

Dr. Daniel K. Darko, Prison Epistles, Session 26, United We Build, Ephesians 4:1-16

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This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 26, United We Build, Ephesians 4:1-16.

Welcome back from the earlier lecture that we had on Ephesians.

I'm very pleased that you chose to join us and that you have been learning with us in this Biblical Studies lecture series. Are you not beginning to realize, as I am, that the more we spend time trying to study the Word of God, the more we feel refreshed ourselves. I find it so in the course of these lectures that much of what I'm saying is being said to myself.

Coming back to what Paul is doing in Ephesians should always remind us about the spirit of unity God desires and expects in his church. Covering the end of chapter 3 up to the very first part of chapter 4, I drew your attention to the doxology and concluded with the first three verses of chapter 4. I would now like to go back to read from those verses and continue to 16, and then we will be able to take our time to look at what are the issues that we need to know about from Ephesians chapter 4, verses 1 to 16. So, if you have a Bible with you, you may open that Bible.

I'm reading from the ESV, and you may join—the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. 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 you according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it says, when he ascended on high, he led a host of captives and gave gifts to man.

What does saying he ascended mean? But he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth. He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. 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 attain to the unity of the faith and 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 in deceitful schemes.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, for whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. Sorry for my clumsy reading here. We have looked at the first three verses of Ephesians 4 already.

So let me just begin to draw your attention a little bit to some of the key things in that because it ties to what we are going to be talking about now. Paul introduces the ethical part of the letter and starts going into the subject of ethics and what the church needs to do to keep the unity. He clearly underlines that this unity is of the spirit and must be kept in that bond of unity.

Underlining some of these elements somehow threw him off and then he began to talk about the commonalities they share. So, his intent probably was to pick up ethics and go through, but then suddenly, he began to realize if I'm calling you to do everything eagerly, he used the expression maintain, do everything in your power to maintain this unity. Suddenly, he felt as though he should give them some basis for this unity.

And so, he began to throw something that I find very enriching in terms of memory. He underlines seven common things they share that should actually encourage them as the basis for this unity. There is one body.

He had told them early on in Ephesians that both Jews and Gentiles are now members of one body. He says there is one body, namely the body of Christ. There is one spirit.

If you remember, they were all sealed by the Holy Spirit. The spirit is at work in them. He prays that they may be strengthened in their inner man by the spirit.

He says there is one spirit. They all share that. They are all called to one hope.

You remember he talks about inheritance and also mentioned that they have now become sharers of the promises. They have one hope. They have one Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the means by which Jews and Gentiles have become one, who paid the ultimate price on a cross for them to be one.

And there is one faith, one belief, one shared common foundational doctrine. Jesus Christ came to die for sinners such as us. And all who believe and accept him as their Lord and personal savior will find salvation and will belong to the community of God.

One baptism. One baptism is one of the questions, one of the issues we'll look at later. What does it mean? Does one baptism mean we were all immersed? Or does one baptism mean something else? And there is one God and Father of all.

That's what we share. And it's not the last on the list. He lists all these things and says, and yet there is also one God who is the father of all.

We share the first six things, and he lists them as one. He brings the word one in front of all of them. There's one this, one that, one that, one that, so that he would emphasize the oneness.

And then, in the end, he puts it in the context of a relationship. There is one father of all. We are one family.

On the basis of these seven commonalities, the church should understand that there is every ground that needs to be for unity to prevail. But what does one baptism refer to? There are a few views. One says baptism, which means immersion, is calling for immersion.

To say every Christian was baptized by immersion. And so that is one thing we all share. The word baptism means immersion.

But the word does not necessarily mean immersion into water, or by water, or being dipped into water. The word literally means immersion. So, the verb is to immerse, to submerge, to dip.

In early Christianity, it is the language that is used for baptism because baptism did just that: to immerse people in the water. But that was not the only use of baptism in the New Testament as we know it. So, when Paul says we have one baptism, scholars are debating as to what he's referring to.

