

Jesus Will Build A Glorious Church (Eph. 1:4)

I. THE ETERNAL GLORY OF THE CHURCH

- A. The emphasis of the book of Ephesians is the glory of who the church is in Christ. Paul seeks to connect the church with the glory and beauty of the church being the body of Christ – His expression in the earth.
- B. **The eternal plan:** In chs. 1-3 Paul makes us aware of the plan of God and the power of the Holy Spirit that is available to the church in order to become the church that He desires.
“...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...” Eph. 1:4 (NKJV)
- C. The Father determined in the eternal counsels that the church would partake of three powerful dynamics. These components are further developed throughout the book of Ephesians. Chs. 1-3 show us the destiny and glory of the church. Chs. 4-5 show us the implications of God’s grace.
- D. **Holy** – set apart to be His people possessing the beauty of God (Ps. 90:17; Isa. 61:3; Rev. 4:4)
- E. **Without blame** – animosity, hostility, and blame towards God and one another removed (Rom. 8:1; Col. 2:15; Rev. 12:10; Gen. 3:10-15)
- F. **Before Him in love** – 1st and 2nd commandment (Matt. 22:37-40)
- G. The above-mentioned realities are in time pursued but in coming ages attained.
- Presently:** Jesus is building His church by the Holy Spirit in keeping with the Eph. 1:4 vision – Matt.16:18; Jn. 14:26.
“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. Matt. 16:18

“According to the grace of God, which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it.” 1 Cor. 3:10
 - Ultimately (eschatological):** Jesus will have a church, the Bride, according to the vision of Eph. 1:4.
“...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love (Bride – Eph. 5:27, 32)” Eph. 1:4 (NKJV)

“...that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.” Eph. 5:27

²² And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Eph. 1:22-23

II. COMMUNITY—THE SPIRIT’S WORK TO BRING FORTH THE CHURCH IN HER GLORY (EPH. 1:23)

“... the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” Eph. 1:22-23

- A. It is the Father’s plan for the church to be the full expression of His personality, power, and purpose. The Father has a plan that is near and dear to His holy heart. What God wants us to become cannot be accomplished by the work of the flesh and our own strength.

Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts. Zech. 4:6

“Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God...” 2 Cor. 3:5

- B. The fellowship of the brethren (that they may all be one) that God desires can only be accomplished through fellowship and cooperation with the Spirit.

“... that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. Jn. 17:21

“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace (power of the Spirit) to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind (external) to one another, tender-hearted (internal), forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you (Jn. 13:35).” Eph. 4:29-32

- C. Paul gives the New Testament church four basic commandments regard Spirit’s leadership which are to be filled (Eph. 5:18), to walk (Gal. 5:16), to not grieve (Eph. 4:30) and not quench (1 Thess. 5:19-20) the Holy Spirit.
- D. **Filling of the Spirit** – Eph. 5:18: Those (all believers) indwelt by the Spirit are called to be filled with the Spirit, which is the **empowerment** of the believer by the Holy Spirit, and to be **influenced** by His presence.
- E. **Grieving the Spirit** – Eph. 4:30: Paul exhorts the church to not grieve the Holy Spirit which is the hindering of the Holy Spirit’s leadership in working love and unity in the community of God.
- F. **Walk by the Spirit** – Gal. 5:16: We are to cooperate with what the Holy Spirit is doing in us. We walk by the Spirit was by interacting with Him, submitting to His leading us towards His ways of righteousness being formed in us and yielding to live obediently.
- G. **Do not quench the Spirit** – 1 Thess. 5:19-20: to not hinder the Spirit’s direction but yield to His corporate leadership.

III. UNITY ACCORDING TO CHRIST JESUS

Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus (His ways and perspectives), so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify (Jn. 17:21) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore (in light of this), accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us (Jn. 13:35) to the glory of God. Rom. 15:5-7

