

All the Growing

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this evening for a short while, and with the Lord's help, and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read.
- Paul's letter to Ephesians and chapter 4. Ephesians chapter 4, and we're going to look, as we said, verses 1 to 16.
- But if we just read from the beginning. Ephesians 4 and verse 1, where Paul writes, I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.
- I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. The question which the first half of Ephesians chapter 4 confronts us with is the question, how do churches grow?
- How do churches grow? And of course, we all know that what Jesus promised his disciples, Jesus said to his disciples, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
- [1 : 1 7] And we all know what Paul wrote about church planting, and also about church revitalization. Paul said that Paul may plant, Apollos may water, but God alone gives the increase.
- So does that mean churches only grow because God's grace is supremely and sovereignly at work in them? Yes, it does. Because without God's grace, there will be no growth.
- Without grace, there will be no growth. Except, as we were just singing there in Psalm 127, Except the Lord do build the house, the builders lose their pain. Except the Lord the city keep, the watchmen watch in vain.
- So does that mean we who are saved by grace and saints in the church, can we just sit on the sidelines and watch God's grace at work?
- Because we're saved, do we just sit back and watch God at work? Well, the answer is, of course not. Because faith without works is dead.
- [2 : 1 9] And as Jesus said, we must work while it is day. Because the night is coming when no one can work. We must work, must of necessity.
- We must work while it is day. For the night is coming when no one can work. Therefore, we must work because, as you know, growth glorifies God.
- Growth glorifies God. So how do churches grow? Does it depend on what type of growth we're referring to? Because how do you define growth?
- How do you describe growth? How do you determine if a church is growing? Is it their attendance? Is that growth? Is it their finance? Is that growth? Is it their holiness? Is it their relationships?
- Is it their worship, their worship style? Is that growth? Is it their growth? Is it their growth? Is it their preaching growth? Is it their pastoring growth? Is it their discipleship growth? Is it their outreach growth? How do churches grow?

[3 : 17] How do churches grow? And that's the question Paul wants to answer in this section. He brings us to this section in Ephesians chapter 4. And he's asking the question, how do churches grow?

And Paul tells us here, churches grow when we're walking worthily together. And churches grow when we're working well together.

Churches grow when we're walking worthily together. And churches grow when we're working well together. And there are two headings this evening.

So churches grow when we're walking worthily together. Walking worthily together. Look what he says in verse 1. I therefore a prisoner for the Lord urge you, urge you, to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

[4 : 21] You know, Paul's letter to the Ephesians is a fascinating letter. But in many ways you could describe Paul's letter to the Ephesians as a game of two halves.

It's a game of two halves. And we should see that because as we discovered in the first half of this letter, the first three chapters of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Paul, as he's described, he's defined all the blessings, all the benefits that we experience and enjoy as believers.

We saw that back in chapter 1. Paul emphasized all these blessings that we receive because we are in Christ. We have received every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.

We have received our election, our predestination, our adoption, justification, sanctification, forgiveness, pardon, perseverance, glorification, and ultimately our eternal inheritance.

All of these blessings, Paul says, they've been graciously and gloriously given and gifted to us from the hand of King Jesus. Then into chapter 2, Paul explained that all these blessings have been given to us, not because of works, but because of grace.

[5 : 32] All these blessings, they're all of grace. It's by grace that we've been saved and it's through faith. It's not of ourselves. It's not of works. It's not of us, lest any of us should ever want to boast.

So all the blessings are all of grace because as Paul expands in chapter 3, it's all a mystery. The fact that we have received all these blessings and the fact that they're all of grace and have been graciously given and gifted to us is the greatest mystery.

It's the greatest mystery to all of us that we would receive any of these blessings. It's all mystery. And we've received it because of God's love, as we saw there at the end of chapter 3.

All the blessings we've received because of the length and breadth and depth and height of God's love towards sinners. It's all a mystery. God's salvation of calling sinners from darkness to light, from death to life, from the dungeon of sin to liberty and salvation.

It's all of grace and it's all to his glory. Therefore, verse 1 of chapter 4.

[6 : 44] Therefore, he now begins the second half of the letter. I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you.

And I stress the word urge. Urge you, exhort you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

And so Paul's letter to the Ephesians, as we said, it's a game of two halves. There are six chapters, as you know, in Paul's letter. And the first three chapters are teaching. The first three chapters, Paul is teaching us.