Because guess what? This could not be an interesting conversation between the Presbyterian and the Baptist, would it? Because if we say we have one thing in common, and that is baptism by immersion, and the Presbyterian said, you know, I had a water pot on my head. Oh, not to talk about my Catholic friends. Then we are saying we don't have that part in common.

Is that what is the issue here? This is where it becomes interesting in today's scholarship because Protestant scholars and Catholic scholars are doing a lot of things together. We are studying together; we are sharing ideas together; we are reading our findings together, and we are interacting on so many platforms together. In fact, sometimes I wish our churches knew that the scholars of our various denominations spend so much time together.

I spend perhaps two or three times a year meetings with people from so many denominations apart from my own confessional affiliation. So does one baptism mean we don't have one thing in common if someone had a sprinkling or otherwise?

Think about that. So, the emphasis on Christian baptism by immersion becomes an issue here.

Now that we know the word means to immerse. But what if one baptism just means baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Does that solve the problem? Or is it a clever way to satisfy everybody? You know, when we raise the issue of baptism and how you perform baptism as the main point of discussion, we often lose sight of a few things. The Baptist will spend a lot of time wanting to fight with the Presbyterian on how baptism is supposed to be.

In fact, I noticed in my own experience with students in fairly recent years where I had opportunities to teach theology as part of my course load, as a New Testament scholar who is interested in ancient texts apart from the New Testament text, I like to read texts like the Didache. And so, I drew students' attention to Article 7 of an early church document that was written by the end of the first century or at the very, very early of the second century. The Didache Article 7 prescribes the formula for baptism and how baptism should be conducted.

As early as the end of the first century, they were prescribed that if the water is so cold, you can make the water warm. I thought that is great. They prescribed that if there is no running water, you can actually put it in the form of a pool.

I said, that is great. And then I soon realized that some of my students actually come from churches that are against people being baptized in baptisteries. So that is not good news.

Well, I say, I am not saying that the early church fathers are saying we could do that. If the water is cold, for the sake of those of us who grew up in Africa, please keep it warm. That's fine.

And then they went on to prescribe that if the water around is limited, they can pour water on people's heads, as we find in the Presbyterian Church and in the Catholic Church. The prescription is clear earlier on in that same Article 7 that it should be immersion. Then, it gives conditions for why all these other modes exist.

But one thing that is clear is that baptism should be in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This brings me to the question: when we say one baptism in Ephesians 4, what are we talking about? Is it how the baptism is conducted? Or the words that are used in baptism, whether we say, I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. What is it going on? We don't know.

And in fact, we will be speculating to claim that we know. But some have argued that baptism here should be seen more as a reference to the work of the Spirit and the union or the union of Christ because we have clear passages in the New Testament

where Paul talks about being baptized in the Spirit, like 1 Corinthians 12, 13. Then, we have Spirit baptism, which is put in the context of the union with Christ.

I will show you these passages later on. More and more, what seems to make more sense is one baptism, perhaps being some kind of expression which I use the Latin expression there as *terminus technicus*, some kind of expression that says we all received one conversion, we all came to one faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we all went through one Christian initiation, or we all went through one cleansing ritual through baptism. What kind of baptism? I have to be honest with you, I don't know.

It's possible that most of the early church did baptism by immersion. But texts like the Didache also tell me that as early as those times, they were already prescribing options. One baptism clearly will be understood by the early church.

That will not be as ambiguous to them as it is to us. So, what does the word mean? It is quite unlikely that it refers to baptism of the Spirit because we don't have that context here. But baptism is linked to a sense of unity, and it is definitely a ritual that was part of the early church and that all members went through.

For instance, when the word is used for baptism in 1 Corinthians 12-13, it reads, For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews, Greeks, slaves, or free, and all were made to drink of one Spirit. If you ask about the context of that particular passage, I will be the first to tell you that Paul is discussing spiritual gifts. So, Spirit is everywhere.

