

Good morning everyone here and online this morning and welcome to Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church. For those that don't know me my name is David James. I'm one of the elders here and it's my privilege this morning to continue the series that Pastor Justin has been doing this summer on Ephesians.

Many of you may not know but I spent 20 years in the Canadian military. When people join the military they undergo basic military training and then their specific training for their particular role.

For those of us that attended RMC, we did our basic training and then we went on to the college for four years of academic and military training before joining units and operating. The first 6 weeks of college life was called Recruit Term. This was an intense 6 weeks of training and socialization into the college. I won't go into all of the details but here are a few tidbits:

- We would wake up at 6am to the hum of a hallway speaker larger than these ceiling speakers turning on followed shortly by the heaviest metal thrasher music I have ever heard
- We had that song to get up, make our beds and get into the hallway in our sports gear.
- After physical training we did drill, had room inspections which we never passed and inevitably had our rooms torn apart only to redo them again.
- We learned to drill individually and together, and did lots of it at 6 am and throughout recruit term.
- Eventually through our time at the college we learned to drill in groups up to and including the entire college of 800 cadets. This required precision and coordination and a common understanding of how to march, turn, stop, salute with rifles and swords, among other more complex manoeuvres

- While there were individual skills we learned, throughout this time they focused on team work and looking out for the other person.
- Recruit Term ended with the recruit obstacle course. This was a grueling 90 minutes that started with each recruit flight getting sprayed down with a fire hose on the parade square and then proceeding to navigate a series of purpose-built obstacles throughout the campus that could only be completed as a team. Afterwards we would become first year cadets.

All of these activities, the basic training, the recruit training, and candidly all of my military experiences were designed to equip the individual to function inside a team, and to socialize us into the military culture and ethos. We learned to march together, to work together, to support each other, to encourage and to hold each other accountable. In effect we became a military community.

We shed our individualism to have a shared identity, a strong sense of unity, and it was very clear that we were a community of like-minded individuals in so much as we shared common military heritage or we're building a common military heritage.

But they don't try to do this as individuals - they need to be taught, they have to be shown the practices, and over time they bring their expertise and talents to the military body to participate in a group of people who are like-minded in their approach or in their outcomes.

The Christian experience is not unlike this where you have individuals who are part of the body who need to learn some of the basics of walking in the faith.

So with the Christian walk we may start as an individual but we are joining the body of Christ and we grow up together into that body. As new

Christians, most don't understand that when we accept Christ we come as we are, not as mature believers fully capable of using our gifts on day one.

We as a body of believers, immature and mature, need to come alongside each other, so that we help each other learn to love God more, learn to serve others with our gifts and talents more, and seeing our lives and those around us changed.

These aren't just words on the wall, these are purposeful and impactful reminders for us about what we are called to do and why - changing lives for Christ.

With that, let's look at Ephesians chapter 4 where we will see three things that speak to our walk: first, we will see who we walk with; second, we will see why and how we walk as Christians; and last we will look at the power that lets us walk in accordance with what Paul describes here.

I invite you to follow along in your bibles, on the screen behind me or at page XX in the bibles in the pew:

**4** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

**7** But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. **8** Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." [a]

**9** (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?[b] **10** He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

**11** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds[c] and teachers,[d] **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, **13** until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,[e] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, **14** 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. **15** Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, **16** 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.

**17** Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. **18** They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. **19** They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. **20** But that is not the way you learned Christ!— **21** assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, **22** to put off your old self,[f] which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, **23** and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, **24** and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

**25** Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. **26** Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on

your anger, **27** and give no opportunity to the devil. **28** Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. **29** Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. **30** And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **31** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Father, thank you for your word and its power to change lives. As we examine this passage, I pray that your words would stand out and that you would reveal yourself and what you would have each of us understand and apply from this passage, and that we as a body would walk in a manner that is pleasing to you. We pray this in Jesus' precious and powerful name. Amen.

I love the epistles and the imagery we find here and in Colossians and Thessalonians as well, of walking in a manner worthy of the calling to which we have been called has sat with me.

I regularly pray that I would walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which I have been called. I think it is just such an expressive way to describe what we're called to do - follow after Christ, walk through life in accord with God's word and Jesus' instruction to us.

It also aligns well in my mind with the striving we see in our vision - this sense of continuous pursuit, of effort to achieve or obtain something, this constant action in walking and moving forward towards something.

I will say that in all the times I have read these passages, I had viewed this as personal, or “I” action - this was speaking to me as an individual.

As is often the case, God unveils His word in stages and as I was reflecting on this and discussing it with Pastor Justin a couple weeks ago, we agreed this is not just about how “I” walk it is also about how “we” walk, together with each other in unity, as a community.

Looking back, Paul was writing this to the Saints who were in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus, intending it for the church as a whole. He was also very clear throughout Ephesians that unity was important, and that we are one body in Christ.

Look at the passage again:

**4** I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, **3** eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **4** There is **one body** and **one Spirit**—just as you were called to the **one hope** that belongs to your call— **5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all**, who is over all and through all and in all.

Paul is clear that we were called **into one body**. In fact he uses “one” seven times in these three verses and also includes the Father, Son and Spirit in the passage -

There is **one body** and **one Spirit**—just as you were called to the **one hope** that belongs to your call— **5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all**, who is over all and through all and in all.

Further, we are instructed by Paul to walk “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, **bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**”

If this was exclusively an individual action, there would not be the emphasis on this bond of peace and unity. Why would we need patience to bear with one another, why would we need to concern ourselves with unity? If we were only called to individual actions why would Paul refer to the one body and the example of the body?

That brings us to the why and how of walking together. Let's look in more detail at verses 11-16:

**11** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, **12** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for **building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God**, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, **14** 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.

