**Unity of the Faith (Eph 4:1-16)**

This is a brief commentary on Ephesians 4:1-16 focusing on the unity of faith and taking the whole letter, i.e., the whole book of Ephesians, into consideration.

First let’s compare the 1984 NIV and the KJV, just to point out a misleading wording errors and omissions in such translations as the NIV that can quite hide the true meaning of this passage. *(I am not pro any bible translation)*

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| **Eph 4:1-16 NIV** | **Eph 4:1-16 KJV** |
| As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy **of the calling you have received**. 2Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3Make every effort to **keep the unity of the Spirit** through the bond of peace.  [4]There is **one body** and **one Spirit**—just as you were called to **one hope** when you were called—5**one Lord**, **one faith**, **one baptism**; 6**one God and Father of all**, who is over all and through all and in all. | [1]I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of **the vocation wherewith ye are called**, [2]With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; [3]Endeavouring to keep **the unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace.  [4]*There is* **one body**, and **one Spirit**, even as ye are called in **one hope** of your calling; [5]**One Lord**, **one** **faith**, **one baptism**, [6]**One God and Father of all**, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all. |
| [7]**But** to each one of us grace has been given **as Christ apportioned it**. | [7]But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. |
| [8]This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” [9](What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? [10]He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) | [8]Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. [9](Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? [10]He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) |
| [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, | [11]And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; |
| [12]**to prepare God’s people for works of service**, so that the body of Christ may be built up | [12]For **the perfecting of the saints**, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: |
| [13]**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. | [13]**Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God**, unto **a perfect man**, unto **the measure of the stature of the fulness 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 men in their deceitful scheming. 15Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16From 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. | [14]That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; [15]But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ: [16]From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. |

**PART ONE—UNITY IN THE FAITH, PERFECTION AND “THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST”**

The building up or edifying of the body of Christ [Eph 4:12] is the purpose for which God has given the gifts to church [Eph 4:11-12]. The building up of the body must be accomplished first before the commencement of the ministry for which we are being prepared.

Since we already have one faith [Eph 4:5], we are not coming to unity in the faith, rather, what Paul is saying is that through this one faith, to which we are all called, we are to be built up until we are made a perfect man, attaining the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ [Eph 4:13].

The idea that we have not yet come to the unity of the faith suggests that Christians can be of different faiths and still all be true parts of the church. This directly contradicts Eph 4:4. This is tantamount to saying that you can have another Lord, other than the only one we are called to; or you can have another Spirit, other than the one Holy Spirit, etc., and still will be considered by heaven to be a part of the Church.

There is

1. One **body,** *(i.e., the church, the body of Christ [Eph 1:22-23; 4:12])*and
2. One **Spirit,** even as ye are called in
3. One **hope** of your calling—this is eternal life, immortality, the glorification of our bodies, the resurrection of the dead [Act 2:26; 23:6; 26:6-8; Rom 5:2; 8:23-24 *the redemption of our bodies is the hope in which we are saved*; Col 1:27 *the hope of glory*; 1Th 4:13-14; Tit 1:2; 3:7 *the hope of eternal life*; ]
4. One **Lord,**
5. One **faith,**
6. One **baptism,**
7. One **God and Father** of all

**PERFECTION AND PAUL’S MESSAGE IN EPHESIANS 4:1-16**

Paul’s message is not that we are **COMING TO** unity of faith and the knowledge of the son of God, but rather that, **IN** the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, we are to be built up until we are made a “perfect man”, until we have been given “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”.

I repeat, we already have the unity of faith, it is this one faith that we were called to.

One of the challenges to understanding this passage, as well as some other scriptures, is the misunderstanding of what Paul means by perfection—to be made a “perfect man”, to be given “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”. It is true that perfection, to be made perfect, has various meanings basically meaning to be complete, but what is too often missed is that there is a particular context in which the apostles use perfection that particularly means to be glorified.