The context of this word in Ephesians is a sense of unity and what they share in common. So, I don't think the Spirit part is what is being played here. Even though some of my charismatic friends may not agree with me, I respect their views on that.

I just don't think that is what is going on here in this particular text. When Paul uses the word elsewhere in Galatians, he uses it in a context of union where Jew-Gentile issues were at stake, and he was actually talking about what they shared. But even here, let's read the text.

For in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God, through faith, for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek.

There is neither slave nor free. There is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, according to the promise.

Here, we see the sense of unity, but if you agree with me, the way the word baptism is used here also is ambiguous. It could very much refer to baptism by immersion in Christ. So, all these other references don't help us a great deal.

One baptism refers to perhaps Christian baptism that involves the conversion process. I may be ready to stick my neck out to say that I think it may be referring to more immersion, but I don't think the early church excluded other forms of baptism, as I mentioned in the text of Didache article 7. Paul will move on to provide a theological foundation for unity. The theological foundation for unity is going to be interesting because here you see two structures.

The first part, which is chapter 4, verses 7 to 10, will highlight the fact that Christ is the gift giver. Christ gives grace. And interestingly, Paul doesn't even use the word charisma in Ephesians.

The word for gift is used in 1 Corinthians and elsewhere. Then, in the second part, he will focus on equipping the saints as a very important theological framework that should guide the rest of the conversation, where he will ask them to take some specific moral issues seriously in the way they live out their Christian life. So, let's take a basic structure here.

From verse 7 to 16, Paul draws attention to the fact that grace is given to each member of the community. And grace is given by the Lord. This Lord gave diverse gifts.

He did not give everyone the same gifts. And the gifts were given to equip the saints. Now, it is very interesting to look at some of these passages here because some of them create a lot of problems for us.

So, pardon me, I read this passage a few minutes earlier on, but pardon me, let me just read some parts of this passage that deserve some serious look. For instance, from verse 7, But grace was given to each one according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it says that when he ascended on high, he led a host of captives and gave gifts to men.

And I need to go on to ask the question, in saying he ascended, what does it mean? But that he had also descended. But let's focus on verse 8. When he ascended on high, he led a host of captives, a whole lot of captives, and gave gifts to men. That particular line, which seems to be a quotation from one of the Psalms, has actually given scholars a lot to talk about.

So let me just show you a few, and I'll try to be as straightforward and simple as possible in the way I explain this. In Psalm 68, 18, which scholars believe is where the quotation comes from, it reads, You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train, and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious that the Lord God may dwell there. If you compare to the Ephesians' Test, the Ephesians' Test reads, When he ascended on high, he led a host of captives, and gave gifts to men.

What does saying he ascended mean? But that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth. He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. If you look at this text, scholars spend a lot of time trying to actually piece together the similarities and differences.

So, if you are following this lecture on a video and not audio, I encourage you to look at the image I have put forward for a minute and just make note of some of the similarities and differences you can observe. You ascended on high. Note that.

When he ascended on high, note that. And receiving gifts among men.

Psalm 68. Note the Ephesians' Test. He gave gifts to men.

So, what is happening? So what is happening? If you look at those carefully, for those who are following this series on audio, you will see that if Paul is picking up from this psalm, he changes the subject from 2nd person you in the psalm to 3rd person he in Ephesians. In the psalm, we find out that he uses a reference to humanity in a singular, and in Ephesians, the word anthropos is used in a plural for human beings. You also realize that in the psalm, he talked about receiving gifts, and in Ephesians, he gave gifts.

So yes, if you pick up some commentaries, you are going to actually see a whole lot of discussion around this. Some have gone on to ask, This is a Jewish test. And therefore, how would it make sense to Gentile readers if Paul quoted from the Psalms or reworked them somehow? I look at it this way.

It's okay to think in those terms, but you also want to know that for Paul, that may be a good framework to work. Whether that is how his readers will receive it, because the same framework may also communicate with the readers or allude to things they would understand. I am in the habit, though I like to believe I'm a young man. I'm in the habit of sometimes in my preaching, pausing in the middle of the sermon and referring to some lines of common hymns or common contemporary songs.

