**Ephesians 3:14 – 4:16**

April 5-6, 2017

*This study contains two different sections (Part 1: 3:14-21 & Part 2 4:1-4:16). Is is between these two sections that Ephesians takes a significant shift. Chapters 1-3 are distinctly doctrinal (chs 1-3) and chapters 4-6 are mainly practical. The former section consists mainly of an exposition of the redemptive purpose of God and the place of the church in that purpose. In the latter section the apostle brings out the ethical implications of his doctrine and urges the readers to put them into practice. Vs 4:1 reveals this explicit shift: recognize the calling you have received (chs 1-3) and* ***live*** *this life worthy of this calling (chs 4-6). -Vaughan*

*More specifically with regards to the passages in this study, Chapter 3:14-21 is a prayer that Paul prays for the people. Chapter 4:1-16 speaks to specific ways that the people can serve God and serve the Church.*

Read- 3:14-21

*The prayer contained in this text is generally considered to be the most majestic prayer found anywhere in Paul’s Epistles, or possibly in the whole Bible. This prayer reveals not only the requests of Paul for the Ephesians but also the desire and longing of God for all of His people. It is an expression of His purpose, a statement of the ultimate goal of redemption that He intends his people to realize. -Vaughan*

Remember again that Paul is in prison, and we can reasonably consider that he had “plenty” to pray for regarding his own struggles. But yet Paul continues to spread the Gospel and he continues to pray with a sincere heart for the early church. What can we learn about how Paul lived his life? What trials or disruptions in your life have you faced where you were tempted to put the Gospel on the “back burner.” Or put another way- to use your own circumstances as an excuse or reason to depart from the path of spreading the gospel? How can we have a heart like Paul’s to sincerely care and be compassionate for those around us and be dedicated in prayer for them?

Vs 14 What is the reason that Paul is praying for the people in Ephesus? Look back over what we have read so far.

*Paul wanted all people (Jews and Gentiles) to truly know who Christ is.*

*There are 3 principal petitions in the prayer which are progressive (like steps on a ladder): 1) a request for inner power (vs 16&17), 2) A request for comprehension (vs 17b-19a), 3) a request for the fullness of God (vs 19b). -Vaughan*

Vs 16-19: (see note above) What is the prayer that you have for yourself: to gain in strength and power from the Spirit, comprehension of who He is, or to be filled with the fullness of God?

Vs 15-19 How do you grasp how long, wide, high, and deep the love of Christ is? What does it mean to you that it surpasses knowledge? Spend time to process through this ( in prayer, small group discussion, etc.) in order to focus on the love of Christ and what this means for each of you in your lives.

Vs 20 Do you have faith in God that He will do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine? What do you believe it means to “ask” God for things, will He give us anything we ask? What is significant about it being “immeasurably more.”

Read Ch 4:1-16

Vs 1: Call out what you believe the calling is that you have received (be specific)? Do you believe you have received a specific calling? How can and how are you living it out? How can we be in prayer for one another to continue in pursuit of His calling?

Vs 2-3: These are specific commands; which of these do you struggle with? Which of these do you need to grow in and how?

Vs 4: Why is it necessary to understand the “Oneness” of God? What does Paul mean by “one hope” “one faith” “one baptism.”? What are these things that he is speaking about (i.e. what is the hope that he speaks of)?

*Verses 9 & 10 explain verse 8 and show that the passage quoted (in Psalms) refers to Christ. Paul is saying that the ascension of such a divine Person as is described by the psalmist necessarily implies a previous descent by that Person from his heavenly abode. Since Christ is the One who thus descended, it must therefore have been He who was spoken of in the psalm as ascending. The phrase “lower earthly regions” is variously understood. It may for instance, mean parts lower that the earth. Starting from this idea, some interpreters conclude that Christ descended into hell, the place of punishment. But it is seriously doubted that the Scriptures give any warrant o the idea of Christs going into hell. Nowhere in scriptures is it said to that Christ saves us by going into hell; consistently the inspired testimony is that He bore our sins in His body on the cross, that by His blood we have forgiveness and redemption. -Vaughan*

*In verse 11 we learn that not only does Christ bestow gifts on people; those so gifted are in turn bestowed on the church to serve it in various ways. Apostles and prophets appear to have been confined to the first Christian generation.*

Vs 11 Do you identify in any of the roles that Paul calls out (evangelists, teachers, pastors)? What does it mean to equip his people for works of service?

*One prominent trait of the mature Christian is doctrinal stability (when we arrive at the measure of the full stature of Christ we are no longer infants at the mercy of error). The second characteristic of the mature Christian is love. And a final trailer of the mature Christian is that he faithfully fulfills his appointed function with in the body of Christ and thus contributes his part to the overall growth of that body. -Vaughan*

Vs 14-16 Speaks to the body of the church, to build each other up into maturity, not easily swayed or shaken, but firm in the faith and this must all be done in love. What does this mean to you? How can you, as part of the church, serve in these ways? What are specific ways you can build each other up in love?

Conclusion

How can we better pray and be sincerely compassionate on those around us that we can have a sincere hope that they may know Christ?

How can we better go and live out this calling that Christ has given us?

In what ways, can we build the church up, and love one another?

*Notes and comments taken from: Ephesians by Curtis Vaughan.*