

Ephesians 4:17-20

1. Church Life

We are continuing to look through the words of Ephesians 4. Ephesians 4 tells us that the reality of salvation accomplished by Jesus should be evidenced in our lives. In other words, we are to live in a manner worthy of our calling to be God's saved people. It can also mean living according to our sanctification. However, when talking about a life worthy of our calling or our sanctification, Paul does not describe our endeavor to be individual, but as a community, that is, centered on the church. He tells us that all the saints become one body and become like Jesus together in the church. And from there, He tells us how a life worthy of our calling should be evidenced and revealed not only in the church, but also in our families, marital relationships, parent-child relationships, and all other relationships in this world.

Above all, what we must think deeply about is that the saints—who were saved from sin, death, and the power of Satan by the blood and righteousness of Jesus—were made one in Jesus and allowed to enjoy the reality of heaven and that the reality of heaven was evidenced on this earth through the church. The entire words of Ephesians 4 tell us about our calling centered on the church. We are called not only to testify to the reality of heaven through the church but also to testify to the glory of the Trinity. How is this so? Just as God is One but exists as three distinct persons, the church is also one body but is made up of many distinct members. These many members become one in Jesus, testifying to the glory of the unity of the Trinity and the reality of the unity of heaven.

We read starting at chapter 4 verse 17, but if we go back to the beginning of chapter 4, we first see that these blessed realities are explained. In verses 1-6, it tells us that Jesus called many distinct members and made them one. It says that we are all one body in one Spirit, receive one baptism, serve one Lord and one God and Father, and have one faith, and one hope. This unity is a unity that is made by the blood of Jesus and is an eternal, unbreakable unity. Paul first looks upon this blessed reality of the unity that Jesus has accomplished through His blood, and he tells us that each believer must find his or her own life in this unity and live as a member of one body, keeping unity.

In Ephesians 4:7-11, Paul tells us that God has placed many members in one body and that Jesus, the head of the body, gives grace and gifts to each member according to the measure of the gift, so that they may serve one church and care for other members. In verses 12-16, he tells us of Jesus' pleasing will and purpose in giving grace and gifts to all members so that they may serve and care for one another. It is for all members to become one in the knowledge and faith of Jesus, to become a perfect man, and to attain the full stature of Christ. In other words, from being one body, we become perfectly like Jesus, being sanctified. This is God's pleasing will and the purpose for which He has called us. And it is the process of the sanctification in which we grow toward Jesus.

In particular, verse 15 says to grow into Christ by testifying the truth in love. As we grow into oneness in believing and knowing Jesus, the fruit is revealed in testifying the truth in love: to grow more as one with the gospel truth that is testified through the fellowship of love in Jesus. This is how we grow healthily into the image of Christ. Since Jesus also testified the truth with the love of the cross, if we grow in knowing and believing in Jesus, we will testify the truth with love.

This is the pleasing will that our Lord Jesus has for his church, and to fulfill this, he is praying without ceasing, and he is indwelling the church through the Holy Spirit and working in each member. And through this, he is making us testify to the reality of the kingdom of heaven and eternal life. Therefore, we must realize the pleasing will that Jesus is fulfilling, and, centered on the gospel ministry, we must live our

lives serving the church and the saints diligently, testifying to the love of Jesus' cross according to the measure of the grace and gifts he has given us.

What is the most important thing that we need to fulfill according to Jesus' pleasing will? Faith. It is the faith that believes in Jesus and the gospel. It is the faith that looks at Jesus in the word and has fellowship with Him. Through this faith, we receive all the strength from Jesus and can live a life worthy of our calling. However, we can also say this for the reason why faith is necessary. Even if we know Jesus and His pleasing will that He is fulfilling, if we only look at the church, ourselves, or the process we are growing through, we feel very miserable. If we only look at ourselves, we are disappointed and can only sigh. This is because the church and the members of the church are not perfect and are still lacking and imperfect. The church is a place where sinners like "me" gather. Sometimes we doubt whether this church, where people like me gather, can truly become a perfect body and reach the full stature of Christ.

However, that is why the Bible continues to tell us to have faith. It says that it is not about what is seen. It is believing in what Jesus has accomplished, is accomplishing, and will accomplish completely. It is to endure and persevere and move forward with hope by looking at my glory as one with Jesus. Persevering with faith and hope is necessary not only for myself but also for the church I belong to. The brothers and sisters who have been given to me should not be judged only by their appearance, but by looking at the truth that we have become new creations in Christ through faith, and also looking forward to the heaven where we will stand before God in glory without any blemish or spot. It is faith until the end. It is looking at Jesus until the end and not losing hope.

