



THE BEREIA PAGE

“Examining . . . to see if these things are so” ~ Acts 17.11

Timely Words Still

“Those who lead disorderly lives tell those who are normal that that (sic) is they who deviate from nature, and think they are following nature themselves; just as those who are on board ship think that the people on shore are moving away. Language is the same everywhere: we need a fixed point to judge it. The harbour is the judge of those aboard ship, but where are we going to find a harbour in morals?”

“When everything is moving at once, nothing appears to be moving, as on board ship. When everyone is moving towards depravity, no one seems to be moving, but if someone stops, he shows up the others who are rushing on by acting as a fixed point.”
~ Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, ed. Alban Krailsheimer (Viking, 1966), 697/383 & 699/382, p. 247; in Douglas Groothuis, *Truth Decay* (InterVarsity Press, 2000), 265

*Teach me Thy Way, O Lord,
Teach me Thy Way!
Thy guiding grace afford—
Teach me Thy Way!
Help me to walk aright,
More by faith, less by sight;
Lead me with heavenly light—
Teach me Thy Way!
~ Benjamin Marsell Ramsey (1919)*

Learning, Hearing, and Teaching in Ephesians (2)

David Anguish

In addition to instruction about how Christians should live, Ephesians 4-6 help us see the importance of intentional and thorough teaching in Christ’s body.

In 4.1, Paul said they were to use what they had learned to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which [they had] been called.”¹ Verse 2 gives “guidelines to show what is meant by the injunction to lead worthy lives” (Bruce, 334), namely the practice of the counter-cultural qualities of humility, gentleness, and patience (longsuffering-ASV) in order to “maintain” (“keep”-NIV) the church’s essential unity (v. 3).

To maintain unity, they also needed to understand the seven ones that have “the nature of an early Christian *credo*” (Bruce, 335) (vv. 4-6). What Paul wrote previously was also important: a discourse about the blessings that come from election in chapter 1, and an explanation of how God had acted by grace to include Gentiles and end the hostility between them and the Jews in chapters 2-3. One body had been created out of the most untrusting and bitter enemies.

Since the division between Jews and Gentiles was caused by their different worldviews and resulting behaviors, Paul reminded them—focusing on the Gentiles—that allegiance to Christ meant not going back to their old thinking. Instead they were to be renewed in their minds and put on the new self that came from learning Christ (4.17-24). He didn’t leave it to them to figure out what that meant in practice, but taught them about ethics; Christ-honoring relationships in marriage, parenting, and work relations; and what to do to remain loyal to God and resist the devil (4.25-6.20).

Of particular interest is Paul’s treatment of the gifts Christ gave the church (4.11-16). This is not the only letter in

Re: Ephesians 4.11

“When new believers are incorporated in the church, they require further ministry (as indeed do older believers): they need to be ‘shepherded’ and taught. . . .

“A bishop, according to 1 Tim. 3:2, should be ‘apt to teach.’ Teaching is an essential part of the pastoral ministry; it is appropriate, therefore, that the two terms, ‘pastors and teachers,’ should be joined together to denote one order of ministry. The risen Christ is depicted in Matt. 28:19-20 as commanding the eleven to ‘make disciples of all the nations’ by ‘teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.’ . . . The content of the teaching was wide-ranging: it included the teaching of Jesus with its implications for Christian belief and conduct. In Acts 2:42 it is called ‘the apostles’ teaching,’ to which the primitive church of Jerusalem is said to have devoted itself. In Acts 13:1 five named leaders of the church in Syrian Antioch (including Barnabas and Paul) are described as ‘prophets and teachers.’ As the number of new churches increased, there would have been a call for more teachers to give young converts the basic instruction they needed.” ~ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Eerdmans, 1984; reprinted 1991), 347-348

“We proclaim him [Christ], warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. I labor for this, striving with his strength that works powerfully in me.”

~ Colossians 1.28-29 CSB

which he mentioned gifts, but how he did so here differs from the other references. In 1 Corinthians 12.4-11, for example, the “varieties of gifts” are diverse ministries from the Spirit to individuals, but in Ephesians 4 the gifts are the *people* tasked to prepare the members to do the work of ministry and build up the body (v. 12)²—namely the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers³ (see Bruce, 345).

If they were effective in their work, the body would reach the unity envisioned in verses 3-6 and its members would grow to a level of maturity wherein they would be capable of evaluating what they were taught, distinguishing between the true and the false. The parts would be working properly and contribute to the body’s growth in love.

I’ve mentioned before that I have often used a refrain in my teaching that I heard from one of my teachers: *People act the way they do because they think the way they do.* I don’t know if he coined the phrasing or heard it from someone. I do know (1) the idea is not original to him, and (2) its truth is evident in the reasons behind today’s choices, trends, and policies. “Where do people come up with these things?” is no idle question. Someone had ideas and effectively taught them.

Following Jesus’ example (John 13.13), faithful disciples have always known that the same method must be pursued in his community. Both prospective disciples and body members will know the teaching, the actions that should result from it, and how it differs from various doctrinal winds (Eph 4.14) only if they are led in “continual devot[ion] to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2.42 NASB).

Let us not grow weary in doing this good work.

www.davidanguish.com

Notes

¹ The inferential connector οὖν (*oun*) in v. 1 indicates that “the doctrine expounded in the earlier part is to be worked out in the later part” (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* [Eerdmans, 1984; reprinted 1991], 333. Subsequent citations are included parenthetically above.

² Bruce, 349, helpfully notes that the different prepositions before the respective phrases indicate that the second and third depend on the first (πρός [*pros*], then εἰς [*eis*] twice). See the ASV: “for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body . . .”

³ I think Bruce and others are correct that the last two titles should probably be taken together, “to denote one order of ministry.” See Bruce’s comments in the sidebar at left. See the note in the [NET](#) for an alternate view.

All Scripture quotations not otherwise designated are from the ESV. Permission is granted to reprint original materials with the credit line, “Reprinted from David Anguish, ‘The Berea Page,’ April 26, 2021.