

“Unity in Diversity”
Ephesians 4:7-8
(Preached at Trinity, January 18, 2015)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As I’ve pointed out, one of the chief themes of the Book of Ephesians is the unity of the Church. Paul stresses how the former division between Jews and Gentiles has been removed in Christ.
Ephesians 2:13-14 NAU - "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall"
We are all united together as the body of Christ.
2. The second half of the Book of Ephesians makes practical application of this truth. Paul begins **Chapter 4** by reminding us that this glorious unity must be protected.
Ephesians 4:3 NAU - "being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
3. In **Verses 4-6** Paul set before us some of the foundational elements that bind us together in unity – there is one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all.
4. Now in a striking turn Paul turns our eyes from the unity of the church to the diversity of individuals within the church. He moves from the things we share in common to those things that are distinct about us.
Ephesians 4:7 NAS - "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."
5. Paul makes similar statements elsewhere:
Romans 12:4-6 NAU - "For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us. . ."
1 Corinthians 12:4-7 NAU - "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶ There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. ⁷ But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."
6. This is surprising as we’ve been looking at the importance of oneness— one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all. I’ve stressed that the number one is unique in that it is a picture of unity. There is no diversity in the number one. As you add a second and a third there can be diversity and thus division.

7. After reading one, one, one, it is surprising to find as we come to **Verse 7** a focus upon diversity within the body of Christ. Again, with diversity comes the possibility of division and conflict. But God has designed a unique diversity among His people. This is a blessing to the church but it also demands great diligence and caution "to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."
8. Of course there are many types of diversity within the body of Christ.
- There is diversity of race – God saves His people from every race, kindred, and tongue.
 - There is diversity of economic status – rich and poor. We are warned against schism based upon wealth.
James 2:1-5 NAU - "My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with *an attitude of* personal favoritism. ² For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, ³ and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," ⁴ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?"
 - Many other kinds of differences among human beings can also be found in the church—weak & strong, large & small, short & tall, intellectually bright and intellectually dull, extravert and introvert
9. Paul isn't speaking about natural diversity. He is speaking of giftedness. He is speaking of God's blessing of grace, distinct among the body of Christ.
Ephesians 4:7 NAU - "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."
- A. On one hand, grace is given to every member of the Body of Christ.
Ephesians 2:7-8 NAU - "so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God"
- B. Many of the spiritual gifts are the fruits of regeneration. Our hearts are transformed and we are united together in love.
Galatians 5:22-23 NAU - "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."
- C. On the other hand, Paul is speaking here in **Verse 7** of grace given by measure. Within the church there is great diversity in gifts, knowledge, influence, and honor.
10. But why? Diversity always has the potential of resulting in division and conflict. Why would God purposely ordain diversity in the Church? The answer is simple. Diversity makes us dependent upon one another which actually intensifies our unity. Simply put, we need one another.
11. This morning I want to remind you of two ways God works uniquely in each of us by His grace and how it affects us as the body of Christ.

- I. First of all, there is diversity in spiritual maturity. Spiritual growth is a work of God's grace. God grants it to us by measure.
- A. There are immature believers and mature believers
1. All of us are on a spiritual journey
 2. All of us start the journey as new born babes
1 Peter 2:2-3 NAU - " like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, ³ if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord."
 3. There is an expectation of growth – **Heb. 5:11-6:9**
Hebrews 5:12-6:1 NAU - "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. "
 4. All of us have the duty to grow. Sanctification is a synergistic work. God grows us and we must partake of good food and strive after holiness.
 5. We also grow through our involvement with other believers.
- B. Every believer has the duty of building up and encouraging the weaker brethren
1. As soon as you are saved you begin the process of growing in knowledge and grace which means you are able to help those less mature
 2. It may simply be by the demonstration of your passion for Christ and your faithfulness to His church.
Hebrews 10:24-25 NAU - "and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*, and all the more as you see the day drawing near."
 3. The more mature members have a duty to mentor and instruct the less mature. This is the pattern of **Titus 2**
Titus 2:1-5 NAU - " But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. ² Older men are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance. ³ Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, ⁴ so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵ *to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored."
 4. Paul describes this clearly in **Verses 11-12**
Ephesians 4:11-12 NAU - "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"

