

LIVE A LIFE OF FAITH IN JESUS

Ephesians 4:1-32

Key Verses: 4:12,13

"...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

In chapter 3, Paul taught us the mystery of God, which is the heart of God, and ultimately the world mission purpose of God through all kinds of unlikely people. We learned in chapter 3 God's beautiful heart to save men from all their sins. We also learned that one person, Paul, who grasped the mystery of God, was so precious. Because he grasped the mystery of God, he became the most famous person throughout the world. Who could you say is the most famous man in the world, except Paul? When we briefly review chapter 3, God wanted to fulfill his world mission purpose. It was God's mystery. It was God's heart. But when God trained his people for 430 years in Egypt, and finally led them to the promised land, they forgot God's purpose. They forgot God. They also forgot that they were a chosen people. They only liked the promised land, flowing with milk and honey. As a result, they had to be dragged into Babylonia as captives. When they wanted to grab worldly blessing, they lost God's blessings and care and became captives in Babylonia, the world power of the time. We must know that obtaining God's blessing is not so hard, but maintaining God's blessing is really difficult. For example, when a person is poor and helpless, he is humble. But when this poor man becomes a suddenly wealthy man, then he becomes proud until he despises people indiscriminately. Nabal is a proper example. David, in his fugitive life, protected Nabal's herdsmen safely. In return, David sent his men to Nabal to get some rations. But he said, "Who is David? Why should I take my bread and water...?" Because of his proud mind, Nabal's heart failed him. He became like a stone right before his death (1Sa 25). On the other hand, Paul became a great servant of God. Even if he had many persecutions, he was known as the founder of Christian theology, which was the most potent weapon in conquering the

world with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he was humble enough to write a letter to the Ephesian flock of God concerning the mystery of God, so as to let them understand the mystery of God, and participate in the world salvation purpose.

In chapter 4, Paul teaches the Ephesians the most efficient way of conquering the world with the gospel of Jesus. It is by the personal growth of their inner man. For example, if we speak many good things, but our inner man is very weak, then we cannot be a conqueror of the world with the gospel of Jesus. St. Paul was in chains in prison. He was old and tired. On the other hand, the Roman Empire was outwardly prospering and glorious, and its army was well disciplined. But because Paul's inner man was strong with the theology of Christianity, he virtually conquered such a mighty Roman Empire within 150 years. The theology of Christianity is that Jesus Christ came to this world to save men from their sins, and whoever believes in Christ does not perish but has eternal life and the kingdom of God as his inheritance. One man's life of faith in Jesus is very important. May God bless us to be strong in our inner man! We want to think about that today.

First, Jesus' ascension and descension (1-10).

When we read verses 1-10, Paul talks about Jesus' ascension and descension repeatedly, because Paul thought that if we are going to grow in our inner man, we must know the meaning of Jesus' ascension and descension; in other words, Jesus' incarnation.

It is easy for us to cowork with God, because we cannot see God and we love God. It is easy for us to talk about God as much as our saliva dries up. In short, the vertical relationship is not difficult. But there is a problem in the horizontal relationship. Look at verses 1-2. "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." We must work hard to grow our inner man by learning of Jesus' inner man. Paul urges us to live a life worthy of God's calling which we have received. Look at verses 3-6. Here Paul urges God's love, the bond of peace, one Spirit, one hope, and God over all and in all, and through all. This requires complete humbleness and gentleness and patience, bearing with others and loving others with the love of Jesus. These verses amaze us in that our relationships with other coworkers are not easy at all. As easy as it is to have a good relationship with God, to

have a good relationship with fellow Christian brothers is very difficult. It is because even if we are converted by the blood of Jesus, still we are not perfect. In one sense, we are good and evil men and one's virtue can be regarded as his evil. Also, we are brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. We all have worldly friends who share many common factors with us. It is easy for us to make friends with them. But it is not easy to make Christian friends, because Christian friends must be friends in Jesus Christ. Christians must be friends in the love of God. So it is very difficult for anyone to make Christian friends. But we should not look at our Christian friends' weaknesses; we must look up at Jesus. We must learn humbleness, gentleness, patience, bearing with others and the love of Christ in order to make Christian friends and Christian unity.

We know that when we were called we had one hope, one God, one faith, one baptism, and we all called God our Father and recognized we are all brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. But Paul understood the Ephesians' spiritual level so well. Paul understood that the Ephesians did well to become one formerly. But true love among Christian brethren was very difficult.

