sin-filled world and sometimes we get mixed up.”

Or maybe you’re not even willing to go that far. You’re just willing to say, “Oh, that’s okay. You know, everybody has to be true to themselves.” And so you encourage them, and so lie to them to tell them and help them to solidify the lie in his own mind that he’s not a man but a woman, and so on.

The Bible says that those things are not helpful, especially for the church. The church must speak the truth within itself. But the church must also speak the truth to a watching world. And the watching world hates the church because it speaks the truth, because it says no. Biological males are males; they’re not women. And biological women are not males; they’re women. And so we need to speak the truth. We need to speak it in love. And we need to let the consequences come what may.

But this is what it means to be the church in the world. This is what it means to be a stable, truth-bound, maturing church, the body of Christ.

Well, that’s all I have to say to you today. So let me close out now with a word of prayer, and then wish you well.

Father in heaven, thank You for this day, for the time You’ve given, for the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts. Father, in today’s chaos help us to stand. Let us be like the man of Psalm 112. Let us stand fast and be immovable, and not be afraid of things that happen in the course of life. But let us take our stand, firmly rooted upon the Lord

“Ephesians & You: A New Walk” (cont’d)

Jesus Christ, knowing that the triune God rules and reigns over all things. And Father, thank You that You do rule and reign over all things and that You manifested Yourself to us in Christ, for it’s in His name that we pray. Amen.