

Unity (Part 3): Ephesians 4 (A)

How Unity Will Occur

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You probably were not aware of it, but I really didn't finish my sermon the other day ["Unity (Part 2): God's Pattern of Leadership"], so we are going to pick up right where I left off and blend right into the sermon I was going to give today anyway. We will take that second section as far as we can, as far as the time allows, but I feel it is needful for me to go on to what I had toward the end of the sermon the other day. I want to pick this up again in II Corinthians 10 just to get a feeling of continuity. This is where Paul said:

II Corinthians 10:12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

He's talking about those who were creating the divisions. He's talking about the false prophets that were coming through that congregation and dividing one group against the other. They were comparing righteousness by comparing themselves with each other. Paul says, "Don't do that."

II Corinthians 10:13 But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God has distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

It is good to catch the essence of what Paul is saying here. An apostle has a measure of rule within the church. In another place Paul referred to himself as an ambassador. An ambassador is a pretty high governmental personage who represents a yet higher authority, and he is in that position in order to carry out the dictates of his nation in its relationship with another nation—a foreign nation. That's where the ambassador resides—in the foreign nation representing his own nation. He bears rule, let's say, in a political situation, over those who are under him at the consulate.

II Corinthians 10:14-15 For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: Nor boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labors; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly.

That word "measure," as I mentioned to you before, is the same word translated "province" in other places. A province is the same thing as a state. There are provinces all across Canada and territories in Australia. So whether you call it a province, or a territory, or a state, or a district or whatever, there are those who are responsible for governing. Their authority reaches to the borders and that is the sphere of their influence, the sphere of their authority. And so Paul tells these people that the Corinthians, the gentiles, are within the sphere of his authority. We find him talking here about basically the same thing as we do today in the political world where the nations are divided into states. There is a federal government that is overall and there are state governments that are over those within a smaller territory.

Our "federal government" is the Kingdom of God, but there is a representative within our nations—an apostle—and he bears a certain amount of authority. This authority is given to him to carry out the dictates of the "federal government"—of Jesus Christ who is the head of the church. This apostle then becomes the channel through which the "federal government," Jesus Christ, gets things to the people in the consulate so they can rightly represent their kingdom.

It is very interesting that in some modern translations, they will translate this into the word "colony" (as seen in the book of Philippians). I believe that *Moffatt* uses the word "colony" in reference to Christians. The Christian congregation in Philippi was "a colony of heaven." It was the consulate that God had raised up there.

I want you see in Joshua 23, verses 1 through 6 that he is explaining part of this process.

Joshua 23:1-4 And it came to pass a long time after that the LORD had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua grew old and stricken in age. And Joshua called for all Israel, and for their elders, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers, and said unto them, I am old and stricken in age; and you have seen all that the LORD your God has done unto all these nations because of you; for the LORD your God is He that has fought for you. [Now look at this.] Behold, I have divided unto you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes, from Jordan, with all the nations that I have cut off, even unto the great sea westward.

What's Joshua telling us? That they divided the nation, the land of Canaan, into various states, provinces and territories. We are just looking at a political division rather than a spiritual or religious division. But what we are talking about in II Corinthians—the sphere of influence of an apostle—is the same general principle. The apostle becomes the one who is the channel for what Jesus Christ wants done—not the church pastors, not the evangelists. The apostle is the one through whom Christ dictates to those who are under him.

Joshua 23:5-6 And the LORD your God, He shall expel them from before you, and drive them from out of your sight; and you shall possess their land, as the LORD your God has promised unto you. Be you therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that you turn not aside there from to the right hand or to the left.

This is Joshua's final address as recorded in the Bible:

Joshua 24:14-15 Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood [the Nile River], and in Egypt; and serve you the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods

which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Now I went into this really for one reason and that is that God, through the transference—through the succession—from Moses to Joshua established the way that He wanted it to operate. They made one of the few successful successions of power that we see recorded in the Bible. It is not the only one, but it is one of the few that came without a hitch, and Joshua did *exactly* what Moses instructed him to do! He carried out what God's prophet (in this case) directed him to do. He faithfully followed the one that God had established as His representative on earth. He faithfully followed the instructions given by Moses exactly to the letter.