The next three chapters, Paul is telling us. He's teaching and then he's telling. The first half of the book or first half of the letter, full of indicatives.

Full of teaching. Second half, full of imperatives. Full of commands. First half is full of information. First half of his letter, full of information. All these blessings, all these benefits, all of grace.

[7 : 45] All a mystery. It's all information. Second half. Here's the application. Here's the application. It's a game of two halves. And now that we've come to the second half of Paul's letter, now into chapters four to six.

The second half, we see that there has been this shift. The shift from the information, chapters one to three, now to the application. Chapters four to six.

And it's all application. And as we said, Paul begins the second half of his letter with this exhortation. An exhortation. He urges us to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called.

That's what he says. I therefore urge you, walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called. Why?

Because churches grow when we're walking worthily together. Churches grow when we're walking worthily together. And as we said, notice, I want you to notice, it's an imperative.

[8 : 52] It's not an indicative. The first half of the letter was full of indicatives. But this here, Paul now moves to imperatives. I urge you. It's a command.

It's an exhortation. It's not just an encouragement. It's an exhortation to us. A command to walk worthily of the calling to which you've been called.

Because as Christians, Paul says, and as he has described in the first three chapters, we are called. We have been effectually called in the gospel to follow Jesus Christ.

We have received all these blessings. We have been called by his grace. We've come to know the beauty of God's grace. Therefore, we are to walk worthy of our calling.

We are to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. And you know, Paul here, and throughout his letters, he has this huge emphasis upon walking worthily of our calling.

[9 : 54] He mentions this walking worthily to all these different churches. He mentions it in almost all of his letters. To the church in Rome, Paul writes that they are to be worthy saints.

They're to be worthy saints. To the Philippians, Paul said, let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. To the Colossians, Paul then wrote, he said, walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him and bearing fruit.

And then also to the Thessalonians, Paul said, walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and his own glory. Time and time again, Paul exhorts and encourages the Christian church to walk in a manner worthy of Christ.

And what he means there by the word worthy. Obviously, we know we are unworthy sinners. So he's not saying you're going to be worthy all of a sudden.

No. He says, walk in a manner or walk in a way of life that elevates Christ. That exalts Christ. That lifts up Jesus in your life by following in his footsteps.

[11 : 09] Follow in the footsteps of Jesus as an example to others. And Paul explains what this looks like. He explains what the example of Jesus looks like because he bases everything he says upon the example of Jesus.

He says there, walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. Verse 2. With all humility and gentleness and patience.

There's Jesus right there. Bearing with one another in love. Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. So to walk with humility, gentleness, patience.

Bearing with one another in love. Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Paul says you have an example to follow. Because you have been called to follow Jesus.

And by following Jesus you have been called to humility. You have been called to walk worthy. And with all humility.

[12 : 14] And you know it's interesting that humility is the first thing Paul mentions in this list of Christ-like characteristics. It's the first thing he mentions. Humility.

Because following the example of Jesus stems from humbly following in the footsteps of Jesus. But as you know humility, it's not about being a nice person.

Humility is not about being a shy person. Humility is not even about being a quiet person. Humility is about restraining and restricting your pride.

Humility is about removing I. Humility is about restraining and restricting pride. You know, false humility.

I was reading a commentary and it said, False humility is the ugliest form of pride. False humility. And you see it with people. False humility is the ugliest form of pride.

[13 : 19] That's why C.S. Lewis once said, Humility is not thinking less of yourself. Humility is thinking of yourself less. I'll say it again.

Humility is not thinking less of yourself. Humility is thinking of yourself less. And you know, Paul even to the Philippians, he told them to have a mindset of humility.

That's what he says, Philippians chapter 2. He says, Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought himself not to be robbery, to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation.

So he humbled himself. And Paul talks about how he humbled himself from the crown to the cradle down to the cross. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

So to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, to walk worthy of the calling to which we've been called, we're to do it with all humility. But then what follows is gentleness and patience.

[14 : 25] And you know, when we consider these characteristics of Christ in the gospel, we see him. We see Jesus all the time in the gospel. We see that he was humble. We see that he was gentle. We see that he was patient.

Patient with everyone he met. Patient. More so, you look at it, and you look at yourself, and you think, Well, he's been so humble with me. He's condescended to me.

He has been gentle towards me. And he has sure been patient with me throughout my life. And Paul shows us that growth as a church, it's intertwined with a Christ-like character of humility, gentleness, and patience.