Knowing that they are familiar with the people, they evoke some sense of belief or element. And if Paul is doing that, then he is doing that to shape what he is doing. The other way to look at it is in rabbinic tests, and we actually have a situation where this psalm is interpreted and reinterpreted for different contexts.

And the way the rabbis use the exegetical methods is slightly different from the exegetical methods we use today. So they can work with the text to convey meanings that are close to what is going on in Ephesians. Some have even interpreted this text in reference to Moses ascending to the mountains to take the law and descending to bring the law back to the people.

Some of the rabbis have actually worked with a test like this, as we know in some of the Jewish tests. What else may that evoke to the Ephesian readers? If the Ephesian readers don't know anything about that psalm, we believe that there could also be some resonance with what is going on with this test. That would make what Paul is saying perfect for the Asia Minor Contest.

So, Paul could be using this to get a double-sword element here. One of the things you will find here is that he depicts Christ as a victorious king, as if he goes to the enemy's camp, conquers them, takes booty, has plenty, and discharges his gifts from there. If Paul were to reinterpret Psalm 68, that would not be so significantly removed from what we would expect from a first-century writer.

But it's also possible that the psalm is only at the back of his mind and is working through his own framework. I'm saying all these things, and a lot of pages are spent on all this to explain to you because you need to understand why those two lines or three lines in some Bibles are indented as quotations in your Bible. They are indented because the translators think that it could be a quotation from Psalm 68 that is being reworked in that particular contest.

You want to know that the quotation is not exact, but it's possible that Paul is familiar with it. That brings us to the next question. What does the lower parts of the world mean? He who ascended, descended, and went to the lower parts of the earth, what does it mean? Well, there are multiple views.

One view that comes from the early church fathers read that this refers to the underworld. That Jesus went to the underworld and conquered the forces of evil. He went to Hades, took captivity captive, rose up as a victorious king, and gave gifts to his people.

The second view reads this as a reference to the incarnation and death of Christ. In this view, it says that the descent actually refers to Christ descending into our world. The only problem with this view, though, is he who descended is also the one who ascended, and when you look at how it plays around, it turns the incarnation upside down.

It turns the incarnation and ascension almost upside down. But is that a possible allusion? Some scholars argue for that. Others actually argue that it refers to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

He descended, and he who ascended on the day of ascension descended, and he descended on the day of Pentecost to give gifts. You know, by charismatic and Pentecostal friends, we just say hallelujah, praise God for that.

Not playing down on the significance of Pentecost. We just have to be careful that we don't find what is not there because it seems to make us find confirmation to some things we believe. This is a complex thing that scholars spend a lot of time discussing.

In fact, last night, I was looking at again at one of my colleagues was saying, and I noticed that some things I had underlined in that book when I read it the first time and other things I'm looking at this time, and I'm asking myself why it is so complex? Because we want to understand what is so hard. But what is the general goal? The general goal is to depict the victorious Christ. The all-powerful Christ.

Discharging his gifts to people who cannot be touched by forces of evil. The imagery of the one who has conquered the principalities and powers and has exercised his supreme reign and his ability to put them in their place giving gifts so that as he gives gifts, he delegates those he gives gifts to so they can function unhampered uninterrupted by the gifts and grace that he has given them. Now if Paul is reworking Psalm 68 fair enough, there will also be resonance with what he is saying in H.R. Meinl because in H.R. Meinl where these readers would be we know that a few of the Apican deities have the motif of the underworld, the ghost of the underworld and the powerful ghost of the underworld and how sometimes the ghost of the underworld are feared because of their ability to bring good or harm when their devotees are nice and give them the right sacrifices and come for the right help.