- A. God desires unity and strong relationships but He desires it His way and on His terms. The Sermon on the Mount is the clearest prescription of what Christian community should look like and reflect.
- B. According to Jn. 17:21, the community of Jesus in the earth is to reflect the relationship dynamic of the Trinity. This requires the work of the Holy Spirit.
- C. It is therefore essential that the pastoral ministry primarily gain their insight and cues from the Word. There are many social definitions of how our needs and desires can be fulfilled. We are all too familiar with these principles because of our familiarity with our own flesh and the value systems of the culture derived from the flesh.
- D. There is an aspect where loneliness or disconnectedness is a work of the flesh – the flesh is the exalted self, or the internal urge to be self-consumed, self-absorbed, self-important, and self-sufficient. The flesh also leads us to be self-confident and that fuels our perspectives of community that will lead towards confusion (Babel).
- E. God's desire is that believers by the Holy Spirit be forged together as living stones into a dwelling place of God.
¹⁹ "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." Eph. 2:19-22 (NKJV)
- F. Jesus builds the house of God in keeping with the Father's requirement that God would have a people in whom His fullness can dwell. The staggering fact of this mystery is that God desired to remove all blame and animosity and have a people forged together, as an international family of affection in the grace of God.
- G. The Holy Spirit will ultimately heal the deep ache for intimacy and belonging. We will understand one another and we will be understood in a supernatural way free from blame and judgment towards one another. In the age to come even the most adversarial people will be unified in grace and overflow with love, care, warmth, and enthusiasm towards even those who have caused us trouble (and we have caused them trouble), if they are in the Gospel.

IV. MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THEN TO RECEIVE: SERVING & LOVING ONE ANOTHER

30 Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead ... 33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' 36 So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?" Lk. 10:30-36

- A. In the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus is answering the question of who the neighbor is. The story reveals that the Samaritan is neighbor to the Jews. This is significant because the Jews and the Samaritans did not visit each other's towns or talk to each other, but rather avoided contact with each other at all costs. Jesus calls His people to love those who they avoid, don't talk to, or feel they don't have anything to receive from.
- B. Loneliness is often rooted in having predominantly utilitarian relationships. This means that we have relationships or pursue relationships that exist primarily because of our personal goals and objectives.
- 13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. 14 And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just." Lk. 14:13-14*
- C. In the gospels, Jesus calls us to not only love those who can be of help to us, but to love those who cannot pay us back in this life as well.
- D. The story of the Good Samaritan shows us some very practical steps on how to relate.
1. When he saw him – We ask the Lord to show us different ones we can love and serve.
 2. He had compassion – When we ask the Lord to highlight someone He moves our hearts.
 3. He went to him – We commit to be the servant in the relationship.
 4. He took out two denarii – We sow our finances into the relationship.
 5. When I come again – We follow up with the relationship.
- E. We must intentionally engage those in our sphere as well as ask Jesus to open our eyes to recognize opportunities that are before us to love and serve one another.

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. 1 Jn 3:16-18

V. REVIEW

"We can't solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." Albert Einstein

- A. The Father determined in the eternal counsels that the church would partake of three powerful dynamics. These components are further developed throughout the book of Ephesians. Chs. 1-3 show us the destiny and glory of the church. Chs. 4-6 show us the implications of God's grace.
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- D. **Before Him in love** – 1st and 2nd commandment (Matt. 22:37-40)
"... the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Eph. 1:22-23
- E. It is the Father's plan for the church to be the full expression of His personality, power, and purpose. What God wants us to become cannot be accomplished by the work of the flesh and our own strength.
"Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God..." 2 Cor. 3:5
- F. The fellowship of the brethren (*that they may all be one*) that God desires can only be accomplished through fellowship and cooperation with the Spirit.
"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Eph. 4:30
- G. Paul gives four basic commandments regarding our response to the Spirit's leadership: to be filled (Eph. 5:18), to walk (Gal. 5:16), to not grieve (Eph. 4:30), and not quench (1 Thess. 5:19-20) the Holy Spirit.
- H. **Grieving the Spirit** – Eph. 4:30: Paul exhorts the church to not grieve the Holy Spirit which is the hindering of the Holy Spirit's leadership in working love and unity in the community of God.
Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus..." Rom. 15:5
- I. The Sermon on the Mount is the clearest prescription of what Christian community is to reflect. According to Jn. 17:21, the community of Jesus in the earth is to reflect the relationship dynamic of the Trinity. This requires the work of the Holy Spirit.
- J. It is therefore essential for pastoral ministry to primarily gain their insight and cues from the Word as there are many flesh-based definitions of how our needs and desires can be fulfilled.