Obviously, we in the church of God have not done that in regard to Herbert Armstrong and I can understand why it has occurred. There is a great deal of confusion out there in regard to his office and that office's connection to the Kingdom of God.

The importance of this is we have got to decide whether Herbert Armstrong was an apostle. And if he was, that brings into serious question all these doctrinal differences that we have with each other and the differences we hold with the doctrines we had under Herbert Armstrong in the Worldwide Church of God.

It's obvious that we split because the doctrines were being changed, but in many cases people felt free to hold onto some that had been changed. The Tkach gang changed a variety of doctrines, and people who left the Worldwide Church of God to go to other organizations held on to some of the changed doctrines rather than going back to the original ones. Now in addition to that, some felt free to make doctrinal changes based upon their own ideas.

If this occurs within a nation (a political entity) what happens? You have civil war. It erupts into a revolution. That is basically what we are going through here and we are scattered as a result of it. Where is the end of this? If Herbert Armstrong was indeed an apostle, then I think that God is using this to weed out those who will not submit to His government. Not the

government of the man. Please understand this: The man is merely a tool, just as you and I are tools. It's the office and the recognition that that office was given to him by the election of God.

In that sense, he had nothing to do with it. He was simply a chosen vessel like Jacob was a chosen vessel, like Abraham was a chosen vessel, like Peter was a chosen vessel or Paul or any others. He was simply a chosen vessel and God decided to use him. He was appointed just as surely as God (in the book of Daniel) tells us that He sets up kings and He removes kings.

We think we elect presidents, and in one sense we do, but we know that we have to look beyond that because of what it says there in the book of Daniel. God's the one who is directing these things and He puts in office whomever *He* wants.

That's what we're dealing with here. So, I think that because of the times that we are living in, that God is weeding out those who will not submit to His government, and I am not referring here to the church government. There are two different entities here: the church government is simply a government of men who are trying to rule like God would rule. And we do it very, very, very, very imperfectly. We are trying, but it is not the government of God.

The government of God is in heaven and *by faith* we yield to that government in spite of other people—whether it be the leader, the pastor, the apostle or whoever. That's everybody's responsibility. In a way, God holds you responsible if you allow a man to come between you and God. It's your fault. The man may be carnal enough to attempt to try to impose himself on you, but if you allow him, it becomes your fault. It's your sin, along with his sin of attempting to impose his rule on you. Every one of us has a responsibility right now to check out what Ritenbaugh is saying to make sure he is right. If you feel he is wrong, you have the responsibility to come and correct me, but please don't do it with swords, knives, staves, and whatever. Whisper in my ear.

If Herbert Armstrong was not what he claimed to be and you feel that the evidence of the work that he did, in being the instrument through whom the end-time church of God was raised up, and the one that God used to restore the doctrines that He wanted to give to the church; the one who in a (and you

may not like this word) "weak way" preached the gospel around the world (Herbert Armstrong preached the gospel to the world in a small way when compared to what the Two Witnesses are going to do)—he did what he did, and there is plenty of evidence there that he indeed was an apostle of God. But if he was not, then I submit that the greater church of God is showing every sign of being nothing more than a Sabbath-keeping, Protestant organization, with each man protesting that his doctrines are the best.

So we have some serious decisions to make and I think that many of you have already made them. You are headed in the right direction as far as I am able to see, but that is your own personal responsibility—to take the bit in your mouth and go with it in the right direction.

Ephesians 2:19-22 Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the LORD; in whom you also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

I want to repeat something that I have said a number of times. This has nothing to do with Herbert Armstrong being infallible or sinless. It has everything to do with God's faithfulness to His own character as well as the patterns that He has established very early in His word. He has done that in order that we can have faith and use it to respond to Him. So God only works through one man at a time to lead. He only works through one man at a time to put doctrines into physical Israel or spiritual Israel, His church, and He does that in order to avoid confusion.

We saw, even with Paul in II Corinthians, that God inspired and motivated these men to divide the world up into geographical areas and keep themselves within them so that they did not overlap in their authorities. God did that in order to maintain unity within the church and to avoid confusion among members.