Humility, gentleness, and patience when, he says, when we are bearing with one another in love. When we bear with one another in love.

Which means that we're all flawed failures trying to follow Jesus. And I think we should always remember that. We are all flawed failures trying to follow Jesus.

[15 : 34] And we need to see that in one another. We are all flawed failures trying to follow Jesus. Which means that we have to accept that people are different. Different to us. We're all flawed failures trying to follow Jesus.

People are different. They're different in their mindset. They're different in their manner. They're different in their motives. We're all different. And Paul reminds us we need to bear with one another in love.

We need to love one another, says Jesus, as I have loved you. So we're to bear with one another in love because we're all flawed failures trying to follow Jesus.

Therefore, we should be walking worthy with humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

So Paul shows us that growth as a church involves bearing and striving. Bearing with one another in love or eager and striving to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

[16 : 37] Bearing with one another in love, striving, eagerly endeavouring to keep the unity, to preserve the unity, to guard the unity of the Spirit in the congregation.

That doesn't mean we always have to agree with one another. We won't always agree with one another. Paul is completely aware of that. He saw that in so many different situations and circumstances in the church.

Doesn't mean we always have to agree with one another, but it does mean that there's not to be friction or fallout or factions with one another. Because happy and holy discussion and debate is always healthy and wholesome.

Happy and holy discussion and debate is always healthy and wholesome. We're to bear with one another in love. We're to eagerly endeavour to keep the unity, to guard the unity, to preserve the unity of our congregation.

That's why our walk as a Christian is so important, so integral to the growth of our church. We're to guard, keep, watch.

[17 : 48] Guard, keep, watch the tongue. Guard, keep, watch the mind. We're to walk with all humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love, eagerly endeavouring to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Because as Paul says, churches grow when we're walking worthily together. churches grow when we are walking worthily together. And by highlighting the positive of following Jesus, following in the footsteps of Jesus, Paul is immediately highlighting also that slandering one another or spreading rumours about one another, that doesn't build up.

It only breaks down. As Jesus said, a house divided against itself, it cannot stand. So if we're to be bearing with one another in love and building one another up and eagerly endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, if we are doing that, Paul says, we will grow.

Because churches grow when you're walking worthily together. Churches grow when we're walking worthily together. And notice Paul emphasises the togetherness, the importance of being together, the togetherness.

He emphasises and explains the togetherness of a church in the following verses from verse 4 onwards. Because he says, in all humility, all gentleness, all patience, bear with one another in love, endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit.

[19 : 26] Literally the word unity is togetherness, the oneness of the Spirit. We're to eagerly endeavour to preserve the oneness, to keep the oneness, to guard the oneness of the Spirit in our congregation.

Because as Paul explains, he says there, verse 4, for there is one body and one Spirit. Just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. And you know, I love those verses emphasising the oneness.

He's emphasising the oneness of church life. That there's one body, there's one Spirit, we have one hope, we have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all, through all, and in all.

Therefore, for this reason, Paul is saying to us, because of this, we are to eagerly endeavour to preserve this oneness, to keep this oneness, to guard this oneness of Spirit in our congregation.

[20 : 47] There's to be a togetherness about us as a church because churches grow when we're walking worthily together. Churches grow when we're walking worthily together.

And Paul explains it, he goes on to explain from verse 8, that we're to walk worthily together because Jesus has ascended. We're to walk worthily together, we're to be of one Spirit because Jesus has ascended and in ascending, as you know, he has left us or his Spirit came.

So we're to be of one Spirit. Jesus has ascended, verse 8, therefore it says, when he ascended on high, he led a host of captives and he gave gifts to men, the gift of the Spirit.

In saying he ascended, what does it mean? But that he also descended into the lower regions of the earth. He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens that he might fill all things.

And so if you know your Psalms, maybe I should test you. Do you know what Psalm that's from? Psalm 68. Thou hast, O Lord, most glorious, ascended up on high and in triumph victorious led, captive, captivity.

[22 : 09] Thou hast received gifts for men for such as did rebel, yea, even for them that God the Lord in midst of them might dwell. And here Paulie explains, he explains that the humiliation, the incarnation, the life, death, burial, resurrection, exaltation, and ascension of Jesus Christ to glory, all of it, all of it was so that the church of Jesus Christ would be built and the gates of hell would not prevail against it.

all of it was so that we would have the gift of the Spirit and walk worthily together in the oneness of Spirit. We would walk worthily together because churches grow, says Paul, when we're walking worthily together.