Is Paul, who is aware and has lived in Ephesus between two and three years, actually thinking that he can project imagery that his readers will understand that Christ has conquered all the powers, the principalities, and powers even including those in the underworld and he rose high above and now he has given gifts to his people and his people can use the gifts knowing that those powers cannot stand against them. Is that what is going on? Certainly, I find two or three of the recent commentators on this subject thinking in those terms, and I should admit that in my recent writings, I have leaned toward this as well. Prominent among the holders of this view is Clint Arnold, who writes that the lower parts of the earth make the most sense in each first-century religious context if they are interpreted as an expression of the world or Hades.

Underworld themes are prominent in Ephesus and Western Asia Minor, where a variety of underworld deities were worshipped. Most prominent was the goddess of Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft and sorcery. So, Paul may be saying, in effect, he went down there, he held them captives, and on the basis of that, now he can give gifts to his people.

And so, he would give gifts, and he would name specific gifts. He gave some to be apostles. He gave some to be prophets.

He gave some to be evangelists. He gave some to be pastors and teachers. What do these words mean? We need to know what they mean.

So, let's look at the apostles. Reference to the title apostle is found in Ephesians in particular, linking to the foundation of the church. That was a key part in the foundation of the church.

In Ephesians chapter 3, verse 5, they are even qualified as holy apostles. We know the disciples of Jesus are referred to as apostles. Paul counts himself as an apostle, but he qualifies as the least of them all.

So, apostles here could be referring to figures like Paul, like the early disciples of Jesus, who were foundational in the formation of the early church. Paul then would be saying that God gave some of those gifts to be apostles, not to mention the fact that the word could also be those who are sent out.

But most probably, he leans towards these specific people who are given this grace to work in that capacity as foundational leaders in the early church. For prophets, it does not refer to Old Testament prophets here but refers to prophets in Paul's own time. As people who are prompted by the spirit to speak.

The spirit usually reveals some mysteries to these people for the edification of the church. I should emphasize edification because we are talking about gifts here. Paul is not using the word prophet here to refer to his soothsayers.

The word prophet here does not refer to what I find in contemporary Christianity, whether we are in West Africa, or we are in East Africa, or in some part of Latin America, where somebody say I'm a prophet. And you, young lady, I know the color of your underwear. For what? For what? What does that mean? Why is God revealing somebody's color of underwear to you? Prophets here are given this divinely inspired knowledge to edify and build a church.

Occasionally, they may have predictable features in their message, but most often, they are given the message to deliver them as divine utterances. The evangelists are special people who are equipped to go from place to place to preach the gospel. Literally, the word refers to the one who brings the good news.

And in the New Testament, we actually have only two other places where the word is used. In Acts, referring to Philip and his daughters, and in 2 Timothy, where Timothy is asked to do the work of an evangelist by Paul, I should say some of my colleagues think Paul didn't write that. The most difficult of the list of this gift for us to consider is a reference to pastors and teachers.

Because as you find in your English translation, those words are linked by the cognate conjunction *end*. But in Greek, it's more difficult than that. It shares one article.

And so, the second part, the teacher's part, has no article, whereas all the preceding gifts have articles. So, the question has been raised: is it one person? Are there two gifts? Or is the pastor supposed to be a teacher? What if someone is a teacher and not a pastor? Do they have a gift mentioned here, then? What is going on? Well, we will try to look at what this is. As I mentioned minutes ago, the two share one article, and it's linked by the conjunction *end*.

Some commentators have argued that this is so because the previous three gifts refer to itinerant Christian workers. The apostles, the prophets, and the evangelists are not stationary. They probably move around a lot, and maybe it's because pastors and teachers are more stationary.

That is why they are defined with one article linked together by the conjunction *end* as if it seems one thing. So, in this sense, the difference is between what gifts make one stationary and what gifts make one an itinerant speaker or worker. Well, some have also argued that these refer to the same people with two gifts.

That is why this particular part of the discussion gets a little bit complex. So let me draw your attention to a few things here. The pastor or the word translated pastor is literally the word shepherd.

The word shepherd is not a word that is new in the vocabulary of the time. We know that shepherd is used as a metaphor for religious leaders in the ancient Near East. If time permits, I will give you some examples. God is even portrayed as a shepherd in some OT texts, for instance, as a favorite among them.

