

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 268 – September 25th – Ephesians 4:1-16

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Ephesians

Beare, F.W.	<i>The Epistle to the Ephesians</i> (Interpreter's Bible), Nashville, Abingdon, 1953
Eadie, John	<i>Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians</i> , Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1883
O'Brian, Peter T.	<i>The Letter to the Ephesians</i> , Leicester, Apollos, 1999
Stott, John	<i>God's New Society</i> (Bible Speaks Today Series), Leicester, IVP, 1979

Chapters 4-6

"The readers have been reminded of the high destiny to which God has called them, and now they are shown that the hope of this calling requires them to live lives in keeping with it. 'Behaviour is thus seen in Ephesians as both response to what God has done in Christ, and as proper accompaniment to the praise of God, the two themes present in chapters 1-3' (Best)." O'Brian

4:1 is the 'topic sentence' for the rest of the epistle. Vv 2-6 form a call to unity on the basis of what they are – one people in Christ. Verses 7-16 then introduce the note of diversity while emphasising that the diverse gifts and ministries are "to build the whole body so as to enable it to attain maturity and unity (v.13), a unity in which there is an integral role for the individual (v.16)." O'Brian

4:1

Παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ ὁ δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ ἀξίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε, παρακαλεῶ exhort, encourage, urge

Characteristically introduces the exhortatory section of Paul's letters, cf. 1 Thess 4:1; Romans 12:1.

δεσμιος, ου m prisoner
ἀξίως adv (from ἀξιος) worthily
περιπατεῶ walk, walk about, live

Cf. 2:10. "God's gracious calling not only bestows great privileges on them; it also carries with it solemn responsibilities. His election and predestination of them for adoption into his family (1:4,5), together with his preparing good works beforehand for them to walk in (2:10), do not remove the responsibility of their heeding the apostolic injunction. They are expected to respond to the divine initiatives, and God's calling establishes the norm or criterion to which their conduct should conform." O'Brian

κλησις, εως f call, calling

The primary effect of the resident power of God is the altered life of the Christian.

Verse 2

μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ πραΰτητος, μετὰ μακροθυμίας, ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων ἐν ἀγάπῃ,

"Significantly, relationships within the body of Christ, especially conduct characterised by harmony, are the first issue Paul addresses as an essential element of their living consistently with this calling." O'Brian. The quality of the Christian life is to be seen primarily in the life of Christians *together*.

ταπεινοφροσυνη, ης f humility

"'Humility, lowliness', as is well known, occurred in Greek literature generally only on a few occasions, and then usually in the derogatory sense of servility, weakness, or a shameful lowliness. In the Old Testament, however, the adjective 'lowly or humble' and its cognates occur more than 250 times, often in contexts which speak of the Lord bringing down the proud and the arrogant, and exalting the lowly or poor whose trust is in him. In the New Testament the noun signifies the 'lowliness' with which one serves the Lord as Paul did when his ministry was conducted among the Ephesians 'with great humility' (Acts 20:19), or is submissive to other Christians (Phil 2:3; Col 3:12; 1 Pet 5:5). The pattern or model is Jesus, who invited people to come to him as the one who was 'meek and lowly in heart' (Matt 11:29)." O'Brian

πραυτης, ητος f gentleness, humility

Slow to insist on own rights. "'Gentleness' or 'meekness', in its adjectival form, designated the poor and oppressed in the Old Testament, who in their deep need humility sought help from the Lord... It is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:23), standing in lists of graces as a concrete expression of Christian love (cf. 1 Tim 6:11; 1 Pet 3:4). This gentleness is not to be confused with weakness (as contemporary Graeco-Roman thought regarded it), but has to do with consideration for others and a willingness to waive one's own rights." O'Brian

μακροθυμία, ας f longsuffering, patience

Used especially of God's patience with his people, Ex 34:6.

ἀνεχομαι endure, be patient with

The series of participles function as imperatives.

ἄλληλων, οἰς, οὗς reciprocal pronoun one another

For comment on the love that is patient, forbearing with others, see 1 Cor 13.

Verse 3

σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης·

σπουδαζω do one's best, work hard at, be eager

Expresses a sense of urgency, 'do it now'.

τηρεω keep, maintain
ἐνοτητος, ητος f unity

Christian unity is created by the Spirit of God who calls us into fellowship with Christ and with each other. Nevertheless, visible maintenance of this unity requires active and diligent work on our part to ensure that the spiritual reality is reflected in the practicalities of day-to-day relationships.

συνδεσμος, ου m that which binds together, bond, chain, ligament
εἰρηνη, ης f peace

It is peace which binds Christians together even as it is strife which tears them apart.