When we were in the Worldwide Church of God, church administration followed that same pattern. They divided the whole United States up

according to zip codes, assigned certain zip codes to ministers in certain areas and we were not supposed to go beyond our sphere of influence. We stayed within our zip areas. If by chance something happened and we had to go "across the border," we would visit the person (contact them) and then, when we went home, we would call up the minister in that area and say, "*I contacted this person. Would you please take care of it from here on?*" The sphere of influence was not destroyed and confusion could be avoided.

In some ways, I understand that what I'm saying flies in the face of our vanity. This is because we like to think of ourselves as being just as good as, just as smart as, equal to, or better than, others. In this case I have Herbert Armstrong in mind. I heard him say many times that he just had an average intelligence, that there was nothing super about him in any way. He said that plenty of men in business were far better and sharper than he was. We thought he was pretty sharp, but he said he ran into people who were far sharper, more aggressive, more energetic, more directly focused on accumulating things and so forth, the kinds of things that he had in his mind when he was in the business world. Our vanity tends to drive us to think that we are equal.

But I want you to understand that this is not the issue here. The issue is what does the sovereign creator God want? It is His election. It's the one He chooses to work through. God is not claiming that this person is any better than anybody else, or any smarter. He is only saying, "This is the one I am using."

I found, I think, in studying the Bible that most of the men God chose were probably pretty sharp, but that's not the issue. God does call some people who are pretty sharp, but most of us are the lowly of the world and we do a lot of things wrong. We do a lot of things out of ignorance; we do a lot of things out of weakness. Again, that's not the issue. The issue is what is God's pleasure regarding who He appoints to an office. He's the one who is calling the shots.

Now, did He reveal His pleasure through Herbert Armstrong? Well I think He did. Was Herbert Armstrong God's ambassador? If he was (answer this question and think of it in regards to the political world), does he have the right to change the laws of the government that he represents? No

ambassador has that right anywhere. That man would be recalled so fast his head would spin if he did not do what was directed by his government in carrying out the foreign policy, the dictates of those who were in the home office. I feel certain God would not operate any differently.

The very fact that He left him in that office just about fifty years seems to indicate to me that Herbert Armstrong, overall, was pretty pleasing to God in the carrying out of his function. That is a longer period of rule than almost anybody in the Bible. Think about it! Longer than Moses. Longer than Joshua. Longer than David. He was doing something right in representing Jesus Christ rather than doing all kinds of things that are wrong. Fifty years under God is pretty impressive and he would have been the first one to admit that he certainly did not do everything right and that he got things wrong on occasion. But he was very quick to repent when somebody could show him that indeed he was wrong in what he had done.

I want to go back to the thought that I gave just a little bit earlier, that we like to think of ourselves as being just as good as any other church member. I have these thoughts as well and so I am describing me as well as, I am sure, you. Let's think about this beginning in II Timothy 2:19. I just want to show you a pattern.

II Timothy 2:19-21 Nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal, the Lord knows them that are his. And, let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. [There's our responsibility. Everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But notice this conjunction.] But in a great house [temple, church, family, person] there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and fit for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.

God plainly says here that He can make a vessel of honor or a vessel of dishonor. It is His choice. We can add to this something that I will not turn to

because I think that you know the principle very well, but Matthew the 13th chapter in the parable of the wheat and the tares shows very plainly, very clearly that God was going to permit Satan to sow tares within the fellowship.

I did not say that they were church members. I said that they were tares. A tare looks very much like wheat until the fruit comes forth and then you can find out it's not wheat. People who are tares are going to be religious. They are going to look very much like church members, but the question is: Are they converted? The principle we're dealing with is that God will permit tares to be sown within the fellowship. The temple, this house, is going to be seeded with vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor.

Now back to Paul's thought there in II Corinthians 10. He said those who compare themselves among themselves are unwise. Who are you comparing yourself with? You might be comparing yourself to a tare. There are traps all over the place here. If we aren't on the ball, we can be led into them.