The one that you know very well is the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. I like that too.

Shepherding or pastoring in 1 Peter 5 is actually linked together with the mention of the elders. So, if I were to throw the oldest reference to you, you remember that in the psalm, the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.

The trait there is the shepherd guides the sheep. He's the one who makes the sheep lie down. And he's the one who leads them beside the still water, sends them to the right places.

He's also the one who restores their soul and leads them on the right paths. In Isaiah 40, verse 11, the shepherd feeds the flock. He got us the lamb in his arms with tender care and carried them in his bosom.

He gently leads them like a mother leads his sheep. So, to talk about pastors or shepherds, it's not remotely distant from the work of a teacher. If you think about a metaphor of a religious leader feeding them with the word of God, it could involve some instruction.

That is not in any way saying those are not two gifts. In fact, I'm more inclined to think that some individuals may have those gifts of being pastors and teachers. But there might also be others who are pastors but not good teachers.

And there are some teachers who may not be pastors. Pastors who are not good teachers. I would not highly recommend them to be a senior pastor.

But if you're a church leader following this teaching, make up your mind on that. I just want to make that distinction. The second part of this particular passage that talks about gifts is the challenge we face in trying to understand verse 12.

He gave some apostles, prophets, evangelists, 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 faith in the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. What are the gifts supposed to be? There are two serious views, I should say significant views in the way we understand this. One view assumes or comes from the point of what we call a priesthood of all believers, which is that all individuals are given gifts to build the church up.

In that sense, Ephesians chapter 4, verse 12 reads that the saints are being equipped, and they are the ones being equipped for the works of service to build up the body of Christ. The word translated edify in English literally is an architectural language to build up. So, in this sense, the saints are equipped, and they are equipped for works of service.

Those who believe in the priesthood of all believers intentionally or unintentionally lean straight toward this view. Others don't share that. In fact, others believe that it is those who have been given the gift that I mentioned earlier on.

The apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and the teachers are the ones who are supposed to equip the saints. Are you getting how they go with this then? What they are saying is this. The leaders are gifted, and it's the leaders who do this.

I can almost tell you that you can find Catholic scholars leaning heavily in that direction because it fits into their church structure, which makes the leadership of the church more of those who have been divinely enabled to equip the rest of the

saints. Let me give you a diagram that may actually illustrate that. So, in that sense, the leaders are the gifted ones, and so these gifted ones actually equip the saints.

They are gifted for the works of service and for building up the body of Christ. This particular view makes a clear distinction between the laity and the clergy. The clergy becomes those who have the gift of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

The laity are those who have been equipped by the clergy, and all these views make Ephesians chapter 12 a good place to fight. What does the text say? When it comes to spiritual gifts, as we know in Corinthians, for instance, the gifts are not discriminatory. Each one is given the gift, but in Romans chapter 12 and Ephesians 4, we are also told that they are given their gift or grace according to the measure.

In other words, abilities are brought in. Who we are as God knows what we can do place in here. It is very likely that the text is meant to convey that people who have been given these gifts do the equipping, but how this is done is not supposed to establish a power structure.

But to show how they discharge their duties. So, to read power structures into it may be too much because some of those who are being equipped will also discover their gift to be teachers tomorrow, and others. And so, that power structure dichotomy can be problematic in that regard.

I like what one colleague said on this subject, and Frank puts it this way. The ascended and triumphant Christ has given an appropriate measure of grace to each believer. Among those he has gifted, Paul lists five groups that are specially equipped to prepare other believers for the work of ministry.

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Those gifted in the ministry of the word and those whom they equip for ministry work together to build up the body of Christ. And the ultimate result is this.

They do so until, as Paul put it, we all attain and note the theme of unity coming up again. We all attain the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God. You probably may be asking why I have not noticed all this while the recurrent theme of faith and knowledge is inefficient so far.