Many correctly know that the Gospel presents “perfection” as a goal of our faith [Gal 3:3 KJV; Heb 7:11; 10:1,14; 11:40] but sadly do not realize what this perfection is. A lie that usually hides the true meaning of what the apostles meant by perfection is the wrong understanding of many that it is “moral perfection”. It is, however, most certainly not moral perfection because Jesus who was morally perfect, since he had no sin [Heb 4:15], was not “perfect” until his resurrection from the dead [Heb 5:8-9 *cf.,*Heb 2:10]. If Jesus, who had no sin, was made perfect, it means that to be morally perfect, i.e., to be sinless, is not what perfection is. *(By the way, moral perfection, a man not sinning at all, is nowhere taught or set as a goal for God’s people in the Word of God, Old and New Testaments alike.)*

Now, we must note that Jesus did not always have this perfection and only had this perfection after his resurrection from the dead [Heb 2:10]. This same perfection is what we are hoping for.

The key to being certain what perfection here means is “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”. “The measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” speaks of Christ’s immortality and glory.

*God’s fullness dwells in Christ.*

For **God** was pleased to have **all his fullness dwell in him *(i.e., Christ)***, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

[Col 1:19-20]

*The fullness of God that dwells in Christ is of his body, i.e., Jesus has the same nature as God the Father.*

For **in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form**, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

[Col 2:9-10]

We can see, if we understand the above verses, that the fullness of the measure of Christ is his divine nature, the fullness of God which dwells in him bodily. Now, since the nature and glory Jesus received at his resurrection is described as perfection [Heb 2:10; 5:8; 7:28], and this is immortality, the bodily nature of God, we can see that perfection here is the same thing as the fullness of the measure of Christ.

Now, although for now, we only have it by faith, we have been given the very same fullness which Christ possesses bodily in Christ [Col 2:9-10].

**SUMMARY—PERFECTION IS THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST**

1. **Immortality is the fulness of God in bodily form.**
   1. Jesus received immortality through his resurrection from the dead
   2. Hebrews describes the resurrected nature of Jesus as perfect—Jesus was not perfect before his resurrection
   3. Immortality is the fullness of God in bodily form
   4. Paul says we have been given this fullness in Christ Jesus, i.e., we are going to partake of this nature.
2. **Immortality is perfection.**
   1. Jesus received immortality through his resurrection from the dead
   2. Paul describes this immortality; this glorified nature as God’s fullness dwelling bodily in Christ
   3. We have been promised perfection in Christ Jesus
   4. Immortality is perfection
3. **The fullness of God in bodily form and perfection are the same—they are immortality.**

**CONCLUSION**

The unity of faith is not what we are hoping or praying for or working towards, we already have it. Nevertheless, we are to grow up in this faith.

It is in this one faith that the saints are being built up in preparation for works of service which God has prepared in advance for us to do. Since it’s a preparation, it will one day end, and when it ends, we will enter be engaged in what we were being prepared for. This preparation will end when we are made perfect, i.e., when we are given immortality, i.e., when we are given the divine nature, “the measure of the fulness of Christ”. And when it is ended, we will enter into the ministry for which we are being prepare. Obviously, if we are being prepared for the ministry, we cannot already be practicing it *(even if we are engaged in this ministry, it can only be in part and not in full)*.

We know when this will happen, i.e., when we will be made perfect—it has not happened and will not happen until the First Resurrection when Jesus comes.

**PART 2—UNITY IN THE FAITH AND THE MINISTRY FOR WHICH WE ARE BEING PREPARED**

For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

[Eph 2:10]

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

[Eph 3:12]

Now, let us look at the ministry for which we are being prepared. The basic reasoning is that if we are being prepared for something, and we are still in the process of preparation, it means that what we are being prepared for has not yet commenced.