**15** Rather, speaking the truth in love, **we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 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.**

Pastor Dave had previously spoken about the APEST model and what these different attributes bring to the church. But look at the why - building up the body of Christ until we attain unity of the faith and knowledge of Christ. Further we are to grow up in every way in him who is the head - that is Christ - we are joined and held together with every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, we make the body grow and build itself up in love.

This isn't the imagery of an individual walking alone. It is the imagery of a body working together.

Let me go back to my experiences in the military. Learning to work and live together at RMC had a purpose bigger than just the obstacles and the time at the college. It taught us the underlying principles that would allow us to work together, to care for each other, to care for others in that context in a way that made us most effective, and ultimately to be prepared to undertake the missions the military gave us.

In the similar way we have a purpose in the church - to bring glory to the Lord, and we see here that as believers in Jesus Christ we are called into community, to walk together, to build each other up so we attain unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God.

God has created us for purpose, to the praise of his glory as Paul tells us earlier in Ephesians - we are part of God's plan to show the manifold wisdom of his church. We are **all** called to be united in one body to grow up into the head who is Christ.

If you look at the first part of the chapter, Paul is focused on the "you" - the Ephesians, the believers in Christ at Ephesus - the Gentile believers. But then in this passage he pivots to we.

As Pastor Justin talked about a few weeks ago, Christ has reconciled all things to himself and this included breaking down the dividing line between Jews and Gentiles. God made the two, the Gentiles



and the Jews, one through the cross. But not just them, he has made all races and all peoples part of the one body - including Paul.

Paul emphasizes this when he includes himself in the description he used about what we are called to do, Paul is talking about himself as well in this passage:

**13... we** all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood,[e] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

**14 ... 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.

**15 ...we** are to grow up in every way into him who is the head

And earlier he said that “grace was given to each one of **us** according to the measure of Christ's gift.”

We are called to walk together, to grow together, to build each other up - new believers like the Ephesians to mature believers like Paul, and we have been given gifts by God to do this.

We each have unique skills and gifts and talents and we are to use these for the body, to help it to grow together. Not only that but we are to seek to know the different gifts and talents in the body and bring them together to achieve Christ's purposes.

So we can't just sit at home and read God's word and pray - we should be doing these things as individuals, for sure - this helps us to know God and

Christ more and strengthen our relationship with Christ but it is not sufficient.

If we want to attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of man, if we want to grow together into the head, Christ - we need to work together to build each other up. We learn how to “know and love God” more and more and we “serve others” more and more as Christ has called us to serve -

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10:45

This is how we walk and it looks like small groups studying and praying together, or teaching Sunday school, or working in the nursery, or visiting shut-ins, or being involved with local and international missions, or making meals for people, or mowing the lawn and watering the flowers here and for others who can't.

It is getting together in fellowship and enjoying time together and building healthy relationships, it is challenging each other when there is something about our walk that isn't right. It is about inviting people into your life and letting them see the real you and hold you accountable to become more mature and going deeper in your walk with Christ.

We are the body, our actions and service within the body changes lives - we grow up, we attain to full manhood, to full knowledge of God, we build each other up.

I won't go through them today but verses 25 to 32 talk about specific ways to walk as do many other passages in the Epistles.

Now, if this is how we are to walk - together in love in the same way the Christ did - loving God and each other, and giving ourselves up for each other, where do we find the power to do that?

Where did the early church find the power to set aside generations of prejudice and racism to bring Jews and Gentiles together, to walk together to build each other up into the church - they found it in Christ, the head of the church as they grew up in Him.

Look at Chapter 5 verse 1, immediately after the passage we read:

**5** Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. **2** And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, **a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

Don't miss this critical statement, Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

And don't forget what Paul said earlier in Ephesians:

**7** But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. **8** Therefore it says,

"When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."[a]

**9** (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth?[b] **10** He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)

Christ died for us, he came down from Heaven and lived with us on Earth as the Son of Man. He experienced all the suffering and temptations and challenges of man and He sacrificed himself for us as a fragrant offering to God. Christ was the only acceptable sacrifice to fulfil God's law and his sacrifice means that we all, if we believe in him, can have the gift of eternal life - by his grace and his actions. Not our own.

**20** But that is not the way you learned Christ!— **21** assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, **22** to put off your old self,[f] which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, **23** and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, **24** and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

The imagery Paul uses in other parts of Ephesians 4 and that we looked at was present tense, ongoing actions - growing together, walking, attaining full knowledge.

In these passages he is describing specific and distinct events -

...Christ gave himself up for us,

...he descended and he ascended,

...we put off the old self and we put on the new.

Christ Jesus was the Son of God, he came from the Father, lived a life only he could live to fulfil God's law, died for us and rose again, and gave us the gift of eternal life. That is where we get the power to live this way and walk in love to grow as the body of Christ.

And as we come together around the table this morning we remember that sacrifice and his willingness to be obedient to death on the cross. His body was broken for us and his blood was shed for us that we might as Paul says:

...be imitators of God, as beloved children. **2** And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Lord Jesus, for those here today that don't know you, please change their lives through the power of your Holy Spirit and bring them into your family and your body. That change will allow them to put off the old self and put on the new self and become children of God.

I also pray Heavenly Father that all of us, current and future believers may be encouraged and moved by your word to walk together in love, to support and build each other up into Christ Jesus that we may grow as a body and that every part would be working properly, that your church here at SVBC would grow in our love for you, and our service to others and that lives may be changed. That the world would see your love when they see this body of believers.

We love you and we praise you and pray all these things in the name and power of your Son Jesus Christ, and all the people said Amen.