So Paul explains why we have to do so. Look at verses 7-8. "But to each of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: 'When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.'" God gave us grace to become one so that God could use our spiritual vessel in fulfilling the world mission purpose. But it was difficult. Paul wrote in verse 8 about Jesus' ascension. This verse describes Jesus' ascension into heaven as the return of a triumphant general from battle. Our Lord Jesus Christ won the spiritual battle in order to fulfill God's will for world salvation through the completion of his earthly messianic ministry, his crucifixion, and his resurrection. When he ascended on high, our Lord Jesus Christ took with him innumerable sinners who accepted the gift of God, Jesus. We thought that Jesus only took one of the robbers who confessed his faith in Jesus when he entered the kingdom of God (Lk 23:42). But this verse says, "captives in his train." These words simply mean that Jesus was accompanied by a huge number of people when he passed through the pearly gates of the kingdom of God.

Paul explains in verses 9-10 why Jesus ascended. Paul says that before his ascension, Jesus had a descension. In short, Jesus, though he was God, gave up all his power and glory and honor of the kingdom of God, and came down to this world to save men from their sins. We know this story very well. But Jesus' descension, that is, Jesus' incarnation, involves true divine humbleness. Proud people cannot understand the meaning of Jesus' descension. Jesus' incarnation is indeed glorious. Luke 2:14 says, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." Jesus' coming to this world is indeed glory to God. Here, the word "glory" means "revealing God's love." God's love is revealed to the whole world through his incarnation. Let's think about the words "coming down" among human society. We can give some money, some service and attend church regularly. But in order to save men from their sins, we cannot give our one and only son as a lamb of God who has to shed his blood on the cross. But Jesus humbly obeyed God's will and came and lived among us. The incarnation of Jesus is also peace to men. Before Jesus' coming to the world, man was like a master and woman was like a slave girl. A rich man was like a feudal lord and their hirelings were regarded as permanent slaves. But since Jesus taught the truth of God, man and woman became equal. Also, Chinese people think that they are equal with Americans. Jesus' truth saved many dying souls. Jesus' truth taught many sinners how to deny themselves. Jesus' truth taught them how to take up their crosses and become the disciples of Jesus.

The incarnation, that is, the descension of Jesus, is indeed marvelous even to the people who came and passed away. There is a beautiful example of Jesus' purpose of descension. There was a very bitter woman. She was a Gentile woman. At that time, the racial barrier was incurable between the Jews and the Samaritans. But there is no racial barrier in Jesus. As soon as Jesus saw her, he said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" It was in order to open the door of her heart so that Jesus might introduce the living water welling up to eternal life (Jn 4:7-14). At that time, tax collectors were known as quislings and national traitors. But Jesus once passed by the tax collector's booth, and saw a tax collector named Levi and said to him, "Follow me" (Lk 5:27). He was a

radically selfish man and a public sinner who was not worthy of any kind of good advice. But Jesus saw his extreme selfishness as his virtue and appointed him as one of his disciples. Later, he became the writer of the Sermon on the Mount, the world's best literature in human history. Paul did not just say, "humble yourself." He said, "be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." How can we be completely humble? The best way is to think about Jesus' incarnation.

One shepherd said, "I am my own man. Nobody can talk to me to do this and that." So his senior shepherd was afraid and could not say a word. A student missionary under his care was patient with this shepherd. But the other day, when the student missionary thought about his sheep, he had no sheep. So he began to blow up, saying to the shepherd, "You deliver message for an average of one and a half hours." When the shepherd was poor and pure he had been a blessing. But when he became wealthy, he became so proud that even his senior shepherd was afraid of him. He became so proud that no one was happy to be in his fellowship. Here we learn that the humbleness of Jesus is the best in order to be a blessing.

Second, to discover others' gifts and respect them (11-13).

In making unity in Christ, we should respect one another. Paul seems suddenly to change his story and talks about each individual person's unique gift. Look at verse 11. "It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers...." It is easy to dig out others' weaknesses deeply and carefully. There is a strong impression that many people enjoy sadistic joy by digging out others' weaknesses and giving them sadistic criticism.

When we watch the video tape about General Patton, anybody can recognize that he is a valiant general. But the crooked news media and benefit-seeking politicians ignored his inner motive of hitting a coward boy with his glove. They only dealt with his rudeness that a three-star general hit a private soldier with his glove. In the newspaper cartoon, he was not beating him with his glove, but General Patton was kicking and

punching the private soldier. So his action to enhance the young soldier's morale became top news. And a three-star general was ordered to apologize to the private soldier, and to all hospital workers who knew about the event. That's fallen man's mentality.

These days, people do not see why they have to work hard or be sacrificial servants of God. They only see a very cynical and sadistic part of life in man, especially in the children of God. Paul knew that there was such a tendency in the Ephesians. He told them that God gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers. Paul sees that each person's gift from God is different. So instead of digging out others' weaknesses, we must try to dig out others' gifts from above and pray for them and help them to grow in their gift. This is a very precious lesson in the spiritual world. We are so grateful that God helped us to have spiritual unity in our fellowship.

