

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 4 AND THE BODY OF CHRIST

The question that should be always before the serious believer is this : Are we as a “church” functioning the way God has designed us to function. The greatest emphasis over the years has been upon **individual gifts and function** that is the basis of “ministry” as we know it today. The emphasis then has focused upon individual “ministry” rather than the collective function of the corporate church, operating on the basis of “body” rather than as a single “ministry”. The concept is that “ministry” is outside the body, ministering to the body rather than just one aspect of the function of the body ministering to itself from within. In this concept the “ministry” stands above the body rather than shoulder to shoulder with the body and as a part of the body and ministers as superior to the body. The purpose of this study is to show that concept is foreign to the Bible based understanding of the “church” which “is His body”.

For all those who have developed a “ministry centered consciousness” there is a great need to have a clear understanding of the eternal truths presented in the book of Ephesians. The unity and “oneness” of the body is one of the key thoughts presented. There are not two bodies where one ministers to the other or one body pays tithes to the other body. This concept has come from the divided priesthood in the Old Covenant. There was a division between the Priests after the genealogy of Aaron and the Levites of the genealogy of Levi. They stood apart from the rest of Israel who were also descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Priests and the Levites (who were more limited in their function) ministered to God in behalf of Israel and then ministered to Israel in behalf of God. They stood between God and Man and man and God as intermediaries. Now we only have one intermediary who is Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who is also Head of the same body .

The Old Testament priesthood after the order of Aaron has been done away with and has been replaced with a whole new priesthood after the order of Melchizedec (which is the first priesthood mentioned in scripture in Gen 14.) Since God has called every New Covenant believer to be a Kingdom where every citizen is a priest, there can no longer be a divided priesthood.

In the pictures of the book of Ephesians Paul gives three metaphors for the church. (1) The church which is His body shows Christ as the Head of that body. (2) The church as the building shows Christ as the cornerstone. (3) The church as wife shows Christ as the husband. The unity and oneness of the “church” is emphasized while being joined to Christ in a intimate relationship. Since Christ is not an adulterer or a bigamist there cannot be two wives or two bodies and the body cannot be divided into two groups. There is also the picture of the church as the army of God and Christ as the armor The one building has only one corner stone. Each body only has one head unless it is something the devil has designed. This is typified as a dragon with 10 heads. This shows total confusion.

There may be different assemblies or flocks but there cannot be different “bodies” or wives or buildings. There cannot even be a difference between Jews and Gentiles. The grand theme of the book of Ephesians is the ascended and glorified Christ but in direct relationship with that is the focus upon the Church which is His body. This direct relationship is such a spiritual reality that the church is said to be raised up and seated with Him in heavenly places. EPH 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our transgressions, **made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), [6] **and raised us up with Him, and**

seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus,

One theme is that Christ is far superior to all else. He cannot be divided by cultural barriers, families, races, various religious positions, and He is superior to the spirit beings without bodies. To be “one with Him” sets the church in a much different realm than any other earthly group and makes “the church which is His Body” “totally unique”. This is so much different than the priesthood after the order of Aaron that to make a comparison or even site a similarity between the two must be carefully made and the differences emphasized in order to give the New Covenant the proper place in the believer’s life. To show the two as the same realm indicates an ignorance of what God has really done within the New Covenant. No place is the Old Testament priesthood shown to be one with God.

Some Bible scholars refer to this oneness as being “organic” but it is much more mystical than that. While the “oneness” must be by Life it is difficult to understand and if the Bible didn’t say it was so we would dare not refer to our relationship with Christ in that way. The Bible says that we are “in Him” and He is “in us”. Is that reality? Yes! How can we explain it? By the Word of God, the Spirit of Christ and by the infilling of the Holy Spirit. With that mystery set forth we will begin in Ephesians 4:1-16.

EPH 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, **entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling [Greek: VOCATION] with which you have been called**, [2] with **all humility and gentleness**, with **patience**, showing **forbearance to one another in love**, [3] being **diligent** to preserve **the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**. [4] There is **one** body and **one** Spirit, just as also you were called in **one** hope of your calling; [5] **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, [6] **one** God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. [7] But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. [8] Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN."

