

Paul Calls Us to Grow in Christ

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] Our God, we are here before you. We know by faith your presence in accordance with your promise.

And it is your stated purpose in your word to speak to us, to speak to the particular circumstances of each of us.

And the particular burden that we have brought to this service, we want to leave with you.

We want to find healing for our minds and hearts and bodies. We want to find strength for the work that you have commanded us to do.

We want to find, we want to be surprised by joy in the midst of the circumstances of our lives.

[1 : 07] So as we turn to your word, we ask that you, in accordance with your ancient promise, and your steadfast purpose of love, will accomplish in us that which is according to your will.

We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen. Please be seated. Amen. I have in my diary here a number of pink slips, phone calls I have to make, and people I have to see tomorrow morning, or during this week ahead.

And I thought I would like to send you home with a pink slip tonight. There is an ominous use of that word pink slip, isn't there?

Well, that's not. I'm just, this is just because these are telephone messages. So, uh, and it's part of my expectation that, that God has a message for each of you tonight.

So you can, you can start with the date and the time, which is approximately 20 to 8.

[2 : 42] Is that right? And, uh, you can put your own name as the message to whom the, uh, to whom, you're the person to whom the message is addressed while you were out.

I don't know what you're going to do with that. Uh, I think perhaps, uh, called would be the, uh, best thing to check mark.

And if you don't hear, I'm sure in his grace, he will call again, but it would be wise if you took the message now and knew what it was he was calling you to.

And then, if you would put down the message which you received. This, I'm really quite serious about this. Last, last week we ended up with Pat handing out a card to people to put down their response to the, to what Paul, what Pat had been preaching about.

And, uh, we read over your responses during the week. And, uh, I mean, a group of us did just to see you. They were all very anonymous.

[4 : 02] I might say you're an anonymous bunch. Uh, but, uh, I must say I had a feeling that some of you weren't being very honest in the responses you had.

And part of tonight's scripture is to encourage you to be honest and, uh, putting down the message, which then belongs to you.

I'm not going to collect it afterwards to see what message you got. It belongs to you. And I hope you'll put it in your diary as a reminder to you of the message you received.

And I do this simply because I'm sure it is God's purpose to speak to us. And, uh, and that what he has to say is probably very specific, or at least it could at least be in part very specific as to something you should be doing some way that you should be responding in obedience to God speaking to you by his spirit through his word.

So now turn to the word. And, uh, that's Ephesians chapter four, verses one to 14. Can I take that?

[5 : 27] And, uh, this is on page 182, I think. Uh, uh, and, uh, uh, uh, Paul continues his letter, chapter four, verse one, I, therefore a prisoner for the Lord.

And that's because it's one of the letters written from prison. He wasn't being spiritual about it. He actually was inside four walls.

Uh, uh, a prisoner of the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called. And so Paul writes and begs with the Ephesians to do this.

Reading over the passage, I think the contrast to that living a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, comes later, if you run your finger down to about verse 14, you will see the opposite, I think, to living a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

That word says, lead a life worthy. You know that lovely word, peripatetic?

[7 : 09] I think that's the word that's here, living a life worthy. It means walking, walking worthy, that your walk is worthy of your high calling, your calling of God.

So you are walking that way. Verse 14, then, is the contrast to that. You're to walk worthy of the calling to which you have been called, rather than, in verse 14, being children tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine by the cunning of man, with their craftiness in deceitful wiles.

So that's the other picture, the picture of where it's possible to be as a Christian, as a member of the Christian community.

Rather than walking worthy of your calling, you will be children, characterized by being tossed to and fro.

The same sort of word is there, the idea of being tossed to and fro as opposed to walking worthy. You're carried away by every wind of doctrine, of teaching, every new idea that comes along, and you're doing something different.

[8 : 41] You've got a brand new idea for this week, so that you can see what Paul is calling for is somebody who's going to walk and keep on walking like that, step after step, in the obedience of faith.

And the other person whom he contrasts with that is the child who's tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine and who is gullible and is carried away.

Cunning of men, craftiness, deceitful wiles, leading people astray, earnest and sincere people. I'm obsessed this weekend because I've been doing Titus and Faiths with the importance of sound doctrine, sound teaching, teaching that gives health and stability and direction to our lives as opposed to being tossed to and fro by the newest idea, the newest fact.