Verses 4-6

Verses 4-6 consist of a series of seven acclamations in which the readers are reminded of the fundamental unities on which the Christian faith and life are based.

Verse 4

ἐν σῶμα καὶ ἐν πνεῦμα, καθὼς καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μᾶ ἐλπίδι τῆς κλήσεως ὑμῶν·

εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἐνος, μιας, ἐνος one

"This *body* is the church, Christ's body (1:23), which comprises Jewish and Gentile believers alike. It is the heavenly gathering assembled around Christ, in which believers now participate. That body of Christ is, by definition, *one*. Each congregation is a local manifestation of this heavenly entity, not a part of it. So although the apostle is writing about the *one body* which is in heaven, all that he says applies also to each local congregation, for it is here that the unity of the body is visible... Believers are members of the body by virtue of the work of the Holy Spirit. And as there is only one body, so also there is only one Spirit." O'Brian

ἐλπις, ἰδος f hope

"When God calls believers into a relationship with himself he calls them to a particular hope (Eph 1:18) which is sure and certain since it rests on his faithfulness – previously the Gentile readers had been separated from Christ and had no real hope (Eph 2:12). It is sometimes called 'the hope of the gospel' (Col 1:23) because it is held out in the saving message of the gospel, and 'the hope of glory' (1:27; Rom 5:2), the expectation of appearing with Christ in glory when he is revealed (Col 3:4) and of sharing in his glory." O'Brian.

κλησις, εως see v.1

Verse 5

εἰς κύριος, μία πίστις, ἐν βάπτισμα·

"This may have been a traditional baptismal affirmation, given the mention of baptism as the third member, and because faith in Jesus Christ as the one Lord was usually the focus of baptismal confession (e.g., Acts 2:34-39; 19:5). However, one should not assume that such a confession was confined to this occasion." O'Brian

'One Lord' is a remarkable affirmation given that 'Lord' is the substitute for Yahweh in the Old Testament and the title of Jesus Christ in the New.

πιστις, εως f faith, belief, the Christian faith

Commentators differ as to whether faith here is objective (the Christian faith), or subjective (trust in Christ). O'Brian thinks that it is probably objective, as later in this chapter (v.18, cf Jude 3).

"In baptism lies the evidence that all sorts of people (cf. Gal 3:28), without any discrimination, share in the grace of Christ." Ridderbos. "There is only *one baptism* because there is only one Lord Jesus Christ in whom believers are united, one body into which all Christians are incorporated." O'Brian.

Verse 6

εἷς θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ πάντων, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐν πᾶσιν.

Cf. 1 Cor 8:6, a Christian version of the Shema of Deut 6:8.

πατήρ, πατρός m father

Is the 'all' masculine, meaning all people, or neuter meaning all things? O'Brian says that "a cosmic understanding of 'all' makes good sense in this context... On this interpretation Paul is affirming that God is supremely transcendent 'over everything' and that his immanence is all-pervasive: he works 'through all and in all'. If this latter understanding is correct, then God's universal sovereignty and presence are set forth as the climactic ground for the unity of the Spirit that believers are to maintain. His universal rule is being exercised to fulfil his ultimate purpose of unifying all things in Christ. The unity of the church is the means by which the manifold wisdom of God is being displayed to the universe. The church is the eschatological outpost, the pilot project of God's purposes, and his people are the expression of this unity that displays to the universe his final goal." O'Brian

Verse 7

Ἐνὶ δὲ ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

The focus now shifts to diversity, a diversity which enriches the unity.

ἕκαστος, η, ον each, every

"Christ sovereignly distributes his gifts to all the members of his body. The recipients are not limited to some special group, such as the ministers of v.11. *Each one of us* is to be understood comprehensively since it includes Paul and all his readers (it is thus the counterpart to 1 Cor 12:7,11). None misses out on Christ's bounty." O'Brian

ἐδόθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s διδωμι

"Grace is viewed in terms of its outworking in a variety of ways in the lives of individuals, and thus comes to signify much the same as *charisma* does in the parallel passages in Paul (1 Cor 12:4; Rom 12:6). Perhaps the use of *charis* here, rather than *charisma*, is to stress the source of divine grace in providing the gifts." O'Brian. Unity does mean uniformity

μέτρον, ον n measure, degree, quantity
δωρεα, ας f gift

Verse 8

διὸ λέγει· Ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος ἠχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν, ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.