EPH 4:9 (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? [10] He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, **that He might fill all things**.) [11] And He gave **some as apostles**, and some as prophets, and **some as evangelists**, and **some as pastors and teachers**, [12] for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; [13] until **we all** attain to the unity of the faith, and of **the knowledge** of the Son of God, to a **mature man**, to the measure of the stature which belongs to **the fulness of Christ**. [14] As a result, we are **no longer to be children**, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; [15] but speaking the truth in love, we are **to grow up in all aspects into Him**, who is the head, even Christ, [16] from whom **the whole body**, being fitted and held together by that which **every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part**, causes the growth of the body for the **building up of itself** in love.

It is important that we set these scriptures in the context of the first 3 chapters but that is beyond this study. These scriptures include Paul’s revelation of the mysteries of Christ. EPH. 3:4-13. Paul explains that it requires a special impartation by God to open the eyes of New Covenant believers to understand these mysteries and prays in that way for the saints in both chapter 1 and chapter 3.

Eph 4:1 & 2 sets the goal of this teaching. So that each one may walk in a manner worthy of the

CALLING with which **we have been** called. Since “**we have been called**” (past tense) it means **we are now called** (presence tense). This puts our calling out of the option realm and out of the realm of “if we decide” and puts it clearly in the realm of demand and obligation, if we have any intention of fulfilling our calling and walking in a manner worthy of that calling.

The GK. word “klesis” translated as calling could be translated as VOCATION. Vocation means a work at which a person is regularly employed. Being worthy suggests that this is not automatic and is therefore fulfilled just by believing something about Jesus. Being worthy suggests that there is a requirement on our part that is going to cost something.

The way it becomes a reality requires that we approach this mystery, which unfolds as the oneness of the body to Christ, with (1) humility, (2) gentleness, (3) patience (4) showing forbearance (5) in love (agape). Each of these attributes of Christ must be experientially ours if the rest of the revelation is going to be fulfilled within our relationships in the body. It is in this way that the “unity of the Spirit is preserved in the bond of peace”. (# 2) Gentleness (or meekness) means that we accept God’s dealings with us without disputing and resisting. Within the context it refers to being patient when injuries are done to us by others because God is permitting it. God reveals our defects by chastening and through the action of others so that we might be purified. Since this “unity” must be preserved among people of different personalities, dispositions and characters it is clear why these attributes must be experiential and personal. If we ignore these requirements personally in our lives, there can be no unity of the Spirit and no bond of peace and consequently no “oneness” except some doctrinal oneness. Some say we can be similar but not unified as “one” until after the church age.

The question is this: Why is this so important anyway?? (V 4) EPH 4:4] There is **one body and one Spirit**, just as also you were called in **one hope** of your calling; [5] **one Lord, one faith, one baptism**, [6] **one God and Father** of all who is *over all and through all and in all.*

The “**7 ones**” in EPH 4 explains why this is the way it must be. The catalyst that holds it all together is **the God and Father** of ALL, who is (1) **over us all** (2) **through us all** and (3) **In us all**. If we accept that as “literal” it would mean that we are “one” with the Father. Since there is but one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, there can only correctly and rationally be “the unity of the Spirit”. When this is actually a fact among people of different temperaments it is certain that the Supernatural is at work. For that reason we must put forth every effort with all perseverance and be diligent to maintain *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* This has mistakenly been understood to be a uniformity of doctrines, of traditions, order of service and even of dress codes. Even without uniformity we can still have unity of the Spirit. There is no connotation of “One Bishop”, “One Pope”, “One Council”, “One Doctrine”, “One group”, One Denomination ETC. All this is man’s plan for “Unity”. The real “Unity” has to be found and experienced in these 7 “ones”.

COL 3:12 And so, as those **who have been chosen of God**, holy and beloved, put on a **heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience**; [13] **bearing with one another, and forgiving each other**, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. [14] And **beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.** [15]

And let *the peace of Christ rule in your hearts*, to which indeed **you were called in one body**; and be thankful. V 13 makes this clear that these attributes are seen horizontally among the believers if the “one body” is a reality.

One of the excuses we hear in the church is that I just don't have the grace to do all those things and get along with everyone so I can maintain that unity of the Spirit. Others may have that grace but I don't. However, when we all stand before the judgement seat of Christ that excuse will not be acceptable. {Because}

EPH 4:7] **But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.** [8] Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN."

