

Finding Your True Measuring Stick Ephesians 4:13-16

This morning we want to move back into our study of Ephesians. If you were here and you remember back, we spent several weeks looking at the different gifts that God's children are given at the point of salvation.

Salvation is such a wonderful thing and it is broader and more encompassing than most people realize. Not only are we saved for eternity in heaven with Jesus, God and all those who have gone on before us, we are saved in this life plus we are given specially selected gifts from God.

Now as we read in Ephesians 4:12 we can see these gifts are given for a couple of different purposes. **Ephesians 4:12, "...for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ."**

The special gifting each one of you have received is to equip you to minister to and build up the body, the church of Jesus Christ.

As we move on into Paul's teaching in Ephesians, we move into an area where he begins to deal with a number of behaviors and attitudes. Before we get there though he tells us why he is going to do so.

Let's skip over the main point I wanted to make this morning, found in verses 13-16. We will come back to them this morning. But let's take a look at verses 17-24. A pretty good chunk of scripture but after we read through it I will sum it up. Look with me.

Ephesians 4:17-24, "¹⁷ So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

²⁰ That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 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; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”

The first thing we see happening in this passage is Paul says the Gentiles, who in this case he is calling the nonbelievers, are darkened in their understanding which has separated them from God. Because of this separation from God not only have they indulged themselves in every kind of impurity but he says they have purposefully given themselves over to it.

That is a pretty bad state of affairs when a person is no longer just struggling with sin but they have purposefully given themselves over to a sinful life. Full of greed, indulging in every kind of impurity.

Paul goes on to say that's not the way you learned about a life with Christ. You were taught to no longer live in that way. You were to put off the old self, to put on the new self and to be made new in the attitude of your mind.

Now here is the great thing I wanted to re-emphasize this morning. Look at the last verse mentioned, verse 24. We are to **“...put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”**

This is an incredible statement when you really think about it. In Christ you have the forgiveness of sins but more than that, you have a new inner self that is created to be like God in righteousness and holiness.

Did you know that? Inwardly, the new you is as holy and righteous as God Himself.

Now some of you have seen this a couple of times but I don't think we can see this and hear this good news enough.

When you came to Christ you came as your old self. You might have been a pretty good person as the world goes but inwardly you were born with a sin nature and that sin nature kept you from interacting with God in the ways He desires for you to. He cannot be in the presence of sin so He sent His Son to take away the sins and sin nature of each person who accepts His Son's cleansing, purifying blood.

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior that is what occurred. Your old nature was taken away, your inward parts were cleansed by the blood of Jesus and then you received an inward filling of God's and Christ's Spirit that is Holy.

Now I want each of us to really get this. The only way you can contain inside of you a Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, that is holy is if the container itself is made holy. And that is the good news of what Jesus did for you. It is an incredible thing that has occurred but you were created, or better yet, re-created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Not only is salvation to heaven your gift, but to be washed pure by the blood of Jesus and to be re-created in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Now that is a gift! Amen!

But here's the rub we deal with. We have Christ in us but the reality is on the outside we have the residue of the old sinful nature which is still pulling on us and the the world we live in is still chasing it and trying to pull us into it.

But Paul says a great transitional statement in verses 20-22.

The way the world goes, **Ephesians 4:20-22**, “...that is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self...”

And that is where we find ourselves as we continue our study in Ephesians. Learning about Christ so we can put off the old self.

As we are going to see it is Christ who is now in you, He is the standard. The challenge each of us have in this life is to put off as much of the old self as possible so the world can see Christ in you. In fact, Christ in you shines so much that He actually becomes a force in the world in and through you.

Let's go back and read through verses 13-16.

Ephesians 4:13-16, “...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.

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 people in their deceitful scheming.

¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ 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.”

I heard a story once where a mother had her child come up to her and said guess what? I am 8 feet tall. His mother, in great surprise inquired how it was that he measured himself and she found out that he had used a 6 inch ruler. He was actually only 4 foot tall.

As we begin to look at growing in Christ, it is very important that we make sure He is the measuring stick.