**THE TWO MAJOR TIME PERIODS IN THIS DOCTRINE**

There are two major periods in this doctrine:

1. The period of preparation of the saints for ministry and
2. The period when they enter into the ministry for which they have been prepared

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| *Preparation for Ministry* | *Time of Ministry* |
| *Time of preparation of God’s people for works of service [Eph 4:12]* | Time for God’s people to do the works of service they were prepared for [Eph 4:12] |
| *The body of Christ****is being****built up [Eph 4:12]* | The body of Christ **has been**built up [Eph 4:12] |
| ***Working towards******unity****in the faith [Eph 4:13]* | The church, the body,**has attained unity**in the faith [Eph 4:13] |
| ***Working towards unity****in the knowledge of the son of God [Eph 4:13]* | The church, the body, **has attained unity**in the knowledge of the son of God [Eph 4:13] |
| ***The church is infants****tossed back and forth, and blown here and there [Eph 4:14]* | **The church is mature** and is no longer tossed back and forth, and blown here and there [Eph 4:14] |
| *Through the speaking the truth in love,****God’s people are growing up****in all things into Christ [Eph 4:15]* | Through the speaking the truth in love, **God’s people have in all things grown up** into him Christ, i.e., they have become mature, [Eph 4:15] |

**THE TIME OF THE MINISTRY FOR WHICH WE ARE BEING PREPARED**

First, just as you don’t hope for what you already have [Rom 8:24-25], if you are preparing for something, it means you don’t have it yet. Therefore, the ministry the saints are being prepared for is not a ministry they have already entered into.

Now, we have pointed out that the time of preparation will come to an end when the saints are made perfect, when they are given “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”. Therefore, since this is when the time of preparation ends, the ministry we are preparing for belongs to the time when we have been changed, when we have been glorified. In other words, the ministry for which we are being prepared will commence after the First Resurrection.

The ministry the saints are being prepared for is a future ministry and it will commence after they have been made a perfect man, having “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”.

**THE MINISTRY FOR WHICH WE ARE BEING PREPARED**

The ministry we are being prepared for is the priesthood [1Pe 2:4-5; Rev 1:6; 5:9-10; 20:5-6]. Although Hebrews focuses on Christ as our High Priest, the very fact that he is high priest implies that he is not the only priest. And since we are his house *(i.e., his family)*, it means that we are to be priests under him. *Priests* *under the Law of Moses came from the family of Aaron the high priest.*

We generally know that we are “a royal priesthood”. However, what is not known is that this priesthood has not really commenced. The fact that the main requirement to be a priest in the order that the Lord Jesus Christ is high priest is an indestructible life [Heb 7:15-16] plainly implies that our priesthood will only commence after the First Resurrection, when we receive eternal life, and not before. If we don’t have eternal life, which is what we are waiting for, we cannot be priests in the order that Jesus our Lord is a priest.

*It is only in faith that we have eternal life [Joh 3:36; 5:24; 6:54; 20:31; 1Jo 3:15; 5:11-13], in actual sense, we evidently don’t have it and so scripture speaks of us waiting for it [Jud 1:21]. We are going to reap eternal life from the Holy Spirit [Gal 6:8], this means we haven’t yet reaped it. Eternal life is called a hope [Tit 1:2; 3:7] and so we certainly don’t have it for no one hopes for what he already has [Rom 8:24-25]. Eternal life is a promise [1Jo 2:25]. It will be given when Jesus comes [Mat 25:46]. It is to be given us in the age to come [Mar 10:30; Luk 18:30]*

Part of the duties we will be performing as priests are

1. The teaching of the Gospel [Rom 15:15-16]. Teaching the word of God, serving as counselor to people, is one of the duties of priest [Mal 2:7]
2. Interceding for the nations under our care
3. Providing atonements for the nations under our care

**BUILDING UP THE CHURCH AND THE COMING MINISTRY**

That the church is being built up in preparation for the future ministry implies that our present spiritual development is not just necessary for salvation. That we are being prepared and built up for the coming ministry means that only those who are built up will partake of the coming ministry.