So that's the contrast with which it all starts. And it describes the things that are to be characteristic of this call, and that is that lowliness, meekness, patience, forbearing one another in love.

And I must confess that it came to my mind as I wrestled with that verse, how would it be if somebody went to the new coach of the British Columbia Lions and said, I would like to be a lineman.

[10 : 40] What are your qualifications? I am lowly, meek, patient, forbearing one another in love. Do you think you'd get the job?

No, I guess you wouldn't. But let me tell you about those words just so that you get a better picture of them. Lowliness means you're not compelled to maintain your reputation.

You don't have to spend all your time projecting the proper image. Which, don't waste time doing that, he says.

You've got something more important to do, walking in the obedience of faith. Meekness means that you are under God's control.

You're not tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. You are walking in fellowship with God under his instruction, under his control, keeping your pink slip in front of you, telling you what he has commanded you to do.

[11 : 54] That's meekness. Patience means that you're prepared to be slow in avenging wrong.

When you've been hurt, when you've been wronged, when you've been offended, you don't flare up like a Roman candle. You are to be patient.

Allow these things to happen. And then forbearing one another, you've got to put up with one another's weakness. It's wonderful how gifted we are at being able to spot one another's weakness. Well, not only are you to spot it, but you're to forbear one another in love. Give time to one another. Be patient. And you know how easy it can be. Well, that's how it starts, and that's what characterizes the walk as opposed to being carried away by every wind of doctrine.

[13 : 10] Now, there's a tremendous amount in this. I think that next time we do a series, we'll take chapter 4, verses 1 to 16, and run it for at least six months, because there is so much here, and hard to get to.

verse 3, we are to be eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Very important statement, I think, because it means that you don't create unity, you maintain it. the unity is given.

The unity is God given. The bond of peace is God given. And your eagerness is to maintain that which is God given.

God has given us a unity, and that unity is in himself. We have in God a unity.

[14:24] unity, as you, you know, you don't have to be told that it means one, and having said the unity of the spirit, he then goes on to describe what that unity is made up of, and there you can see it.

One body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of us all. So, that's the unity. Our unity is in God, and it doesn't matter how deep your convictions, and how hot your passions, the oneness of God remains.

And, you have got to be eager to maintain that, and not to tear things apart all the time, to tear people apart, to tear people apart through philosophies and ideas, but to maintain the awesome reality of the oneness of God.

So, that one is there, and then in contrast to that one that's there, there is all, all you people, all those people out there, all the people everywhere, there is an allness as well as a oneness.

[15:57] There is a oneness in God, but then there is the God who you find out is the Father, the God and Father of us all, who is above all, and through all, and in all.

So, you get the oneness of God, it affects everybody, nobody can escape from the reality of that unity which is in God.

We all belong to one another in that unity, and we must be eager to maintain that oneness, to recognize and realize and work out that oneness.

And then having dealt with oneness and then allness, he now treats eachness. You see how he does that?

He goes after us and says this oneness and the allness of God's fatherhood for us then goes on to talk about each of us.

[17:14] And he says about each of us, grace was given to each of us so that this grace of God, the God who is father of us all, above us all, through us all, and in us all, has given to each of us, you individually, and you individually, and you individually, and you and you and you and you and you, each of us, this grace is given into the circumstances of your life.

The love of God is poured into your life and into your circumstances and into your world to each of you. If I say it's given to all of you, you say, well, of course, that's all except me.

it's given to all of you and to each of you. So he changes that emphasis there and says that.

And then he goes on and he says, some of you. You see how he changes that again? And he's talking here about gifts.

There's a peculiar reference, and I think we're going to have to bring in the learned Dr. D'Umbrell to work you through verse 8 and 9, because I'm not going to spend any time on it tonight, simply because it seems to me very complex.

[18:49] It's one of the lovely things about it is that the reference that it's to in Psalm 68 says that he receives gifts from men, and Paul has turned it around and said he gives gifts to men.

So that's part of the technicality of that verse that you have to work your way through and maybe we'll get Dr. D'Umbrell to help us with it sometime. But he goes on now to talk about each and what he does for each, then he does for some.

And you see how that comes up in verse 11. His gifts were that some, some of you, and this is where he starts to differentiate between all of you.

Some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, some teachers, so that God is father of us all.

He gives grace to each, and he appoints some to particular functions, things, so that some of you will be one thing and some of you will be another.

[20:06] And probably very important for you to identify that and to be helped by the other people here to identify what that is.