Let's think of this a little bit further. I want you to understand that everybody is not equal. People in the fellowship are not equally converted. Some are unconverted but look good on the outside. God knows those who are His, but He allows these others to be there too. In fact, in one place, in I Corinthians 11 (I believe it's verses 17 through 19), Paul even said there **MUST** be divisions among you. He means it is ordained that there be divisions among you. We have to deal with them. I'll show you that God is testing us as we go along here.

We have to begin with this thought though: Is everybody equally gifted artistically? I can hardly sing a note. I can't play a tune on anything. I have no gift at all for music. I love to listen to it and in that case my ear is pretty good. But the other parts of me are no good at all. I am not gifted in that way at all.

Are you creative? Some people just seem to have ideas flowing out of their minds—clever things that enable jobs to go better. And that's great. How about athletically? Is everybody gifted athletically the same? We are not equal are we? We are not equal artistically, creatively, or athletically. Does everybody have exactly the same I.Q.? No, we don't. Some people are

smarter than others. Some people are able to retain tremendous amounts of information—sometimes it's trivia—but on the other hand it might be really useful information. Their memory is just like a sponge. And then there are others whose forehead is like a piece of concrete. We're not equal that way either.

We all know the answer to that. But this is even taught in the Bible. How about Matthew 25 in the parable of the talents? God gives to one five talents, another two talents, and another one talent. Has God treated those three people equally? Not in the giving of the gifts He has not. He will judge them all fairly. But He did not give them gifts equally. God does not deal with everybody in exactly the same way. "Jacob have I loved. Esau have I hated."

Everybody is treated fairly, judged in a just manner by God. But not everybody is treated equally. Of how many people in the Bible did God say, "He is my friend"? One. How many times did He say, "This is a man after my own heart."? Once. How many times did Jesus say to somebody, "This is the disciple that I love"? Even though Peter was the first among equals, His relationship with John was close and warm. There was a bond there that He had with John even though He recognized that in Peter was the kind of leadership that He wanted and appointed him to that office. He did not treat them both the same way.

We can go on to other examples. It says that David and Jonathan loved each other. It doesn't mean that they were homosexuals. It just means that David and Jonathan were like two hearts beating in three-quarter time. They thought much the same way. What the one lacked the other had. What the other one had the other one lacked. They just got along and were two people who were closer than most can believe.

God does not expect us to have the same relationship with everybody. And you know that that's true. There are people with whom you have a relationship with that is warm and close and friendly and kind—it's mind to mind, heart to heart. You don't have with other people, but you're still friendly and you still love those people. You're not at war with them.

I'm going through all of this so you can understand that God's appointment of Herbert W. Armstrong was not made because he was better. It was simply

God's choice. We will never know why, maybe until we're in the Kingdom of God—why God chose this man early in his life and began to train him in the discipline that He wanted him to be in, in order to do the work. God's relationship with Herbert Armstrong was different from the relationship that He had with the rest of us. Always remember that to whom much is given, from him much is also required. God judges fairly.

I Corinthians 12 shows very plainly that God does not give the same gifts to everybody in the same measure. But He does give everybody gifts and expects everybody to use those gifts for the well being of the church. So, does it make the foot better than the hand or the hand better than the eye? No, each part of the body is gifted in order to carry out its function. It doesn't make one better than the other, but neither are they treated equally in the gifts that are given.

Your body can do without a toe. It's not nearly as important as the heart. Which one would you rather lose? You see, are they equal? They are not equal. One is more important than the other. One carries out a function that is necessary to life—much more vital to life than the other is.

In I Corinthians 12, it says that God has put us in the church as it pleases Him. Then it goes on to say, "first apostles." That is an order of authority. It is an order of rank, because if you look in your King James it goes on to say, "secondarily prophets". There is no equality there. We are equal in that we are all sons of God and that God judges us all fairly, but we are not equal in gifts given. We are not equal in responsibility given. We are not equal in gifts to use for the benefit of His church.

I Corinthians 14:5 I would that you all spoke with tongues, but rather that you prophesied [meaning preach]; for greater is he that preaches than he who speaks with tongues.

In one way, the speaking in tongues was a minor gift. But one who speaks teaches people laws, principles, ideas, gives encouragement or whatever that may last for eternity. So there it is—greater is he who preaches than he who speaks in tongues.