- C. Dwelling together in a great diversity of maturity levels demands great love and patience.
1. The characteristics of spiritual immaturity are very similar to the characteristics of natural childhood. Consider the similarities.
 - a. Lack of knowledge - A young believer has limited knowledge
1 Corinthians 3:1-2 NAU - " And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. ² I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able"
 - b. A tendency towards childish behavior
 Undisciplined - Good habits are poorly developed
 High standards have not been established
 They sometimes lean towards self-centeredness
 - c. Unjustified self-confidence
 A child often overestimates his ability
 Immature Christians often overestimate their knowledge
 They argue of things of which they have little knowledge
 Immature Christians seldom consider themselves immature
 - d. A taste for unhealthy food.
 They often prefer simple things
 They would rather read a blog than seriously study the Bible
 - e. A dislike for hard work – a child dislikes cleaning his room
 Immature Christians often excuse themselves from the work of the church
 - f. Prone to being gullible
 They are easily enticed to accept new ideas
 They are not yet grounded in sound doctrine
 2. And it takes great maturity to recognize our immaturity. Few possess that maturity.
 3. We must all give ourselves to helping one another mature
1 Thessalonians 5:14 NAU - "We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone."
Ephesians 4:13-14 NAU - "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 fullness 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"
 4. We have great need of one another. No child could exist long without the care of adults. Christians enter the faith in need of mature saints to love, and teach and nurture in the faith. But even the newest believer is endowed with gifts for the strengthening of the body.
 Calvin – “No member of the body of Christ is endowed with such perfection as to be able, without the assistance of others, to supply his own necessities.”

- II. Secondly, there is diversity in spiritual giftedness
- A. Christ, by His Spirit, has gifted each of us differently – in different ways and in different proportions. We are gifted by measure.
1. We do not all have the same function in the church
Romans 12:4 NAU - " For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function"
 2. All in the body do not have the same place of recognition
- B. Each of you has been given a particular gift or gifts to be used in the body of Christ.
1. This is the essence of being a part of the local church.
1 Corinthians 12:4-6 NAU - "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. ⁵ And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. ⁶ There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*."
 2. The church is built up and strengthened through the labors of each individual part.
Ephesians 4:15-16 NAU - " 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 what 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."
 3. Each of us is different and God has gifted us distinctly
"But to each one of us grace was given"
 - a. Not everyone possesses a gift that will place him prominently before the congregation. But all are important.
 - b. Your duty is to discover your gifts and give yourself to using them with the full extent of your ability
 4. Again, every believer has at least one gift to be used for the building up of the church.
 - a. Your gifts are special and unique to your work in this body.
NAS **1 Corinthians 12:7** – "But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."
 - b. You have been given as a gift to this church. We can see this with the gift of pastor:
Ephesians 4:11-12 NAU - " 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"
 - c. Each of us are stewards of our gifts. We must be faithful to use them to the glory of our Master.
 - d. The purpose of your gift is not self-aggrandizement or self-promotion or self-satisfaction but for service to the body of Christ.
- C. God is sovereign over the distribution of the gifts. There is no place for pride on our part or jealousy. It is all of God's doing.
Ephesians 4:7 NAU - "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."

Conclusion:

1. Why would God ordain such diversity within His church? Doesn't diversity always present possible conflict? Won't it open up the possibility of jealousy, envy, or strife?
2. Diversity teaches us of grace. God has saved each of us from great sin. Such grace teaches us to be gracious towards others.
3. Diversity teaches us of God's sovereignty. God makes us what we are.
1 Corinthians 15:10 NAU - "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me."
4. It brings peace of mind. If you are what you are by the grace of God and if you have your place in the body Christ by God's grace then you can have confidence that it is what's good for you and good for the body.
5. It reminds us of our dependence upon one another. As the body of Christ we must build up one another. We must teach one another, encourage one another, pray for one another. This is God's design for us.