But then secondly, Paul says, churches grow when we're working well together. Churches grow when we're working well together. this is what we see secondly, working well together.

Now look at verse 11. He says, And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all attain the unity of the faith, 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 and deceitful schemes.

Now I don't know why, but when I was thinking about this passage, the image and the illustration that I have in my mind of what Paul is saying here is of sports day.

[24 : 02] So if you go back in your mind to sports day as a child and taking part in a three-legged race. I'm sure you remember your own sports day, I'm sure maybe you were sporty in your youth and maybe you took part in a three-legged race.

I can't remember but they probably don't do it nowadays, probably because of health and safety or some other reason. But as you know, in the three-legged race, one of your legs is tied to someone else.

It's tied to your teammate and you have to learn as a team to work together as a team, to walk together as a team or even to run together as a team to reach the finish line.

I know that's the image, that's the illustration I have in my mind as we come to this passage because Paul says that congregational life and church life is like a three-legged race. Congregational life and church life is like a three-legged race because in a three-legged race, you can't be pulling in different directions.

You can't be moving at different times. You can't be arguing who's in charge. No, you have to hold on to one another closely in the three-legged race.

[25 : 17] You have to talk to one another calmly in the three-legged race. You have to encourage one another to move forward together. You have to spur one another on as you move forward together.

More than that, you have to walk in the same direction. You have to work together and you have to be a team. And as you know, the old cliché goes, there's no I in team because team stands for together everyone achieves more.

There's no I in team. Together everyone achieves more. And in these verses, Paul, he introduces us to the team. He shows us who is the team in Christ's church.

He gives to us the line-up, the line-up of Christ's team, the team that he set up in his church because he says there in verse 11, he gave the apostles, prophets, evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up of the body of Christ.

And you're on Paul's mind there, that's a strong line-up, a really strong line-up because he says in Christ's church there are apostles, there are prophets, there are evangelists, there are shepherds, there are teachers.

[26 : 33] And Paul says that they are there, all these men that God calls into these different roles and responsibilities in the church, they all have different positions, different purposes within the team.

Some, he says, are apostles. They have been specifically sent by Christ. Others are prophets because they have a message to proclaim. Some are evangelists because they have a passion to reach out to the lost.

Others are shepherds because their role is to pastor the Lord's people. Some are teachers who want and who have to teach the truths of God's word. They all have different roles. They all have different responsibilities within the church.

They all have different positions and different purposes within the team. But notice, there's no one on the sidelines. No one's left on the bench.

There are no substitutes in this team. Everyone's involved. Everyone is involved in the team because the apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers, they all have their roles.

[27 : 37] They all have their responsibilities. They all have their positions and their purposes, which is, verse 12, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

Their role as apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, teachers, is to equip the saints. To equip the saints to equip us for the work of ministry, for the building up the body of Christ.

So no one's left out because everyone is involved in the team because the team is to work together. The team is to work as one unified body.

Just like the three-legged race, it's to be one body moving forward. The apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, the teachers, they're to use their roles and responsibilities, their positions and purposes to equip the saints and build up the body.

Everyone is on the team. The team is to work well together. And we're to work well together, says Paul, until, verse 13, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.

[28 : 58] We're to work well together until we attain unity, the oneness. It's the same word as before, the togetherness of the faith. It's the same exhortation as the previous section, where we're to walk worthily together to keep the unity and the oneness and the togetherness of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

But here, Paul isn't exhorting us to walk worthily together. He says, you're to work well together. And you're to work well together until we attain the unity of the faith, until we attain the oneness, the togetherness of the faith.

Because churches grow, says Paul, churches grow when we're walking worthily together, and churches grow when we're working well together. Churches grow when we're working well together.

And you know, Paul, he emphasises and he explains that we need to work together and we need to work well together as a team. We need to work well together as a team.

As I said, there's all these old cliches of there's no I in team. Together, everyone achieves more. No man is an island. But there are other old cliches that you're probably familiar with.

[30 : 14] Such as, it takes a whole team to make a team. It takes a whole team to make a team. Which means that everyone is involved in the team.

No one's on the sidelines. No one is on the periphery. Everyone is involved in the team. Another cliché is, a team is only as strong as its weakest player.

player. A team is only as strong as its weakest player. Which emphasises the importance of everyone's input. Everyone's involvement.