The Amplified translates this as; “And He bestowed gifts ON men”. This “grace gift” or “gifts” were given to each one in proportion to, and in the exact measure to correspond with the “grace gifts” that Christ has given to each one of us personally. Therefore, there is none who can say they don't have sufficient grace or a grace “gift” to be developed. The same one who has descended from heaven to the lower parts of the earth is the exact same one who has now ascended high above all the heavens that now **He might fill all things**. He is the exact same one who has now also given various ministries to us (the church) . It would clarify different things if we understood that these “men” with “ministries” were given to the church for the fulfillment of God's purposes in the church and not for their own glorification or titles. The purpose of these ministries is not just to create some ministry but for the equipping of the saints. In Eph 4 these ministries are given no other purpose to exist.

These ministries include some apostles, prophets, evangelists, some pastors and teachers. It is assumed that these “ministries” are men who have been given **these offices in the church**. This is, in a way, conjecture because it is not that clear whether this speaks of a work these men do or whether this speaks of the men themselves who have been “set in these positions”. We don't even know if these “ministries” are divided up among members of the assembly (body) because it says He gives “SOME” as Apostles etc. We are not told if that means in each assembly or for some universal work. However, we assume “some pastors” refer to a local assembly. We know that Paul speaks about “us apostles”. 1 COR 4:9] For, I think, God has exhibited **us apostles** last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.

However, it is clear that **all these ministries** are assigned a particular work to do. In this they ***all called to the same work***. That work is defined as “(1) the equipping of the saints for **their work of “service”** [or that word is translated other places as ministry], for **their purpose and work** of building up the body of Christ. (2) until we all (the whole church) attains to that unity of the faith and the (epignosis) {full, exact, precise and} true knowledge of the Son of God **who is the perfect man**. That means to the same fullness, the same height, the same completeness that is seen in Christ. In other words, this whole function of the ministries within the church(the body of Christ) is designed to bring the church to the finished perfection of Christ Himself. The 5 ministries are there **to perfect the saints** so **they** can **minister to the body** until the whole body comes to the same perfection as Christ. The whole church, itself, must minister to itself.

If these 5 ministries are 5 men who have been given this tremendous responsibility of bringing the church to perfection and yet the church doesn't grow up in all things, the only conclusion that we can come to is that these ministries have miserably failed. That means if the various members of the assembly do not grow up and contribute to the growth of the body to the building up of itself, something has gone wrong with the 5 ministries and they have failed in their divine call. When they, therefore, stand before the judgement seat of Christ and report that their ministry didn't produce the predestined result it will be a very sad day.

In these scriptures we see the "ministries" are set "**in the body**" for the building up of the body. We see this again in 1 COR 12:28] **And God has appointed in the church**, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. These ministries are set "**in the church**" and not **above** the church or over the church as is commonly taught. It is assumed that these "ministries" are a privileged class **out of the church** who are the power and authority **over the church**. In some circles these ministries are "an annex to the church" but Ephesians teaches us it is the church that is annexed to the Trinity. In this same way the church is the structure while God, the Trinity, is the tenant that lives there. It is God, the father who is OVER all, THROUGH all and IN all.

While it is surely true that these ministries are given certain authority within the church to build the church up and watch over the souls of the saints we must be careful to hold that authority within the framework of the body and not as some "ministry" over the body. We surely must leave room for the direct discipline of God in the believers life and for each one to be taught of God.

These "ministries" are just **members of the body** who have been given a certain grace to edify and build up and mature **the other members of the body** until the **whole body** is able to minister to its self and **build up its self in love**. In fulfilling their call or vocation within the body, the "ministers" will themselves be "perfected" by the other "ministries". To assume that "these ministries" are already mature, complete and perfect is a serious mistake. It is also clear that these "ministries" **don't give themselves** to the church or volunteer for the ministry. They are either set there by Christ or they have no God given ministry.

[V 14] As a result of this subjective ministry within the body by the various members of the body is "that we are no longer to be children". The work of maturing the children to become young men and then fathers is the **responsibility of the whole assembly** and not some "pastor" who is not equipped or given all that grace to do all that work himself. If the pastor said "I don't have the strength or grace to perfect all these children myself" he would be correct. If he wonders why he doesn't have the strength or the grace, Ephesians 4 should explain why. God designed this work and assigned this work for the whole assembly and it requires every member functioning and supplying to the other members.

It is when one man tries to do what God designed **the whole body to do** that the church remains less than it was foreordained to be. If one man with one ministry assumes that he is going to "perfect the church" he should stop and ask himself "how" is he going to do that?