The Apostle Paul, who wrote this letter to the Ephesians, also established the church and did the ministry of the word through the pain of childbirth, but great problems, divisions, and sins arose in the church and the saints. So he sent letters with a longing heart and exhorted them with tears. The Apostle Paul wrote letters while looking at the saints and the church in Jesus through faith. If he only looked at the appearance of the church and the saints at that time, it was so hopeless and gloomy, but he saw them with hope until the end in Jesus. He looked upon Jesus' church and the saints with faith in the glorious reality that Jesus had already saved and they would be completely transformed into the image of Jesus in the future. He looked upon them as children of God who belonged to heaven, and He scolded them, corrected them, encouraged and comforted them, and shared fellowship with them in love. The same is true for us. We should look upon ourselves, our church, and our brothers and sisters with faith, and we do not become frustrated or discouraged in any reality, but live our lives as members of Jesus' body with patience and endurance out of hope and actively share the fellowship of love with the saints. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit who dwells in the church and the saints never forsakes or leaves us, but is working in us. He began our salvation and is completing it. With faith in that, we look upon each other and share the fellowship of love. Therefore, faith in Christ and the Gospel is necessary for the fellowship of the saints.

As we always say, when God commands us in the Bible, we must not forget that He commands us in the reality that Jesus has already accomplished and in the reality that He will fully accomplish in the future. Therefore, God looks at us in Jesus and heaven and commands us. But how can we completely obey that command? We must do it in Jesus by faith. True obedience must come from faith in Jesus. Even our inadequate and imperfect obedience is accepted as perfect obedience in Jesus by faith. Therefore, until the day we enter heaven, our obedience must always be accompanied by repentance and faith. Repentance should be also done with hope. Because we know that when we reach heaven, we will ultimately reach the perfect obedience of Jesus. This is the same for ourselves and the church. We must believe that Jesus accepts us perfectly in Jesus, hope to reach the glory of Jesus, humbly acknowledge our weaknesses and shortcomings, and go forward boasting only in Jesus until the end.

That is why we need the gospel until the end. With faith in the gospel, we endure and persevere, bearing each other's sins and faults, just as Jesus did for us, serving each other humbly, filling in each other's weaknesses and shortcomings, and keeping unity. This is the very reason why He called us as members of one body. To fill in each other's shortcomings and build each other up. The grace of Jesus is with us here. It is accomplished with the grace and gifts that Jesus has given us. Therefore, Jesus, who is with His church through the Holy Spirit and the Word, is working in His members and making His body grow. Please do not forget this. He now tells us more specifically how to live a life worthy of our calling, starting from verse 17.

2. Life of Christians

Ephesians 4:17, "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds."

The first part of verse 17 begins with "Therefore." Since Jesus is uniting the church and the saints, which are his body, and is growing them to the full stature of Jesus through the Word, the saints who believe in this reality of the gospel are told not to live like Gentiles who do not know Jesus and have no relationship with Him. Jesus' church and the saints belonging to that church cannot have the same heart, thoughts, or intentions as non-believers, and cannot speak, act, and live in the same way as them. All members of Jesus' body are saved and become one with Jesus, and they are the people who belong to heaven. From here on, they are completely distinct from the sinners of the world. Therefore, the purpose of life must be different. We cannot act as Gentiles act in the vanity of their hearts.

In other words, the saints who are united with Jesus cannot live with the same purpose and seek the same things as non-believers, and the church belonging to heaven cannot seek the same things and live with the same purpose as the world. We are told not to act like them. This is because it denies the reality that Jesus has accomplished. And because it denies the reality that Jesus is currently accomplishing. We, the believers, must believe in and obey the words of Jesus. That is why the Apostle Paul says that he testifies "in the Lord." He is not commanding those who are not in the Lord. He is commanding those who are enjoying the reality of salvation that the Lord has accomplished in the Lord. He says not to act as the Gentiles act in the vanity of their minds. What does this mean? The characteristic of the lives of all people in the world is that their minds are filled with vanity. Here, vanity means being vain. They are people who live by that principle because their minds are filled with vain things. No matter what they think, what they say, what decisions they make, or how they live, there is no Jesus, no hope of heaven, no joy of salvation, no glory of God, or no gospel.

In the Bible, all vanity, or vain things, refer to things that belong to this world. In the end, they are things that will decay and rot away in the world that ends with death. In Ecclesiastes, it says that everything under the sun is vanity and meaningless. The sinners of the world are filled with the vain things of the world, so those vain things become the purpose of their lives, and they judge, decide, and live by those principles with their lusts filled with those vain things. Therefore, there is nothing in their lives that is not vain. There is nothing in their thoughts, words, or actions that is not vain. Ultimately, the reason their lives are vain is because God is not in their lives. Because Jesus is not there. There is no love, grace, salvation, or hope for heaven from Jesus, and there is no life that fears God. There is no life that enjoys or glorifies God. Ultimately, the vainest thing about their lives is that they will end in death, lose all the vain things of the world that they have sought and possessed, and eventually fall into hell and be judged by God for eternity. Even so, they see nothing else but the vain things of the world. That is all.