διὸ therefore, for this reason

The quotation is from Ps 68:18. "In its original context Psalm 68 is a call to God to come and rescue his people (vv. 1-3). He is to be praised (vv. 4-6) for his past acts of deliverance and provision for his people. After the exodus he went in triumph before them (v. 7), so that Mount Sinai shook (v.8) and kings were scattered (vv. 11-14). The Lord desired Mount Zion as his dwelling (v.16), so he came from Sinai to his holy place (v.17), and ascended the high mount leading captives in his train. The 'you' in v.18 refers to God's ascent of Zion, probably in the person of the victorious king (or perhaps in reference to the establishment of the ark, which symbolised the invisible presence of God in Israel, on Zion). He led his captives in triumphal procession as they made their way up the temple mount.

"Paul applies this picture to Christ's ascension, not because there was some vague analogy between the two events, but because he saw in Jesus' exultation a further fulfilment of this triumph of God. The original wording of the Psalm, which addresses the Lord directly after his triumphant ascent of Mount Zion, 'when you ascended on high,' is understood of Christ's exaltation, an event of momentous theological significance, as Ephesians 1:20-22 makes plain." O'Brian

ἀναβαινω go up, come up, ascend
ὕψος, ος n height, heaven, high position
αἰχμαλωτίζω make captive, take prisoner
αἰχμαλωσια, ας f captivity; group of captives

Cf. Col 2:15 & 2 Cor 2:14

ἔδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s διδωμι
δομα, τος n gift

The Hebrew and LXX text of Psalm 68 read '[you] *received* gifts' but both the Syriac Peshitta and a paraphrase of Psalm 68 in the Aramaic Targum read 'you have *given* gifts.' Accordingly, it has been claimed that Paul has taken over the textual tradition as reflected in the Targum ('you gave'), and employed a common technique of early Jewish hermeneutics, known as *midrash peshet*, in which his exposition of the text in the light of its fulfilment in Christ is integrated into the actual quotation. This procedure, which appears elsewhere in the New Testament's use of the Old, would account for the differences present in Ephesians 4:8." O'Brian. The Targum applies the Psalm to Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai to receive the law from God and give it to the people. Accordingly Stott writes, "As Moses received the law and gave it to Israel, so Christ received the Spirit and gave him to his people in order to write God's law in their hearts and through the pastors he appointed (v.11) to teach them the truth."

Verse 9

τὸ δὲ Ἀνάβη τί ἐστὶν εἰ μὴ ὅτι καὶ κατέβη εἰς τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς;

ἀνάβη Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ἀναβαίνω see v.8

καταβαίνω come or go down, descend
κατώτερος, α, ον lower
μερος, ος n part, piece
γη, γης f earth

τα κατώτερα [μερη] τῆς γῆς Could be "lower parts, namely the earth." Eadie considers many possible interpretations of this phrase, including a reference to Christ's descent into hell, and concludes "with the majority of expositors" that the words simply refer to the earth. O'Brian suggests it should be understood to mean 'the earth below'. Quoting Calvin he says, "Paul's contrast is 'not between one part of the earth and another, but between the whole earth and heaven'." The phrase refers to Christ's incarnation. Hendriksen views this phrase as a metaphor for Christ's deep humiliation – a deliberate contrast with his ascent 'higher than the heavens'.

Verse 10

ὁ καταβάς αὐτός ἐστιν καὶ ὁ ἀναβάς ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν, ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα.

ἀναβαίνω see v.8

ὑπερανῶ prep with gen far above; above, over

He has ascended to the highest place, cf. 1:20-21.

πληρωῶ fill, make full, fulfill

Hendriksen surveys the various views of what is meant by Christ 'filling all things' and concludes that he fills the universe with the blessings or gifts which have been gained as a result of his atoning work. O'Brian thinks the phrase is best understood of his mighty rule over all things – filling is used of his sovereign rule, cf. Jer 23:24.

Verse 11

καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφήτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους,

"The building of the body is inextricably linked with the intention of filling the universe with his rule." O'Brian

ἔδωκεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s δίδωμι

The various 'offices' or 'officers' in the church are all gifts from Christ. For similar lists, cf. Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:8-10, 28-30; 1 Peter 4:10-11. The gifts here are people.

προφητης, ου m prophet

Cf. 2:20; 3:5.