This phrase "perfect the church" is obviously very difficult to translate because there are so many

different interpretations of what that means. If taken within the context it seems to mean that born again believers (the saints) are dislocated, fragmented, individual, deficient, incomplete, impure in habits and conduct (although forgiven) and not yet in an orderly spiritual state. The implication is that they are “saved” but not yet built up into the “unity of the body” and much “correcting” is yet necessary. In other words “children” are not yet full grown and mature “adults”. God’s eternal purpose was designed **for full grown adults to participate with Christ** in ruling over all the works of God’s hands. Therefore, the body is to raise the children to full maturity. To accomplish that Christ has commissioned various ministries to be set in the church! He has also given diverse gifts and graces to **each member of the body** to use to help in this great work. For this reason each member must use their grace and gift to contribute to the good of the whole body. For this reason the burden is not placed upon one man or one ministry but upon the whole body. This is what we will call “the corporate responsibility and ministry” of the body to itself.

Then we could logically ask ourselves ; What if the whole assembly grew up and matured and all became young men and fathers? Could we just relax and wait for Jesus to come back for us? This situation is just not possible because of the nature of the ministries that Christ has set in the body. It was never God’s design for the saints to always need continuous ministry for the rest of their spiritual lives. God’s plan is for them to grow up and begin to minister and not remain as children. But what if the saints never “grow up and begin to minister”? Then we can say, without contradiction, that these 5 ministries have miserably failed to do their God given job and will have to answer to Christ for their failure. Anyone who has any revelation would not want to be in their shoes when they have to report to Jesus and give an account of what they did with what they were given. However, if these 5 ministries are functioning within their grace and gift, the church will arrive at God’s desired end. If we don’t believe that we just don’t believe the scriptures. The fact is either they are true or they are not. Then how do these 5 ministries function within the church to perfect the church from within?

Within the framework of their gift and grace the Apostles taught, disciplined and trained others “of the saints” to be Apostles. Paul took with him various disciples whom he trained, personally. The Prophets did the same with those who were given that gift and grace. The Evangelists trained, disciplined and taught the saints to be Evangelists. In addition to that , according to the example that is given in acts 8, the Evangelists also evangelized the unbelievers. The Teachers of God’s Word took special care and responsibility to teach, train and disciple the saints to search the Word and to get revelation and understanding of how to minister the Word to the saints so they could be instructed and edified and built up and strengthened. The goal is not just to teach but to raise up others who have the gift and grace so they can teach. 2 TIM 2:2] And the ***things which you have heard from me*** in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, **who will be able to teach others also.**

In the same way Pastors are given the responsibility to train, disciple and teach the saints who have that calling and grace to become pastors. 1 TIM 3:2] An overseer, (An Elder who oversees) then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, **able to teach,**

If the Evangelists are doing their job there will always be new believers to train, teach and disciple and perfect and mature as Evangelists or for the other ministries. In Acts 8:14 when the Apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God from Philip, the evangelist, they sent down

Peter and John, the Apostles. Why? Because more work needed to be done in Samaria.

ACTS 13:1 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, **prophets and teachers**: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. [2] And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul **for the work** to which **I have called them**." [3] Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. When these "prophets and teachers" were sent out by the Holy Spirit they were called Apostles. When the Prophets and Teachers are doing their job the Apostles are trained to do their job and ready to be sent out.

If the Pastors are doing their job there will always be a supply of Pastors to shepherd (and oversee) the new believers. If the Teachers are doing their job there will be plenty of Teachers available to instruct in the study and ministry of the Word. ACTS 6:2] And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. [3] "But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. [4] "**But we will devote ourselves to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.**" It appears that the Apostles, who were not traveling, were giving themselves to prayer and the study of the Word and were functioning as teachers in the assembly. V 2 Indicates that the whole congregation were "disciples" or persons who were in training. If the Apostles are doing their job there will always be new churches being started and the process starts all over again. The same is true of Prophets and Teachers. If they are doing their job the church will always have vision and direction and a corporate word from God and the Holy Spirit can separate qualified men to "the work"..

The reason the church is stuck in a rut and is spinning her wheels is because the ministries have not been recognized **among the saints** or some restriction is placed upon them so that they can't develop their grace and gift. For that reason some "Pastor" is trying to do the best he can to **fulfill all 5 of these ministries** and miserably fails to **even to raise up Pastors** which by themselves can never perfect and mature the church. The real question is this: Can Pastors raise up and train Apostles? Do Apostles raise up and train Apostles? Then the old question arises; Which comes first the chicken or the egg. Acts 6 gives us the answer that Prophets and Teachers raise up the Apostles and then Apostles raise up Apostles.