People who identify their own gift, I suspect are mostly wrong, and we need one another to help us identify what that particular gift may be, and to help each other with it.

So that these gifts are given, and the purpose for which they are given, if you look carefully, is that there's a it's for equipping, that is strengthening, making fit.

And now he's moved on to a particular concept of the body. There's one, there's all, there's each, there's some, and now he's talking about the body.

and that this is the body of Christ. It's a highly Trinitarian passage, you see, that God who is the Father of all, Christ who has redeemed all, and the Holy Spirit that makes us all into one body.

[21 : 42] It's that unity of the Spirit that makes us one body. and rather being at odds with one another and deceived by one another, we are to be in one Spirit so that we can complement one another with the different gifts he's given to some and to some and to some and to some, one gift and another and another and another so that we become part of one body.

And that picture is given there when he says that, well, that he has that purpose in verse 13, until we all attain to the unity of the faith of the knowledge of the Son of God.

God, we have a goal to attain. And that goal is unity of faith, of the faith, some question as to which is the bright translation, unity of faith or unity of the faith, knowledge of the Son of God, mature manhood, and the standard of that maturity is to be measured by the stature of the fullness of Christ.

So that we come to that, you see what God is doing among us and how he is bringing us into that unity which we are eager to maintain and not only are we eager to maintain it, we want to attain it, maintain and attain the unity that belongs to us in Christ.

And that unity is to bring us as the body of Christ, members one of another to maturity. Not to be, as I've suggested, children tossed to and fro.

[24 : 10] And then he says, but not that, but rather this. And the rather comes in verse 15, 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 knit together by every joint with which it is supplied when every part is working properly, making bodily growth and upbuilding itself in love.

Well, that's what he would rather us do. And the process by which that is done seems to be speaking the truth in love.

And the I am very disturbed myself. And I feel very much the victim of this.

I'm not the victim of someone else doing it. I feel the victim of my own doing it. I think religion is such dangerous stuff.

I know I've said this hundreds of signs, but because it provides us with a little drama that we can act out so that we can pretend to be what we are not.

[25 : 46] And we can create all sorts of symbolism and all sorts of ritual and all sorts of roles around us so that we can pretend to be what we are not.

and that we learn how to do it. We learn a language in which to do it. And so we are deceived by one another.

Mind you, with the best and highest and most spiritual and religious intentions in the world, it happens. things. But the characteristic of what Christ wants to happen is that we should get to the place where we can speak the truth in love to one another.

You know, truth is not to be a baseball bat that we beat the other person over the head with. the measure of love we have for another is that we talk to one another about things that are true.

We speak the truth in love one to another. And the result of that is not something that becomes increasingly artificial and phony, and spurious, but something which, well, two things happen.

[27 : 24] We grow up. We grow up into him who is the head. Christ is the head and he is the interconnection between us.

My relationship to you and yours to me as we speak the truth and love to one another is through Christ who is the head. That's how we are enabled to do that.

It's very difficult to speak the truth in love. I don't mind somebody speaking the truth to me in one way, but emotionally I'm often just quite unprepared for it.

So I, while I say with my mind, speak the truth, emotionally I give all the signals don't dare tell me because it'll destroy me.

And yet it doesn't destroy. What it says that it does is, uh, is that we grow up in every way into Christ.

[28 : 34] that, uh, in the exercise of, of these gifts for the building up of the body of Christ, then, uh, we grow up into this maturity in Christ, and, uh, and the wholeness of the body of Christ becomes

apparent, apparent, and the interconnectedness between people becomes apparent.

Every joint with which it is supplied when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilding itself in love. So that Christ is, is the head of the church, but Christ is also the interconnection of the church, the church I'm speaking of as the body of Christ, the company of Christians, the basis on which we relate to one another.

Now, I tell you that, and I must leave you with it, but there's a lot more to be said about it, uh, a lot more to be said in the way of how practically do you do this?

How, how could we do it? how, how can this happen? I become, I become aware, and with this I will conclude, having meant to conclude already, I become aware that for me, standing up here preaching, that what I have to do when this is over is go home and try and get my mind in gear to do it again next week, and the week after, and the week after, so that the privilege really belongs to you, because you have to take this and work it out in the circumstances of your life.

This is why preachers, I think, become so phony, because they, uh, they just go on telling other people how to do it, never working it out for themselves.