VI. COMMUNITY– RELATING WITH ONE ANOTHER IN CHRIST

“According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation (Mt. 16:18) other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. 3:10-11

“We all must live in two spheres - in society and in privacy. To survive in society, we must thrive in privacy.” Abraham Heschel

- A. Fellowship - Our fellowship with the Holy Spirit and the fellowship of the brethren are two sides of the same coin. It is therefore essential that we not put interacting with God, privately and corporately, opposite to our interaction with one another in friendship.
- B. The community that God desires is only as strong as the inner-life of the soul of that community.
“... what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” 1 Jn. 1:3
- C. Fellowship begins with our interaction with the Trinity. There is significant impact that awaits us when our communion becomes Trinitarian because it brings us into the “divine romance” of the Father and the Son. In doing so communion causes us to get our eyes off of ourselves, get lost in the divine fellowship and empowered to give ourselves to one another in love.
“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” Matt 16:18
- D. The church is built upon not only the doctrinal and conceptual truth of Jesus Christ but on our dynamic understanding of Christ that comes from the Word and our interaction with the Father by the Holy Spirit.
- E. The modern culture of subjectivity has long since been in danger of turning into a culture of narcissism, which makes the self its own prisoner and supplies it merely with self-repetitions and self-confirmations. It is therefore time for Christian theology to break out of this prison of narcissism, and for it to present its doctrine of faith as one of the all-embracing history of God. This does not mean falling back into objectivistic orthodoxy. What it does mean is that experience of the self has to be integrated into the experience of God, and the experience of God has to be integrated into the Trinitarian history of God with the world.¹

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. 2 Cor. 13:14 (NKJV)

¹ The Trinity and the Kingdom by Jurgen Moltmann pg. 5

VII. EPHESIANS: THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH

“... just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love...” Eph. 1:4

- A. God has determined from before the ages that He would have a people who would be voluntary lovers, holy (set apart and beautified), and blameless (intimacy without shame and without animosity between them and God and among one another). Holiness, in essence, is love for God and one another.

“...and raised us up with Him (Jesus), and seated us with Him (Father) in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (privilege, access, authority)...” Eph. 2:6

- B. Though we were formerly enemies as children of wrath, God’s eternal decree insists on our glory and destiny. Those who were once His enemies but are now highly exalted adorn the court of heaven.

- C. When these truths touch us we view God, others, even our enemies and ourselves differently.

“... in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. Eph. 2:22

- D. Former enemies of God have now become the place where God’s glory will dwell, and from where He will express His fullness throughout all of eternity.

“... so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.” Eph. 3:10

- E. Powers and principalities (good and evil) gain insight into the plan of God by the way we relate with one another.

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name...” Eph. 3:14-15

- F. The church is an international family of affection on earth and in heaven.

“...to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” Eph. 3:21

- G. God’s glory will share in the same glory of Christ Jesus and in partnership with Him display it through all the ages forever.

“This mystery (Bride of Christ) is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.” Eph. 5:32

- H. The church is the glorious Bride of Christ destined to be equally yoked and reign with Jesus forever.

- I. In the building of community it is essential that we ask the Father for insight into these truths. The prayers of the apostles, such as Eph. 1:17-19, are designed with this in mind.

VIII. CONFLICT WITH THE FLESH: THE CHALLENGE OF COMMUNITY

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. Gal 5:13

- A. We are free to love. The purpose of our emancipation in Christ is so we can love God and love one another.

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Let My people go, that they may serve Me.” Ex. 7:16

- B. In light of our glorious emancipation in the gospel, Paul calls believers to resist sin by not letting sin run its course in our lives and by not making ourselves available to sin (through word and deed).

¹² ***“Therefore do not let sin reign (let it run its course) in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts ...” Rom. 6:12***

- C. In Christ we now are free to obey God by presenting ourselves alive, ready to respond to Him through His power to obey His commandments to love.

- D. ***“I did it my way.” Frank Sinatra.*** This sums up the perspective of the flesh in relation to God. The flesh can be referred to as the exalted-self. It is the internal urge to be self-consumed, self-absorbed, self-important, and self-sufficient.

- E. “The flesh is the ego which feels an emptiness and uses the resources in its own power to try to fill it. Flesh is the ‘I’ who tries to satisfy me with anything but God’s mercy.”² John Piper

For (because) the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Gal. 5:14

- F. Giving opportunity to the flesh is the greatest hindrance to growing in community. The most neglected works of the flesh are our internal attitudes and dispositions, i.e. anger, envy, speech.
But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. Gal. 5:15

- G. Paul’s answer to this dilemma is to call the church to walk with the Spirit, which we do by fellowshiping with the Spirit and submitting to His leading towards righteousness. The primary Pauline definition of the Spirit’s leading is the Spirit bringing us into His war against the flesh.

For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. Gal 5:17

² The War Within: Flesh Vs. Spirit by John Piper <http://www.desiringgod.org/sermons/the-war-within-flesh-vs-spirit>