The system that man has designed has failed but the system that God has designed will succeed if we just believe what it says and act upon it.

It is amazing that men who can believe God for signs and wonders just can't believe God to perfect the saints and prepare them to minister. What other "supply of raw material" do we have to use to fulfill this demand? The fear is that untrained saints will make a big mess. That is true! Untrained saints will surely do that! That is exactly why the saints (disciples) must be taught, trained and disciplined to prepare them to minister.

The system we now use of a Pastor or Teacher trying to raise up the other ministries by preaching "a message" or even just "a verse" on Sunday morning is producing very little except to sustain the status

quo. Training “a Pastor” to go out and start a work like an Apostle or to Evangelize has not been much more successful. The “prophetic movement” is trying to train “Prophets” to pastor a church. We wonder where are the Evangelists that are training the Evangelists? It appears that many “Evangelists” are trying to train believers how to be believers and do the work the Pastor was trained for. Some “evangelists” are trying to teach the Word and are teaching confusion. It appears that the Holy Spirit is so frustrated that He just goes ahead and saves people anyway.

How can we tell if these 5 ministries are doing their job? EPH 4:13] until **we all** attain to the ***unity of the faith***, and of the (epignosis, the full) ***knowledge of the Son of God***, to a ***mature man***, to the ***measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ***. If this is not happening something is wrong! When the “children” remain children after many years something is broke.

God has bestowed upon **the multitude of believers** a variety of gifts and graces that are supposed to fulfill a goal and produce certain results in the church (1) The unity of the faith (2) the exact, true and full knowledge of Jesus Christ (3) A mature, complete and functioning man. (4) A church that looks and acts and ministers like Jesus Christ.

Notice that we are not to raise up “perfect MEN” but the “oneness” of the “Perfect Man”. It may be a frustrating job to try to raise up perfect MEN or even perfect WOMEN. However, that may look more plausible than raising up an assembly to look, act and minister like Jesus Christ. Can we believe for “one mature church” joined to one Perfect Man? If not, for what are we preparing the church? Maybe to be joined to New Earth or to take up their place beside the Old Testament saints? The spiritual standard that is eternally fixed is the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. I doubt if we can negotiate or plea bargain a lesser standard. We could begin by trying to get the church built up to a full grown and mature adult “Christian” and then work on “the fulness of Christ”. We surely can’t prepare people to go beyond where we are, in our maturity. On the other hand we may have trouble fitting a half developed body on to a mature, full and complete Head and then declaring “that is good enough.” After all Jesus may not mind going around in eternity with a baby body!

EPH 4:14] As a result, we are no longer to be children, ***tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine***, by the **trickery** (dice-throwing) of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming,

All these doctrines that are blowing around are just a “crap shoot” when it comes to preparing the church. There is a certain evil atmosphere in which these unstable, blowing and shifting doctrines produce their evil effect. That is why the “children just remain children.” It is because they are told “God loves you just like you are. You sit there and listen to me preach and don’t cause any trouble. Just pay your tithe and attend the meetings. Our goal is to get 1000 in Sunday School and then a bigger building to hold more eternal children.” (That is a para-phrase)

The Greek suggests “ Craftiness tending to the methodized system of deceit”.

What is the solution? V15] **but speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ In contrast to speaking “blowing, unstable, shifting doctrines” **SPEAK THE TRUTH** in love. The only way to counter lies is with the TRUTH. Paul was obviously dealing with

some sort of error in the church at Ephesus that was hindering the church from fulfilling God's predestined plan by growing up into Christ. Something was happening that was producing children but not full grown Christians.

The system of deceit today is willing to "sacrifice the truth" for "the sake of unity" and "out of love for others." Besides that to do nothing is much easier and to build the church up to that standard will require all of our time and the whole church working together. The excuse is this: "The bunch that God has given me are impossible to mature. They don't have any burden to be trained or the time to be disciplined." "They keep me so busy that I have no time to train anybody". "All I get done is trying to put out the fires that are trying to burn up the work I have built"

1 COR 3:13] each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and **the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.** [14] If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. [15] **If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss;** but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.

Sometimes we spend a lot of time trying to put out fires that God started to test our work to see what sort it is. Just building with silver, gold and precious stone is too time consuming and I see so little result from my work. I like the wood, hay and straw church better! The clear warning is "You are working for nothing". It is better to have one little piece of gold than a whole train load of straw. However, God must open the eyes of our understanding to accept that eternal fact.