So the Biblical record is clear. It shows that each prophet or apostle was appointed or as they were appointed, God added new doctrines or He refined and restored old ones. In our generation that one man that God chose to be the instrument to announce His message and to establish doctrine within His church was Herbert Armstrong. It is not a matter a greatness. It is not a matter of equality. It is a matter of appointment. The choice of the great God.

If I'm going to be faithful to God's governance, how much right do I, as a church pastor, have to change what was delivered to me by an apostle? I have far less right to change what was instituted than he did. And that's why I have chosen to go in this direction. It is governmental. It is a matter of faith even though, brethren, I can see that there are things that I feel are wrong about certain doctrines. I am afraid to change them until I am assured that I have the authority to do so.

One is the calendar. I can see that there are flaws in it, at least I think they are flaws. And I think that there are better ways that it could be done. But do I have that authority? If you can help me with this, I would appreciate it very much. I'm not smart enough, I'm not gifted enough and I most definitely feel that I don't have the authority at this time to do anything like that, even though I have the urge from time to time to make the leap and present something to you in regard to some of these issues. But that governmental thing is my anchor and it holds me back. You're going to have to judge whether you think that it's good that I continue to use that anchor.

I know that in a multitude of counselors there is safety and in a multitude of counselors there is wisdom. A lot of you people are new with us, but those of you who have been with us in the past know that I have presented things to the whole church, I mean doctrinal questions, and have asked for your thoughts, your opinions, your research, your advice and whatever regarding what we ought to do.

I feel that it is time to turn away from what we will call theory and begin to get to something that is more practical.

There is a very famous Protestant theologian who is the author of several commentaries. He said that it is his personal opinion that no subject has

caused so much confusion in the hearts and minds of church members, and that no subject has been more frequently dealt with in sermons, books, pamphlets and articles, than unity.

I do not know whether that is one hundred percent accurate, but one thing I feel is certain: unity is not a frequent reality in any area of life. The world is certainly not at one with God. The peoples and nations of this world are not at one with each other. And even in marriage where we are dealing with only two people, unity is not all that common either.

The man who made this statement was an Englishman, Martin Lloyd Jones. He said this in relation to the ecumenical movement. He said that the trouble generally arises because the advocates of ecumenism—getting all the churches together—are content to make vague, general and often sentimental statements about this vital issue. He said, as an example, that these theologians will quote Ephesians 4:15 in which the terms love and truth appear in relation to unity, but emphasize a vague love exclusively, at the expense of truth.

You know he is right because these religions that are trying to get together do not believe the same things. So, truth is compromised with the statement, "Well, all you need is love." They fail to remember that love is the keeping of the commandments and there has to be love first toward God in the obedience and submission to His commandments before there can be any unity with God. If there is no unity with God, there is no unity with men either. So they are going to get together, but they're not going to be unified. They will just put together a political union in order to achieve certain ends.

This man broke the issue down into this simple statement: "they make statements about a vague love at the expense of truth." Unity cannot be achieved through sentimentality and vague generalities. Unity requires submission to truth.

Anybody involved in a marriage ought to understand that. Marriage does not work simply because one has a nice, warm thought that it should work. Unity requires truth in conduct as well as a well-defined love and a great deal of sacrifice and a great many more specifics besides.

The same is true with the church. Unity is going to be caused to occur. And it will occur because those involved are doing what is necessary to unify them with it, with the church. It's not good enough for us to be merely hoping that somebody, namely God, will do something to bring the church together. I wonder how many of us waited for God to straighten things out within the Worldwide Church of God, and we ended up leaving anyway because God wasn't doing anything. He wanted us to do something.

There are times you have to escape a famine in order to find a place where you can get some water and be fed. It is not smart sticking around when a few steps will take you into a place of fellowship where you can be fed and thus survive until God does do something. Not merely survive, but do something that will make steps toward healing the disunion that is occurring. Unity cannot be forced on the church. But we can do something about making sure that we are personally and individually united with God.

Another one of the problems in this area is that we all tend to be creatures of habit. Prejudices have formed within our minds from the time that we were born. Unfortunately, we are still, to some extent, governed by them. In many cases, these are the very things that need to be overcome in our relationships with God and God's family.