εὐαγγελιστης, ου m one who preaches the good news, evangelist

Cf. Acts 21:8; 2 Tim 4:5. The term probably "covers a range of activities from primary evangelism and planting of churches to the ongoing building of Christians and the establishment of settled congregations (cf. Rom 1:11-15)." O'Brian

ποιμην, ενος m shepherd

"Leaders in the church are exhorted to be 'shepherds of God's flock' (1 Pet 5:2; Acts 20:28) who pattern their pastoral ministry after Christ's example." O'Brian

διδασκαλος, ου m teacher

Opinion is divided as to whether 'pastors and teachers' refers to two groups or to one. O'Brian writes, "The *pastors* and *teachers* are linked here by a single definite article in the Greek, which suggests a close association of functions between two kinds of ministers who operate within the one congregation (cf. 2:20). Although it has often been held that the two groups are identical (i.e. 'pastors who teach'), it is more likely that the terms describe overlapping functions (cf. 1 Cor 12:28-29 and Gal 6:6, where 'teachers' are a distinct group). All pastors teach (since teaching is an essential part of pastoral ministry), but not all teachers are also pastors. The latter exercise their leadership role by feeding God's flock with his word." O'Brian

Teaching is exposition and application of Scripture (Acts 15:35; 18:11,25; Rom 2:20,21; Col 3:16; Heb 5:12) or an explanation and reiteration of apostolic instructions (1 Cor 4:17; Rom 16:7; 2 Thess 2:15; 2 Tim 2:2; 3:10).

Verse 12

πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων εἰς ἔργον διακονίας, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ,

καταρτισμος, ου m training, equipping
διακονια, ας f ministry, service
οικοδομη, ης f upbuilding, encouragement
σωμα, τος n body

The purpose of the particular offices or tasks mentioned above is to enable the whole church to be active in ministry which results in the church being built up, so O'Brian (though Lincoln and other commentators prefer to understand all three phrases as co-ordinate and referring to the work of those offices listed above – as per AV, RSV).

Verse 13

μέχρι κατανήσωμεν οἱ πάντες εἰς τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ,

μεχρι and μεχρις until
κατανήσωμεν Verb, aor act subj, 1 pl
κατανταω come, arrive, reach, attain

"The verb employed here is used figuratively and means to 'attain or arrive at a particular state', with the focus on the end point. Significantly, Christian growth or progress does not occur in isolation, for Paul's language here envisages God's people *collectively* (*we all*) as *en route* to this vital destination." O'Brian

ἐνοτης, ητος f unity
πιστις, εως f faith, trust, the Christian faith

"The eschatological tension is evident in the first element – the unity of the *faith*. This *faith* has already been given (v.5), yet its oneness is still to be fully appreciated... It is best understood here in terms of its objective content rather than readers' activity of believing. The point being made, then, is that God's people are moving towards the goal of appropriating all that is included in the one *faith*." O'Brian

ἐπιγνωσις, εως f knowledge
ἄνδρα Noun, acc s ἄνηρ, ἄνδρος m man

εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον 'to mature manhood'. "This description to which all believers are headed is understood as a corporate entity: it is not described in individual terms, but refers to the totality of believers as the body of Christ (cf. v.12), in an expression that is akin to 'the one new man' of 2:15. The phrase 'mature man' is somewhat unusual since the term for an adult male or full-grown man is used, rather than the generic word for man or human. The adjective has the sense of 'mature' (cf. 1 Cor 2:6; 14:20; Heb 5:14) rather than 'perfect', and focusses on the mature adult person in contrast with the infants of v.14 who are immature and unstable, like a storm-tossed boat blown in all directions by the winds of false teaching." O'Brian. The picture is of the church as the body of Christ growing up to manhood – transcending childishness (v.14f)

τέλειος, α, ον complete, perfect, mature
μέτρον, ου n measure, degree
ἡλικια, ας f age, years; stature, maturity
πληρωμα, τος n fulness

"The maturity of this growth is measured by nothing less than Christ's full stature. The glorified Christ provides the standard at which his people are to aim: the corporate Christ cannot be content to fall short of the perfection of the personal Christ' (Bruce)." O'Brian

Verse 14

ἵνα μηκέτι ὄμεν νήπιοι, κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι παντὶ ἀνέμῳ τῆς διδασκαλίας ἐν τῇ κυβείᾳ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐν πανουργίᾳ πρὸς τὴν μεθοδεῖαν τῆς πλάνης,

μηκετι no longer
ὄμεν Verb, pres subj, 1 pl εἰμι
νηπιος, α, ον baby, infant, child

"The contrast between 'the mature person' of v.13 and the 'children' here is pointed. Not only do the latter's ignorance and instability stand over against the knowledge of the *mature* adult (cf. 1 Cor 2:6; 3:1; Heb 5:13,14), but also the use of the plural 'children' (with its implications of individualism) stands in contrast to the *one* 'mature person' who is a corporate unity." O'Brian

