

LOVE INCORRUPTIBLE: EPHESIANS 4:1-16

The Summit Church, March 4th and 5th 2017 , Jason Gaston

Introduction and Welcome: It's always a joy and honor to be able to stand up on this stage and share God's word with you. It's a joy because I have such a deep love for you, The Summit Church.

My name is Jason Gaston, Family Ministry Pastor here (which basically just means that I get to serve the most incredible teams here on the planet (Kids and Student Teams) and they get to serve in the trenches with hundreds of you making disciples in among the next generation week in and week out here at The Summit.

Disclaimer today: If at any point I look like I am about to fall over and absolutely die right here on this stage, it's because..well..I am. I have herniated disk in my lower back and well...I'm getting old folks.

Because I want to be mindful of my time here on stage so I will be asked to preach again at another date, we're going to jump right in today. That sound good? Go ahead and open up your bible to the book of Ephesians 4, and we'll be in the first 16 verses today.

While you're turning there,Story to set up the whole passage

Let's read this passage together:

"As a prisoner for the Lord, therefore I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received."

The book of Ephesians is one of what we call the "Prison Epistles." The reason is because..wait for it....the writer (Paul, also named Saul) was writing to a church that he loved dearly from a Roman prison.

"Therefore" is the pivotal moment in the book of Ephesians. It's a transition statement from the the first 3 chapters of the book on what it means to know King Jesus to the 2nd 3 chapters of how to actually live it out!

"Be *completely* humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

Paul says that we should "walk in a manner worthy of the calling"--we should walk in a way that is a worthy response to the gospel. And the way that we do that is by UNITY.

Nothing declares to each other and an unbelieving world the beauty of the gospel more than our ability to keep unity in the body.

I don't think I need to spend a lot of time on this since Pastor JD brought the house down with this message on unity last week.

But, Paul is simply stating again what he emphasized in chapter 3, that when we are united in the body, we beautifully reflect the unity of God to a world that is divided on so many things. Unity in the body should make the world go "WHAT??"

And unity in the gospel shapes WHO WE ARE and HOW WE LIVE. We'll talk about that a little more later.

But to *each of us* grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. That is why it says: When he ascended on high, he led the captives in his train and gave gifts to men." What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

Anyone else just get lost there? There's a lot here to unpack, but I'm on a time constraint, so I'll just give you the cliff notes version of what is happening. (Cliff...what a guy!)

Paul quotes Psalm 68 and relates it to the victory of Jesus. Instead of giving a direct quote of Psalm 68:18, basically summarizes it in his own words.

You see, Psalm 68 is a victory hymn. Historically, it was typical, after a king won a significant military victory, to bring back the spoils of war..on the winning end. It was a celebration of the king and what he possessed.

You seeing this yet? Let me just remind you of something this morning... King Jesus came. He went to the cross, died for the penalty of sin, went into the grave, and curbed death in the teeth and is now reigning victoriously...and he gives us to spoils of victory...gifts as a reminder and a tool for the mission ahead!

"It was *he* who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and

teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up"

God has called and equipped people for the sake of the church. He's given gifts of leadership to the church FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHURCH. Did you catch that?

Pastor JD, the leaders in our church, our heartbeat and our passion and our calling is to use the gifts that God has given us to serve you, to love you, and *to equip you to use your gifts* for the sake of God's kingdom within the body and the world.

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.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there...

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. From him the whole body, joined together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up I love as each part does its work.

Four things I want us to see today as we seek to grow up in Christ.

1. The Gospel creates a changed people. (v.1-6?)

For just a brief moment, can we just press pause and look at the context of this passage? Remember, who's writing this? Paul, who is also called...Saul.

Remember Saul? Yeah....1st Century Jihadist. What was his goal, if you read Acts 9:1 it says he was “breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s people.”

