

# ***Gospel Therefore*** ***Gospel Community***

*Pouring Your Life into the Church*  
*Grace Fellowship Church, Pastor Brad Bigney, March 4, 2012*

## **Ephesians 1-4**

Paul rarely addresses singular Christians because when God saves you, He saves you INTO the body of Christ. You're a part of something much bigger than you.

### **Three Choices we have to make to live a life worthy of our calling**

#### **I. Your Humility Has to Be Intentional and Pronounced**

**Ephesians 4:2** "With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love."

*NIV* "Be completely humble..."

The companions of humility (v. 2) are gentleness, longsuffering, bearing with one another in love. The absence of these very traits has devastating consequences.

Pride fragments and splinters the people of God off into dozens of different personal preferences and projects while the church of Jesus Christ wheezes like an asthmatic that just can't move forward... can't make progress.

#### **II. Your Agenda has to be Much Bigger than Your Own**

**Ephesians 4:3** "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

*ESV* "Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit..."

*NIV* "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit..."

Notice it's not a call for us to try to BUILD unity; it's a warning to KEEP or to maintain the unity that God has already inaugurated for us in Christ.

You can't make unity your focus when you're waking up every day with a burning personal agenda of your own. If you're still wrapped up in promoting you, and what you want, and fulfilling your personal dreams – then you're going to wreak havoc on the unity here in our church family because you're going to have a different agenda altogether.

"Innumerable times a whole Christian community has broken down because it had sprung from a wish dream. The serious Christian, set down for the first time in a Christian community, is likely to bring with him a very definite idea of what Christian life together should be and to try to realize it. But God's grace speedily shatters such dreams. Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves. By sheer grace, God will not permit us to live even for a brief period in a dream world. He does not abandon us to those rapturous experiences and lofty moods that come over us like a dream. God is not a God of the emotions but the God of truth. Only that fellowship which faces such disillusionment, with all its unhappy and ugly aspects, begins to be what it should be in God's sight, begins to grasp in faith the promise that is given to it. *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, pp 26-27

"When a person becomes alienated from a Christian community in which he has been placed and begins to raise complaints about it, he had better examine himself first to see whether the trouble is not due to his wish dream that should be shattered by God; and if this be the case, let him thank God for leading him into this predicament..."

The more clearly we learn to recognize that the ground and strength and promise of all our fellowship is in Jesus Christ alone, the more serenely shall we think of our fellowship and pray and hope for it." *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, pp. 29-30

#### **III. Your Abilities and Gifts have to Take a Back Seat to Grace**

**Ephesians 4:7–8** “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.’”

When God gave you spiritual gifts to use, He gave you grace. The two are closely related.

Whatever gifts or talents or abilities you think God has given you need to all take a back seat to the bigger picture of grace. It’s not about you and your gifts, or me and my gifts. It’s about the grace of God.

When your gift starts showcasing YOU more than the grace of God, get ready for the lights to be turned out. God will just pull the plug on that whole mess. He’ll find someone else that’s less caught up in themselves and more stunned by the grace of God and more focused on passing on that grace to others.

- The grace of God keeps us and our gifts in check
- The grace of God must be the fuel that motivates and drives us as we use our gifts
- The grace of God must be the ultimate goal as to why we do what we do

God designed the gifts, and gave us gifts, as a means of spreading His grace!

**1 Peter 4:9–11** “<sup>9</sup> Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup> As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. <sup>11</sup> If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

When it comes to spiritual gifts and serving in our church family – we’re not trying to impress people with our gifts, we’re trying to grace people with our gifts. When you walk away from whatever it is that God has gifted you to do, people should feel like they’ve been refreshed by God’s grace.

The humility, and unity, and serving of our church family really rides on the degree to which each one of us pursuing Christ, becoming more like Christ, and having our minds renewed to think more like Christ.

### **Philippians 2:1-8**

God’s called us to serve together in humility and unity, but it won’t happen automatically.

- What about you? What do you bring to our church family?
- Are you choosing to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you’ve been called?
  - Is your humility intentional and pronounced?
  - Are you living for something bigger than your own personal agenda?
  - Are you willing to have your own abilities, talents, and gifts take a back seat to grace?