

## Holy Living and the Church

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When we hear the term “church” many things can come to mind. For many, the building comes to mind. To some, church could mean an organized religion or it could mean a denomination. Maybe there are others who see church as a local fellowship or the universal church. For the church to operate correctly and to be effective in the time it is living in, the church needs to be focused and strong. A good example of this is the past military event in Iran done by the United States Military. They were focused on destroying the nuclear capabilities of Iran. Our military used new 30,000 lb. bombs (GBU-57 Massive Ordnance Penetrator) that could go down an air shaft. Not only that, but our military shot other types of missiles before this bombing from submarines that would drop on certain targets after the bunker bombs had hit. In other words, everything had to work together with good communication and with great skill. Also, there had to be a mindset of victory for the men and women who were involved in this mission. If they had thought they were going to fail before they even started, the outcome might have been different. They had the same vision and they had the same drive. They wanted victory for their Country, peace in the world, and lives saved. All of this put together gave them purpose in their mission. What’s our mission as the church? What drives us to come every Sunday? What drives us to work together to work as one? Hopefully, as we journey through Scripture this morning, we’ll start to see that Holy living is not only a personal relationship with the Lord, but Holy living is also a relationship with each other where the people, the church, is on a mission for Holy living together. We must look at the bigger picture of Holy living. How easy it is to keep Holy living to ourselves. A church can’t grow or continue to do the Lord’s work when the people are no longer one in Holy living. Let’s take a closer look into this.

Let’s turn to Ephesians 4: 1-6 where we read this from Apostle Paul, “<sup>4</sup> I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>eager to maintain the unity of

the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (ESV – Biblegateway.com)

This is a huge statement Paul is making for the Church. At the core of the church lies an oneness that cannot be fractured. Paul, who is a prisoner for the Lord, urges the church to live a life worthy of the calling they received. When you ask forgiveness for your sin and you allowed Jesus into your heart with the help of the Holy Spirit, you become a new person spiritually and you are then part of God's Kingdom. We are to live a life worthy of that calling. So, Paul tells the church to do this requires us to be completely or all humble, gentle, patient, and bearing with one another in love. The Greek term for bearing or forbearing, means to put up with, endure, suffer (Strong's Concordance). That means we put up with each other and endure through the love of Jesus. This is how Jesus loves us – He puts up with us and endures us. Remember, we must love the Lord with everything we have and love our neighbor as ourselves. This is part of Holy living which all Christians are called to. Paul tells the church this in the very beginnings of Ephesians chapter 1: 4, "Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ (NLT)" This is the unchanging plan of God which is for us to be Holy through Jesus Christ. So, we must be patient with each other in the love of Christ. What Paul just said makes more sense when you look at verses 3 and 6 where we are to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit within the church and Paul would say Holy living creates unity in the church because we become one with Jesus and through Him we become one together as a church. We all share in the one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is through all and in all. This is complete unity and we must thirst for this. We're all call to be Holy together and serve Jesus together with humbleness, gentleness, and patience. Through Holy living, we all can enjoy being one together through Jesus Christ. Paul makes this statement in the second part of verse 27 in Colossians 1, "For this is the secret: Christ lives in you and this



is your assurance that you will share in his glory. (NLT)” Since Jesus lives in us through the Spirit; we need to allow the Spirit to bind us together in unity so we can share in His glory.

We see this in the next piece of Scripture that we’ll be reading which is Ephesians 4: 11-13 where Paul states, “<sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds<sup>[a]</sup> and teachers,<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,<sup>[c]</sup> to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, (ESV – Biblegateway.com)