[30 : 51] And I guess it's a message like that, that I want to put on my pink slip, and, uh, you think about the message that, uh, should go down on your pink slip to give direct application to what Paul is talking about here in Ephesians 4.

Amen. Amen. Having heard the word of God explained to us and explained clearly, we have an opportunity to respond.

That opportunity is on page 233. 4. I'd invite you to stand and recite, not just with the lips, but with the heart, the words found there.

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made, who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.

He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father, and he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end.

[33 : 30] And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeded from power and his Son, who in water and his son together is shall we kneel?

during the coming week you might want to be in prayer if you haven't already been about those who responded in one way or another to last Sunday evening's message by our friend Pat, and we're asked to pray for Hugh Kierkegaard, a man who was involved with our Sunday evening congregation for a while and is now working at the Spring Hill Penitentiary in Nova Scotia.

Just request prayers for prayer for Hugh. The Lord puts it on your heart, please. Do remember him in your prayers.

And so as one body of believers we turn now to a time of intercessory intercessory prayer. So shall we pray?

be mindful O Lord of thy people bowed before you tonight and of those who are absent from us.

[35 : 46] We ask you to care for infants, to guide those who are young, to support aged people, to travel with those who are voyaging in tonight, to bless and heal the sick amongst us.

Could we turn in our book of common prayer to page 54? On page 54, prayer number 37 is for those in anxiety.

And just before we pray this prayer together, could we in the silence of our hearts or perhaps you'd like to say something aloud about some situation or some person you know who is in going through a time of suffering just now.

strength to hear and what do anything you know how you can ask similar to Thank you.

Thank you.

[38 : 32] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. You are the helper of the helpless, the savior of the lost, the refuge of the wanderer, the healer of the sick.

Thou who knowest each man's need and hast heard his prayer, grant unto each according to thy merciful loving kindness and thy eternal love.

[39 : 41] This we ask through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Harry's reminded us tonight about the church and its oneness.

So as part of the one holy Catholic church, we'll want to pray for it this evening as well. Most gracious God, we humbly beseech thee for thy holy Catholic church.

We'd ask you to fill it with all truth. And in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it. Where it is in air, direct it.

Where anything is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen and confirm it. Where it is in want, furnish it. Where it is divided and rent asunder, make it whole again.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Could you now take the book of alternative services and turn to page 238?

[41 : 09] Amen. As a way of uniting all of our prayers which we've spoken or said quietly, silently in our hearts, we'll say this prayer beginning, almighty God, together.

Almighty God, who has given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee and does promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy name, thou wilt hear their requests.

Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be most expedient for them, granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth and in the world to come, life everlasting.

For thou, Father, art good and loving, and we glorify thee through thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, in the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Amen. In the middle of the next page, there is this invitation to each and every one of us.

[42 : 28] You that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins and are in love and charity with your neighbors and intend to lead the new life, following the commandments of God and walking from henceforth in his holy ways, draw near with faith and take this holy sacrament to your comfort and make your humble confession to Almighty God.

Almighty God, Father of our believers, he prays us in the inner circle of odcinkes that have loved you.

We proclaim our spirit on the gospel of molecular■■■s, God bless you. This is God's word to you.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of his great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him, have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and bring you to everlasting life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Lord, please stand. This is a sign of our unity, a sign of the unity as we prepare to gather around the Lord's table.

[45 : 09] The peace of the Lord be always with you. The peace of the Lord is with you.

Amen. Please turn in your songbook to song number 26.

And we will sing this as we receive our offering. Amen. Welcome all ye noble saints of love, As now before your merry eyes and thought, God and man at table are set down.

God and man at table are set down. God and man at table are set down.

God and man at table are set down.

[47 : 49] God and man at table are set down.

God, a man, a table, I sat down. Worship in the presence of the Lord. With joyful songs and hearts in one accord.

And let our host, a table, be adored. God, a man, a table, I sat down.

God, a man, a table, I sat down. When at last this earth shall pass away.

When Jesus and his bride are one to stay. The feast of love has just begun that day.

[49 : 14] God, a man, a table, I sat down. God, a man, a table, I sat down.

God, a man, a table, I sat down. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. You have signed signed signed. Everyone wants to read and read and be accepted.

May■■i-■yozurz vare July that idea of enjoying day. We should let every step and patient who is in all of this nature. There are as many hombres and mixedederemiasian saints that happen.

We should stand here and stand, every day.