Everyone is to be part of the team. Because everyone in the team is to give 100% as the team works together. Because a team is only as strong as its weakest player.

If there's a player in the team that's only giving 20% while the other players are giving 100%, the team is only as strong as its weakest player. So Paul emphasises to us the importance of everyone's input, everyone's involvement in the team.

[31 : 20] We need to work together as one unified body. We're to work well together to attain the unity and the oneness and the togetherness of the faith.

Why are we to do it? Because there's a world out there. 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 and craftiness in deceitful schemes, rather speaking the truth in love, having honest conversations, we're 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, when each part is working properly, working at a hundred percent, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

You know, Paul, he's exhorting us, he's urging us, he's encouraging us to work well together as a team. because another cliché is united we stand, divided we fall.

United we stand, but divided we fall, and churches grow together, it says, grow well together when we're working well together. Churches grow when we're working well together.

Therefore, the question we need to ask ourselves, and with this I'll conclude, first question is are we part of the team? Are we on the team? Are we part of team Barvis?

[33 : 04] Or are we happier on the sidelines? Are we happier as a spectator? Are we happier to step back and watch others step forward and serve? But Paul is reminding us here, and it's really hard hitting.

This is what he gives the application. This is where the rubber hits the road. Paul is reminding us, even you could say he's reprimanding us, and he's saying to us, as a member in our congregation, you are a member of team Barvis.

As a member in the congregation, you're a member of team Barvis. Therefore, as a member of team Barvis, have you honestly asked yourself, in 2024, what am I doing on this team?

What am I doing on this team? My friend, what are you doing on this team? What am I doing on this team? What are we all doing together on this team?

Because there's no point pointing the finger or pushing the focus onto someone else or saying, what about them, what about them? We're all part of the team. We're all on team Barvis together.

[34 : 12] Therefore, as a member of team Barvis, have you asked yourself, have I asked myself, what am I doing? What position do I play? What part do I play?

How can I serve on team Barvis? How can I read that development plan and think, where am I going to serve in Neart? If I am serving in team Barvis, am I giving 100%?

How am I serving on this team? Because you know, Paul, he's urging us, exhorting us, to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called.

The minister didn't die for you. The elders didn't give their life on the cross for us. We are to walk worthy of the calling to which we have been called.

Called by the Christ who loved us and gave himself for us. So Paul here is reminding us, even reprimanding us, as he teaches us how churches grow.

[35 : 22] Churches grow when we're walking worthily together, and churches grow when we're working well together. Very challenging about how churches grow.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. Our Father in Heaven, we give thanks to Thee this evening for reminding us and in many ways reprimanding us.

The need to work well together, but even more so to walk worthy of the calling to which we have been called. Oh Lord, to walk with humility and with patience and with gentleness and to walk in a manner where we're bearing with one another in love, we're eagerly endeavouring to maintain and to keep and to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, that we would see that we are together, that we are one body, one people, we have one Lord, one faith, one hope, in Jesus and Jesus alone.

Bless us, Lord, together then, we pray. Help us to work well together, to serve together, to serve as a team together, to do it all to Thy glory and ultimately to the furtherance of Thy kingdom.

Lord, we confess that we are not what we ought to be. We confess, Lord, that we fall short in so many ways, but Lord, help us, we plead, to serve a right, to walk worthy and to give our all for Jesus who gave his all for us.

[37 : 00] Keep us in, we pray, do us good, we ask, go before us, we plead, for Jesus sake. Amen. We're going to bring our time to a conclusion this evening.

We're going to sing in those words that Paul quoted. Psalm 68. Psalm 68 in the Scottish Psalter and verse 18 down to the verse Mark 20.

Psalm 68 and verse 18. Thou hast, O Lord, most glorious, ascended up on high and in triumph victorious led, captive captivity. Thou hast received gifts for men, for such as did rebel, yea, e'en for them that God the Lord in midst of them might dwell.

Down to the verse Mark 20 of Psalm 68. To God's praise. The pastor Lord was glorious, sa' B Let us live, captive, captivity.

The lost receive, it gives for men, for such trust in rebel.

[38 : 48] Give for them, but God the Lord, in midst of them might dwell.

Let be the Lord who is to us, O Father, salvation God, who daily with his benefits as plentifully doth Lord.

The of salvation is the God, who is our God most strong.

And unto God the Lord, from death, the issues to belong.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forevermore. Amen.

[40 : 36] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.