If we all strive for Holy living, this Holiness from God will help to unite us and help us to grow into mature Christians which is the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. This is what we all should want to strive for – building up the body of Christ. Paul states in verse 11 that the leaders of the church are to equip the saints for the work of ministry until we all attain unity of the faith. All of this is done to build up the body of Christ. People often just look at verse 11 and say pastors and teachers are to do all the evangelizing. This is not what Paul is saying. The leaders are to build up the regular folks to reach the lost just as the pastors and teachers do. The early church was good at reaching the lost because they were unified in Holiness through the Spirit. We’re all in this together. I know someone who works out, but their one arm is crippled. So, they lift weights with the one arm, but not the other. So, over time the good arm became bigger and bigger till his muscular arm could barely fit through a shirt sleeve. The other arm is only a quarter of the size of the good arm and you can’t see any muscles. The problem comes when he tries to lift items which require two arms. The strong arm has no problem to raise its end, but the weak arm can’t lift its end. So, he tries to use that strong arm to lift the whole item while he uses the weak arm as only to balance the item since it can’t handle the weight. He now has a hard time keeping his balance and his strong arm is getting tired very quickly. If the weak arm was as strong as the good arm, he would have no issues because there would be equal weight on both sides and his balance would be equal as well. Paul knew that for a church to function correctly, they all needed to be united as one through Jesus. So, when we see a young Christian that is weak in faith, we just don’t give

up on them, but we bear or put up with them and help them to grow in their faith so that there can be equal balance within the church. Then we all can enjoy the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Not only do we want to be Holy ourselves, but we want our fellow brothers and sisters to be holy as well so that the Lord's Kingdom can be advanced on this earth. In other words, we need to look at the bigger picture of Holiness. It isn't all about ourselves. If you have half the church striving for Holiness while the other doesn't, the church can't function in its full potential just like the man with one strong arm and one weak arm. He was limited. The church needs to be unified as one through Jesus. Why is this so important?

Let's continue with Paul and continue in Ephesians 4: 14 – 16, <sup>14</sup>“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. <sup>15</sup>Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from 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. (ESV – Biblegateway.com)

Let's start with verse 16 where Paul tells us that the church needs to be joined together and to work properly so that the whole body can grow and build itself up in love. Paul stresses again the need for spiritual growth or Holy living as a group. We do this because we don't want to be like children who are tossed to and fro by the waves of false teaching, temptation, and evil doctrine. It's nice to be part of a group that is on the same wave length. This means that everyone is focused on the same thing. A business is focused making money and a good business is focused on making money and putting out a good product. A new CEO one time had a group meeting with the other leaders of the company and he asked the whole group what they wanted out of the company. They all said in unison they wanted the company to grow and be a better company. The new CEO gave a sigh of relief because he already had a group of leaders that had the same mission he had. The company was going to run smoother because of this. If there is different doctrine or false teaching spreading within a church, that church will not be



focused on Jesus. The church will be focused on the waves that are tossing them to and fro. Our focus as a Church is on who is the head of the Church which is Jesus Christ. He is our real CEO. For us to be able to focus on Jesus in the correct way requires all of us to be a Holy people. So, Paul tells us we must build each other up so we are not tossing back and fro, but remain steady in the culture we are living in.

Let's go a step further and turn to Titus 2: 11-15 where we read this, "<sup>11</sup>For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, <sup>12</sup>training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, <sup>13</sup>waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup>who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.<sup>15</sup> Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. (ESV – Biblegateway.com)

Not only do we need to be a Holy group so we can brush off false teaching and false doctrine, but also to help the church to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions in our present time. Verse 14 tells us Jesus gave Himself for us to redeem us from "all" lawlessness and to purify His people (us) for His own possession who are zealous for good works. We should want to be a Holy people because of this. We should look at each other and want every person in the Church family to be holy including ourselves. We live in a lawlessness time and we need to be on the same page as Jesus on knowing right from wrong. This means we don't try to appease everyone when they do wrong, but to show love by letting them know it goes against the Word of God. We strive for this group holiness while we wait for the blessed hope – the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. What drives us to come to Church and want to be a Holy people? It is out of love for Jesus first, and then it's for each other. We should want all of us as Christians to be a Holy people. I'll close this sermon with the Scripture that is our theme for this year as a Church family and let us pray this prayer for each other:

<sup>16</sup>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup>so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through

faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (NIV – Biblegateway.com)

*NLT Life Application Study Bible*. Tyndale House Publishers, Inc: Wheaton, 1996

*The Strongest Strong's Concordance*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001