How does a man go from THAT (stopping and destroying God’s people as his main motive) to writing the church to “press on in Christ, walk in the gospel and live in unity? wasn’t he the one trying to DIVIDE the church by destroying it?

a. It’s because we serve a King that is in the business of Redemption, the business of making people new!

i. 2 Chair Illustration

b. It’s from that place that we now live! We

c. Humility, gentleness, patience, and bearing with one another in love

i. Those are not characteristics of the old person, only the new one.

b. The gospel brings unity

a. Eager to maintain unity in the body

b. Unity in the body declares to the world “We (a people redeemed and united in Christ) are here, we’re not going anywhere because of what Jesus has done in us.”

c. The world can live lives changing based on their stances on policies, politics, and latest fads. Those will fade....

d. But we ain’t movin!!!!!!

e. WHY? Because Jesus is better. The body of Christ is worth it.

2. The gospel equips for the journey (vs. 7, 12)

Now, you’ll remember that this passage specifically addresses those that have been gifted for leadership in the church to equip YOU to use your gifts for the sake of the kingdom of God.

Well, if the leaders are to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, you need to know that you have a gift and a task.

a. You have been given a gift For the sake of the body

b. *All people* have been given a gift

c. **But to *each of us* grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. (v7)... so that the body of Christ may be built up (v.12)**

a. It’s not just a select few (Pastoral teams)

d. This changed people, the church, has a gift that God has given us in his grace for the sake of one another.

a. **That means I NEED YOUR GIFT. I NEED YOU to USE YOUR GIFT.**

b. I need you to speak that gift over me and use that gift towards me.

c. **My kids need your gift.** They need you to encourage them, spur them on. They need you to get off your rear ends and start serving and USING your gift to build this body up in unity and righteousness

i. **By the way, can I just stop for a second and say “thank you” to the 500+ who are pouring out their lives and using their gifts for the**

sake of the gospel in the next generation here at Summit. THANK YOU for loving our kids and students and families. Thank you for partnering with them to raise their kids to love Jesus and his mission.

e. Paul tells us in 1 Cor 12: **"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."** (1 Corinthians 12:7)

- **3 different places in the NT** Paul lists out examples what spiritual gifts are (Romans 12; 1 Cor 12; Ephesians 4). They include things like **hospitality, mercy, serving, generosity, exhortation, evangelism, leadership, vision, faith, prayer.**
- **So how can you tell what yours are?** Pastor JD and our small groups team did an awesome job of that this past week in our study, so I'm just going to quickly hash that out for a minute
- We believe that we can know that fairly easily:
 - **A spiritual gift is usually the overlap of what in God's kingdom we are passionate about, what we're good at, and what others affirm in us**

INSERT IMAGE FROM SMALL GROUP STUDY

"Ability" refers to what you are **naturally good at**, because a lot of times (not all the time) a spiritual gift includes what you are naturally gifted for.

- For example, my gift of teaching coincides with a natural ability I have for public speaking, persuasion, and coaching. I love to coach. I'm a baseball coach, and I love to stand in front of people and talk their ear off.

- Evidently, **Paul was a great thinker and writer** before he became a Christian. He had been selected to apprentice under the highly respected Jewish leader (Acts 22:3).
 - **There are exceptions, of course.** Sometimes, God gives spiritual gifts that have little to do with natural abilities just to show everybody it's not about human talent but his power.

Passion refers to what you love. What drives you, wakes you up at night, gets your soul jacked up and excited in the kingdom of God.

"affirmation" refers to what other people see and call out in you. (Remember the context of Eph 4? The church!!)

Where all 3 of these converge is typically the place of a spiritual gift:

I figured out early on what my spiritual gifts were (teaching, evangelism, leadership, and I built my life around them. **All of us** should **know what they are** and they should be a key part of our lives.

- **I'd go so far as to say** that if you don't know what your spiritual gifts are, you can't really know what God wants you to be doing.
- **How could you?** God has given each of you a gift to use in this mission. Do you know what yours is?

By the way, if you don't know what your gift is, that's why it's important for you to be plugged into a discipleship relationship with someone, small groups. It's also a way for

the people of God to use their gifts to build up the body into maturity, to speak life into one another!