Now, basically, the building up of the church is the bringing of the saints to maturity. This automatically means that those who are not built up to maturity, will not be qualified to be ministers in the coming priesthood. Since we must be mature to partake of the ministry, and since the ministry would be entered into through the First Resurrection, it means that the characteristics of the mature will not be imparted to us at the First Resurrection, we either have them before then or we don’t.

The following are some of the characteristics that define spiritual maturity,

1. Godly character [1Co 3:1-3]. Immortality will not impart godly character to anyone just as among angels there are good and bad
2. Ability to distinguish good from evil [Heb 5:14]
3. Detachment from the world [1Co 3:1-2; Mat 13:7 *seed among thorns, the thorns being the cares of this life and deceitfulness of riches*Mat 13:22]
4. Knowledge of God’s word and understanding of God’s ways [Mat 13:11-12]. Even among angels, there are different measures of knowledge and understanding, and even Jesus still learns from the Father. Therefore, glorification does not mean that we will all be equal in knowledge and understanding of God’s works and ways.

**THE CALLING**

We have all in Christ received one calling, and this calling is to one hope. However, though this calling is one, grace is given to each of us as Christ apportioned it. That is, though we all generally have the very same calling, we don’t all have the same grace.

The differences in grace is expressed by the differences in gifts. Although Paul’s focus in Ephesians are the callings or offices in the church—apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers—these graces also include other gifts [Rom 12:3-8; 1Co 12:4,7-10]. Although Paul does not mention them in Ephesians 4, these other gifts are included because they all serve the purpose of edifying the body. However, the office gifts are the key, and most important gifts—the other gifts are meaningless without the office gifts.

**THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFTS**

1. to prepare God’s people for works of service,
2. so that the body of Christ may be built up
3. 13until we all reach **unity in the faith** and
4. ***Unity* in the knowledge of the Son of God** and
5. become **mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
6. 14Then 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.
7. 15Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will **in all things grow up into him who is the Head**, that is, Christ.
8. 16From 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.

**CONCLUSION**

Through the edifying work of the ministries that have been given to the Church, we are being made spiritually mature and are being prepared for the work of the Royal Priesthood which will commence after our change from mortality to immortality.

This preparation and edification of the Church is to be in the one faith to which we were called, the faith that was once for all handed down to the saints [Jud 1:3], the faith we already have [2Pe 1:12]. And in the knowledge of the Son of God, the one Lord to whom we were called.

**OUR PRIESTLY GARMENTS, A REQUIREMENT FOR OUR PRIESTHOOD**

Without our priestly garments, we cannot serve as priests

…make **garments** for Aaron, **for his consecration**, **so he may serve me as priest**.

[Exo 28:3-4]

They are to make these**sacred garments** for your brother Aaron and his sons, **so they may serve me as priests**.

[Exo 28:4].

Our immortality and glory, which we will be given at the First Resurrection, is our priestly garments, they are our glory and beauty.

And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty.

[Exo 28:2 KJV].

These garments, the divine glory to be given us is also the salvation we are to be clothed with.

Now arise, O LORD God, and come to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. May your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, may your saints rejoice in your goodness.

[2Ch 6:41]

I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints will ever sing for joy. [Psa 132:16]

These same garments, called ‘salvation’ in 2Ch 6:41, with which God’s priests are to be clothed, are called our ‘righteousness’ in Psa 132:9.

arise, O Lord, and come to your resting place, you and the ark of your might. May your priests be clothed with righteousness; may your saints sing for joy.

[Psa 132:8-10]

There is certainly much more to be said about our *coming*priesthood as believers, but I point out the above to demonstrate that just as Aaron and his sons could not be priests under the Old Covenant without their garments, we too cannot be priests under the New Covenant except we are have been glorified. And, again, as I have earlier pointed out, this immortality, this glory is called “Perfection” and is what Paul describes as “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ”.