Our saints cannot live like them. It is because we are saved from the vain things of the world. It is because we are united with and belong in Jesus and heaven. This is the biggest difference between the people of the world and us, but how big is the difference? The difference between heaven and hell, the difference between eternal life and judgment, and the difference between God's children and Satan's people is as great as the difference. If He saved us with this enormous reality of difference, shouldn't our lives be different? Shouldn't the reality of this blessed gospel be reflected in our thoughts, words, and actions and should we not let out even a little of the fragrance of Jesus and the gospel? Otherwise, if we share fellowship with thoughts, words, and actions that come from the vain things of the world, it is not a fellowship of faith, and we cannot keep the unity that Jesus has accomplished there. He tells us not to do that.

Since our saints have participated in Jesus' life and become those who belong above the sun, not under the sun, that is, in heaven, we must seek the life of heaven that is not in vain and live with hearts filled with it. Above all, it is a life in which Jesus is in us. It is a life in which we worship God with joy and hope in Jesus. It is a life in which we love and obey God like Jesus. It is a life in which the glory and joy of Jesus are the center of our thoughts, judgments, decisions, and life. It is a life in which we live according to the purpose for which Jesus called us, according to the will that Jesus accomplishes in our lives. This is a life that is different from the people of the world who follow the vain things of the world. Their lives have nothing to do with Jesus or His good will. Continuing to verses 18-19, we see how the vain lives of unbelieving sinners of the world are revealed.

Ephesians 4:18-19, "They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity."

It says that all the people of the world who do not believe in Jesus are like this. Darkness, ignorance, hardened hearts, lifelessness, sensuality, greed, and impurity. It says that this is the reality of their lives. Isn't that a bit too much? How can we say that not just a few people, but all the people of the world are ignorant, hardened hearts, and do all kinds of dirty things with greed? Isn't that a bit too much? If those who do not believe hear these words, they will say, "You make me laugh. Many people are better and more wonderful than you Christians. Many people among you who say they believe are worse than unbelievers." And they will continue to boast about their vain hearts that are filled with the world. When you look at it from their perspective, it is not necessarily wrong. However, if you look at it from God's perspective, it is different.

Our saints and the people of the world may be similar in terms of being sinners, but there is a fundamental difference. Even though they all appear similar on the outside, there is a reason why Paul only speaks of the people of the world who do not believe in this way. The most fundamental difference is that in the latter part of verse 18, they do not believe in Jesus, so they are spiritually dead being separated from God, but our saints possess and enjoy God's life by believing in Jesus. In other words, the lives of saints and worldly people before God are distinguished by whether they have Jesus or not, whether they know Jesus or not, whether they have faith or not, and therefore whether they have the grace of Jesus or not, and therein lies the greatest difference.

All lives that are separated from God are darkness, ignorance, hardened hearts, sensuality, greed, and impurity. Without Jesus, who is the light, no matter how good and moral one lives, it is darkness. If one does not know Jesus, no matter how much one knows, how much wisdom and knowledge one has, and how much one has learned the worldly principles of life, one is ignorant. If one does not have a heart that loves Jesus, no matter how good one does, it is a hardened heart. If you do not seek and find Jesus, you

will live a life of greed seeking all filthy things that is, a life of idolatry. A life that lives without Jesus is sinful in the eyes of God. The lives of all those who do not believe in Jesus are like this.

We were once all like this before. However, God did not leave us alone in these sins but saved us through Jesus. Through the blood and righteousness of Jesus, we are forgiven of all sins and are justified, possess the life of Christ, and are accepted as sons of light who belong to heaven, just like Jesus. Therefore, we cannot live like the sinners of the world who left God. We cannot return to darkness again. Through Jesus, we are called to know and believe in God as our Abba Father, to have a relationship with God the Father, to love Him, to have fellowship with Him, and to grow to the full stature of Jesus, the true Son. Therefore, we can never live like the sinners of this world who do not know or believe in Jesus. Thinking, speaking, and doing all the vain things of the world, rather than boasting about Christ and trying to have fellowship with Him, is not appropriate in the church. Do not leave yourself like that, but turn away, seek grace, and restore.

The following verse 20 says, "But you did not learn Christ in this way." We did not preach Christ in this way. We did not learn Christ in this way. The Bible does not speak of Christ in this way. That is why the knowledge of Christ is the most important. The Apostle Paul says in Philippians 3:

Philippians 3:7-9a, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him"

May the Holy Spirit guide us to the most precious knowledge of Christ. May we learn more about Christ and live as holy sons of God like Him, separated from the vain life of the Gentiles. We will look at this passage in more detail starting from verse 20 next Lord's Day.