Why do we have to build each other up? When we do so, we can help people grow to do works of God's service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we are all united in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Here, we learn that a humble man can learn God. Here, we learn that those who respect others can grow to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Without this, churches cannot accept God's world mission purpose. Rather, churches will be laughingstocks to the worldly people. They see church members as boxers or baseball players and they also see church people as men and women of big mouth for nothing.

Third, the children of God must grow in Jesus (14-16).

Look at verse 14. "Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming." Here Paul emphasizes that the children of God must grow and the children of God should not be swayed by the worldly consensus. When we become a Christian and get married, we think that we are grown up Christians. But those who did not study the Bible and those

who did not suffer much to grow in Christ to be like Jesus, remain as Christian infants with diapers. Infants are full of curiosity, especially about toys or cartoon movies. Likewise, new Christians who do not have the theology of Christianity or the key point of gospel faith are tossed back and forth by the waves and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Therefore, when we write our Bible testimony, we must write how we are growing, specifically in what respect, instead of just writing habitually to entertain others.

The world is full of evil. And new Christians are like infants. So mature Christians must take care of young Christians wholeheartedly and mature Christians must study the Bible all the more. Then we can grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (16). It is surprising to know that there is an immeasurable joy in the spiritual realm. People of the world only do bad things and are suffering a guilty conscience and live a life of sin with a sense of punishment. But we have the joy of growing every day. As we know well, Dr. Mark Yoon was one of the most fearful persons. Because of his fear, the size of his wrist was like a piece of chopstick. His voice sounded not like a man. But he accepted Jesus Christ and began to grow by the help of the Holy Spirit. In the course of growing spiritually, by the help of his wife, and in the course of getting a Ph.D., he expressed unutterable joy in Jesus many times.

Fourth, the children of God must be the light of the world (17-32).

First of all, we should not live like Gentile people. Usually, non-Christian people's hearts are hardened and fixed. They think if they have money they would be happy. So several parents of our fellowship members tried to persuade their children, "If you quit Christian life, we will buy you houses and give you a lot of money." But in reality, they don't give any money to their children. They only hinder their children's life of faith. How can we help those hardened people? We must be a light to them. We must have an absolute attitude toward them. If possible, we must teach them the key point of the gospel, saying, "Those who believe

in Jesus will not perish but have eternal life and inherit the kingdom of God as their reward. But those who live for apartment buildings or their delicious food will go to hell and suffer eternally." This is the promise of God. This is the way we can be the light to the world.

These days nobody cares about children in grade school. But we must know that they are future leaders of this nation. It is a great mistake to just let them do things because they are little and not so important. But when we observe how they are treated in school and at home, generally people condone their selfishness and rebellious mind and let them do whatever they want to do. As a result, in their grade school days, they practically become mentally corrupt middle-aged men and women by experiencing all kinds of worldly things. We cannot but be deeply concerned about this situation. It seems to be good that everybody work and support themselves. So the government and parents must discipline children to be obedient, and help them study hard instead of playing around.

This mental corruption has already pervaded to colleges. There are so many boys who are above 30 years old. Still, they did not finish undergraduate courses. They work minimum wage jobs and with the money they earn, they enjoy their life of sin. This is not lazy young people's problem. This is the problem of Christian corruption. Christians do not have influence in this society. There are so many Christians. But they are nominal Christians and they have no authority or dignity--especially no good influence on their children. So they cannot say anything to their children. And their children are growing like thornbushes (17-19).

How can the children of God give a good influence in this society? How can the children of God restore the moral standard and spiritual order of this nation? First, Paul clearly tells us that we must put off our old self. Let's read verse 22. "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires...." Second, we must be made new in the attitude of our minds and put on the new self (23,24). In short, we must be sure that we are new men in Christ. Third, we should show our life of light. We

should not get angry and give the devil a foothold (26,27). Fourth, we must not steal (28). It is funny that Paul encouraged Christians not to steal. But there are many people who have the habit of stealing, even after becoming mature Christians. There was a wedding ceremony. One handsome Christian young man was the best man. During the ceremony, the time of ring exchange came. But the bride's ring was gone. So the ordainer managed the ceremony. The best man came home and took off his coat. Then he found the bride's ring fell out from his pocket. Likewise, there are many habits of stealing. Christians should not steal. They should discipline themselves not to steal. As a leader of a fellowship, those who are working two jobs must think very seriously about whether they are stealing God's time. Fifth, Paul teaches us that we should build up others (29). In order to build up others, we must first learn how to bridle our mouths. The mouth is the door of the heart. So Paul says we must overcome bitterness, anger, brawling, and malice (31). Those things make our mouths hurt others. But we must be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave us (32). If we use our mouth, the door of the heart, to build up others, we can raise many sheep.

In this passage, we learned that we must practice the humbleness of Jesus, which is glory to God and peace to men, and which is full of grace and full of truth. Then we can be a light to the Gentiles.