κλυδωνιζομαι be tossed by the sea
περιφερω carry about
ἀνεμος, ου m wind

"Like small rudderless boats they are *tossed back and forth by the waves* and driven this way and that by the prevailing wind." O'Brian

διδασκαλια, ας f teaching; act of teaching

"Various religious philosophies which threatened to undermine or dilute the apostolic gospel." O'Brian

κυβεια, ας f trickery, cunning

πανουργια, ας f deceit, craftiness

Means, literally, a 'readiness to do anything', "and here signifies the malicious deception by which the false teachers seek to lead the unstable astray." O'Brian

μεθοδεια, ας f trickery; pl tricks

"Denotes a 'crafty scheming with the intent to deceive' that describes the intrigues of the devil (Eph 6:11). Satan's machinations have 'method'; his aim is to *mislead* the immature who are not grounded on apostolic doctrine." O'Brian

πλανη, ης f error, deceit, deception

Verse 15

ἀληθεύοντες δὲ ἐν ἀγάπῃ αὐξήσωμεν εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα, ὅς ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλὴ, Χριστός,

ἀληθευω speak the truth, be honest

"*Speaking the truth in love* lays out a twofold contrast with the false teachers: the latter were presenting *false* doctrine in a *deceptive* manner, but over against this God's people are to grow through proclaiming the *truth in love*... Accordingly, the apostle is not exhorting his readers to truthfulness in general or speaking honestly with one another, however appropriate or important this may be. Rather, he wants all of them to be members of a 'confessing' church, with the content of their testimony to be 'the word of truth', the gospel of their salvation (1:13)... *In love* describes the sphere of the Christian life and spells out the manner in which the ministry of all is to occur. Its juxtaposition with truth is no accident. The claims of the two should not be held in tension. The truth as proclaimed should not be dissociated from love or promoted at the expense of love, while a life of love should embody the truth of the gospel." O'Brian

αὐξήσωμεν Verb, aor act subj, 1 s αὐξανω
grow, reach full growth

κεφαλῆ, ης f head

Verse 16

ἐξ οὗ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβασόμενον διὰ πάσης ἀφῆς τῆς ἐπιχορηγίας κατ' ἐνέργειαν ἐν μέτρῳ ἐνὸς ἑκάστου μέρους τὴν αὐξησιν τοῦ σώματος ποιεῖται εἰς οἰκοδομὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἐν ἀγάπῃ.

"Christ is not only the goal of the body's growth (v.15); as the head who rules over the body he is the ultimate source (*from him*) of its growth, for he supplies all that is necessary for its well-being, including its unity, nourishment and progress." O'Brian.

σῶμα, τος n body

"Paul's focus is on the growth of the body as a whole, not on the need for individuals to become mature in Christ, however necessary this may be." O'Brian

συναρμολογεομαι be joined together, fit together

Cf. 2:21.

συμβιβάζω bring together, hold together

"The two verbs are virtually synonymous and indicate that there is an ongoing, unified growth to the body. It is 'not shapeless', but is 'ordered and united, ... fitly framed and knit together' (Best)." O'Brian

ἀφῆ, ης f ligament

Lincoln thinks "what is being highlighted is the role of the ministers in the whole body ruled and nourished by Christ and that, just as in v.11 the giving of Christ was embodied in particular persons, so ... [in this phrase of] v.16 the growth from Christ is mediated by particular persons." O'Brian follows this line but also emphasises that "the importance of each members' active contribution to the growth of the whole body is asserted in the words *as each part does its work*, which recall the language of v.7... In the light of God's dynamic enabling through Christ believers should eagerly exercise their ministry for the good of the whole. The presence of gifted persons within the body makes us dependent on one another, and as every Christian fully utilises his or her gifts for the growth of the body, divine fulness will be experienced." "Just as the human body, when properly supported and held together, experiences natural growth, so also the church, when each of its members supports and maintains loving contact with the others and above all with Christ, will, under the sustaining care of God (or of *Christ*...) proceed from grace to grace and from glory to glory." Hendriksen.

ἐπιχορηγία, ας f supply, support, help

ἐνέργεια, ας f working, power, activity

μετρον, ου n see v.7

εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one

ἕκαστος, η, ον each, every

μερος, ους n see v.9

ἑνος ἑκάστου μερους each and every member

αὐξησις, εως f growth

σῶμα, τος n body

οἰκοδομη, ης f see v.11

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/her/itself

"Love ... becomes the criterion for the assessment of the church's true growth. Even the fullest demonstration of gifts has no spiritual value if love is lacking (cf. 1 Cor 13)." O'Brian.