

**The Conduct of the Called:  
Walking in Unity and Maturity, Part 2**

Ephesians 4:7-16

*Christian unity exists in spite of diversity. That is, God has reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to Himself in one body through the cross (2:15-16). Christian maturity exists because of diversity. That is, God has gifted His church in different ways for the the growth and edifying of the body (4:12, 16).*

- I. Christ gives grace-gifts to \_\_\_\_\_ for the sake of the church (7-10; cf 1 Cor 12:4-6; Rom 12:4-8; 1 Pet 4:10)
  
- II. Christ gives grace-gifts to the \_\_\_\_\_ for the sake of the church (11-16)
  - A. Three-fold \_\_\_\_\_ (12)
    1. For the \_\_\_\_\_ of the saints
      - a) For the \_\_\_\_\_ of the ministry
      - b) For the \_\_\_\_\_ of the body of Christ
  
  - B. Three-fold \_\_\_\_\_ (13-16)
    1. Unity of the \_\_\_\_\_ (13)
    2. Sound \_\_\_\_\_ (14)
    3. Spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ (15-16)

Here, then, is Paul's vision for the church. God's new society is to display charity, unity, diversity, and growing maturity. These are characteristics of 'a life worthy of the calling' to which God has called us, and which the apostle begs us to lead (verse 1).

The more we share Paul's perspective, the deeper will be our discontent with the ecclesiastical status quo. Some of us are too conservative, too complacent, too ready to acquiesce in the present situation and to resist change. Others are too radical, wanting to dispense with the institution altogether. Instead we need to grasp more clearly the kind of new society God wants his church to be. Then we shall not be content either with things as they are, or with partial solutions, but rather will pray and work for the church's total renewal.

Some look mainly for structures of unity, but seem to have no comparable concern that the church should become a truly caring community marked by humility, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance and love. Paul's primary concern is not for structures; he begins and ends with love (verses 2, 16).

Others lay great stress on the fact of the church's unity as a theological concept clearly articulated in their minds, but appear to see nothing anomalous in the visible disunity which contradicts their theology.

Others are content with a uniformity of church life and liturgy that is dull, boring, colourless, monotonous and dead; they have never glimpsed the variety God intends or the diversity of ministries which should enrich and enliven their membership of the body of Christ.

Others have a static view of the church, and are well satisfied if the congregation manages to maintain its size and programme, without cutback; they have no vision of church growth either by evangelistic outreach or by the Christian maturing of their members.

All such complacency is unworthy of the church's calling. In contrast to it the apostle sets before us the picture of a deepening fellowship, an eagerness to maintain visible Christian unity and to recover if it is lost, an active every-member ministry and a steady growth into maturity by holding the truth in love. We need to keep this biblical ideal clearly before us. Only then shall we live a life that is worthy of it.

- John R.W. Stott