You have a gift, It comes from God to equip you to live out this calling of the gospel. You need it, I need it. We need it.

3. The gospel calls you to grow up.

Then we will no longer be *infants*, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there...

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things **grow up** into him who is the Head, that is Christ. From him the whole body, joined together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work. (v.14-16)

Buckle up for a second and put on your big boy/girl pants. This one may hurt a bit...and I'm sorry...but not really.

You see, we live in a culture that hands out participation trophies for simply showing up and telling people they're snowflakes because they're breathing. It needs to stop.

Real talk: We need people to stop simply showing up and start growing up.

And let me tell you something, we love to look at the people on the receiving end of those participation trophies and point

them finger at them. BUT WHO GIVES THOSE TROPHIES TO THEM? WE DO. Why? Because we love to be pampered too.

As a pastor in student ministry for 13 years, I used to look at some kids that grew up in our churches and walk with Jesus but make some of the dumbest decisions on the plane and be baffled..but chalk it up to "they're just kids."

Then, I realized that most of that wasn't because they were deeply immature, they were simply patterning their lives after their grown up parents that still act like middle schoolers.

Listen very closely to what I'm saying today. If you want to look like Jesus, you have to grow up and stop conforming to the world around you and start walking towards Jesus!

What Paul is after here in Ephesians 4 is a common theme for the people of God all throughout Scripture...to see the body of Christ, the people of God, grow into maturity.

- **Joshua 22:5** ...love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to keep his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul."
- **Proverbs 9:6** Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of insight."
- it doesn't matter where you are in this journey
 - Shallow End: Milk and Cookies (recently a new believer)

- Deep End: Tomahawk steak from Angus barn (walking with Jesus for a long time)
- **The goal is the same: Keep growing!**

If you're anything like me, you need a little bit of a scoreboard. I need to know where I'm winning. I need to be able to see where I'm growing. It's just how I am hardwired. Here are a few areas I think the Scripture speaks towards our maturing as a believers

1. **What is your thought life like?** (*Romans 12:1 "Do not conform any longer to the patterns of this world, but be renewed by the transforming of your mind"*)
2. **What is your behavior and attitude like?** (Gal. 5)
3. **How are you spending your time?** (Eph. 5)
4. **What is the effect of the company you keep on your life?** (*Proverbs 13:20 "Walk with the wise and become wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm"*)
5. **What do your ambitions reveal?** (Matt. 6)
6. **When was the last time you opened the word?** (Ps. 119:9-11 "how does a young man...")
7. **How often are you repenting?** **WHERE WE HAVE SIN, WE MUST HAVE REPENTANCE! WHERE WE HAVE NO REPENTANCE, SIN TAKES ROOT.**

Psalm 1: One of my favorite passages in all of Scripture. It's a passage I pray over my family, our students, and this church almost daily. It speaks deeply to this idea of maturing

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither." Psalm 1:1-3

We need a generation of TREES, not a generation of weeds. The only way to do that is to dig deep in the steams of the gospel....daily.

The gospel changes people who change the world.

- a. You see, the set up for 4:1-16 is actually found in 3:20-21

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." 3:20-21)

- a. Immeasurably more
 - i. The soul never paints without a picture
 - ii. What's the picture being painted for your life right now
 - iii. Do you want to see God do some incredible things in your lifetime through the local church?

- iv. Do you want to see God do some great things in your life down the hallways in your home?
- v. Do you want to see God do some great things, immeasurably more in your lifetime in your neighbors and co-workers lives?
- b. Then grow up, roll up your sleeves, and get to work.
 - i. For many of us, we don't have a problem with knowing the right things about God...
 1. It's that we don't have right practices or right affections.
 2. If you want your affections to grow for Christ...start practicing the disciplines of the faith

Imagine what RDU could look like when we, The Summit Church begin to grow up, use our gifts to serve one another and our community. That's when we will begin to see "In RDU as it is in heaven" become more of a reality.

Let's pray.