Because for Paul, faith and knowledge are integral parts of keeping that unity intact. He prays for it; he talks about it, he encourages them, and he spells out that this is what the church is supposed to be. Members who have enough knowledge to make sure they do their part to function in a community of faith in the spirit of unity.

When they do that, the goal is that these gifted people equip the saints so that they become mature. That word is one of those words I find interesting in the way it is pronounced. I think I have a strange accent, and I find some of my American friends say mature and some say mature, and I don't know how it's supposed to be pronounced.

So, I say mature. I lean towards the British, who would say mature as well, so I would say mature. To be mature, manhood is to have some basic knowledge and experience of life so that you are not gullible or vulnerable.

You are not easily swayed because that sense of maturity has come with experience and has enabled one to be able to know what they truly stand for and be able to sometimes even articulate it with clarity in wisdom. To mature manhood and to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. To the completeness of being in Christ.

The completeness of the full stature of Christ means that it lacks anything in reflecting the personhood of how the body of Christ is supposed to function. And in that body of Christ, thinking about the fullness of the stature of the body of Christ reminds me of First Corinthians 12, where Paul talks about the gift and the fact that we are all given all these gifts as believers to help build the body of Christ together. Using the body imagery, he says what will happen if one part of the body says it has no need of the other, and yet there are different parts of the body, highlighting what theologians have called unity in diversity.

Though we have diverse gifts those who are gifted are equipping the church, and in the church, there will be people who have different abilities according to the measure of capability or ability that God has given them and so we can all work to fit together to build the church together and that is the goal that is the desire of Paul here that if the gifted folks are doing their work to equip the saints we may all attain that stature the full stature reflecting the fullness of Christ in the community of faith. The second part of the goal is that we will no longer be children. He makes a sharp contrast to maturity and say now he hopes that this is what the church does not become no longer be like children tossed to and fro by weight like waves carried about by every wind of doctrine by human cunning by craftiness in deceitful schemes he hopes that the church will be mature to the point that they are not vulnerable like children and they are not as stable being tossed like waves on the Atlantic Sea.

I grew up on a part of the Atlantic that is so terrible in terms of how the waves work. The second and third parts of his goal are so that they may grow up in every way into him, who is the head, Christ. Christ is the head.

It is from whom the whole body is connected. His hope is that as the gifted people are equipping the saints, all of them will be joined and held together in Christ Jesus by every joint with which all is equipped. When each spirit works properly.

In other words, if somebody is the hand, the head, the feet, everybody is working together to make the body of Christ grow. And as it grows and builds itself, it does this in love. United we build.

Paul, in admonishing the church in Ephesus and its wider region, urges them to understand what he's been talking about and the spirit of unity that needs to prevail. He began with general admonition and established the need to work eagerly for the unity of the spirit that is supposed to be the state of the church, to maintain and to keep that word. He goes on to say they have more things in common with a Greek, Jew, or Roman.

They have seven commonalities, and all of them are introduced by emphasizing the word one to highlight oneness. And then he goes on to say, yes, now that you know this, let me remind you that the Christ, the victorious Christ who has conquered the powers of evil and whom all powers are subjugated, has given a great gift to his people. He has given some apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip the saints so that the unity that he mentioned at the very beginning would work well.

But the way he catches the language actually reminds us that that spirit of love, the note on which he ended the third chapter, is expected to be so prevalent to permeate every aspect of community life. Paul's argument is this. The church is made to be one.

Each individual has a part. No one is exempted. Those who have specific gifts have more responsibility.

Together, we should all work to maintain that unity. And together, we will build the body of Christ to be what it is meant to be. I hope that, on a personal level, you are catching the vision of Ephesians in your church and your life.

May that spirit of unity that he talks about be something you would like to pursue with the strength and grace he has given you. And you would like to work towards making it a reality in your own local congregation. God bless you for joining us in this study.

I look forward to more of these studies with you on Ephesians. Thank you very much.

This is Dr. Dan Darko in his lecture series on the Prison Epistles. This is session 26, United We Build, Ephesians 4:1-16.