I don't think that we could be dealing with nicer people than those in the church. And yet, it's still difficult. Offenses are caused. Irritations occur. Sometimes downright anger. Jealousy arises. Envy sticks its head in. These things divide people away from one another and these are nice people. They may have the same intentions as you do, but you're offended by them or they are offended by you, because we don't look at things in quite the right way.

I picked that up again from I Corinthians 1:10 where Paul said we all have to see things in the same way. We don't. But there is a way that we can work toward that end and see things in the right way. This difficulty must be dealt with and it's what we're going to be dealing with in this sermon. We're going to begin to see what God says to us. We're going to see it primarily through a short section of the book of Ephesians, at least using it as a base. What we're going to see is the knowledge that we need and the conduct we need as a foundation for becoming more tightly unified. First of all with God and then with each other.

Ephesians 4:1-3 I therefore, the prisoner of the LORD, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

The first thing we're going to look at is the way the book of Ephesians is structured. This is a critical juncture of important information here at the beginning of Ephesians 4. That word "therefore" is very important to understand (to understand its position and why it is there).

The book of Romans is generally considered to be the foundational book as far (as doctrines of the New Testament Church). I think that's a little bit simplistic because each book emphasizes and expounds upon different doctrines and their application to life. The book of Ephesians fits this mold. It has the same author, Paul, or we might say God, and it is structured in a very similar manner to the book of Romans.

We're going to be looking at the book of Ephesians because it expounds upon doctrines that especially pertain to unity. This does not mean that Ephesians contains all the necessary information on unity. It simply emphasizes it.

"Therefore" is a conjunction that bridges either to a command, a conclusion, an exhortation or perhaps, all three. Here it is a bridge to what has the elements of all three, with exhortation being the strongest. Paul is appealing to us to make practical application of the things that immediately preceded the word "therefore."

He's talking about the things that appear in the first three chapters because he spent those three chapters laying the foundation for the word "therefore" and what follows. What follows is what is necessary to produce unity. It matters not whether it's in a family or a church or a government or a nation. Much of John's sermon yesterday came out of Ephesians 5—talking about the unity of husband and wife—setting the pace for the family and being a means of

preparation for the Kingdom of God and our unification with Jesus Christ for all eternity. That's just one small area of this book that covers this subject of unity and the word "therefore" is bridging from the first three chapters to that.

Ephesians 1:3-5 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

Herbert Armstrong considered this to be his favorite chapter in all of the Bible. I can certainly understand why. It is ringing affirmation of what God has called us to. It is a thunderous opening for a glorious theme of vision that Paul gives us in these three chapters. And this is just the beginning.

God has predestinated us from the beginning! Boy, does that have pregnant meaning within it! Did God have you planned out even before He created Adam and Eve? He might have! It can mean that. It may not be general at all. It might be very specific. That that great mind that created everything had YOU in mind way back then. That's awesome and awe inspiring! Can that God control Herbert Armstrong? Some don't think so.

Brethren, God has been preparing for the formation of the church and its judgment since before the foundation of the world. We have reached a very important stage in the unfolding of that process. For thousands of years, His work in and through man has been in motion and now we are at center stage and the focus of action.

Billions of people have lived and died without ever being given a glimmer of a glimpse of insight into why they were born, what was going on. But we do, because of His plan, because of His mercy. He's chosen us and given us some insight. Now I know that all of us here believe that, but unfortunately we so frequently stop with this vision. Even though it can excite us, we do nothing or we do little because we begin to realize that it is going to be costly for us to yield to God's conditions.

I emphasize this in the baptism counseling. We are to count the cost, because the cost is the greatest thing that you will ever pay for anything in life. It is your life from here on out. But this leads us to fear—to fear stepping out to pay the price in the sacrifice of our lives. Maybe because of the fear of failure. Maybe because we're too lazy. Maybe because we feel that our faith is too weak. So what do we do? We remain in our comfort zone, nursing the old habits and perhaps even chaffing at the guilty conscience that we have because we know that we should be doing better.

Now this chapter break here in Ephesians 4:1 is almost a disservice. Paul didn't write it that way. He wrote it as a free flowing letter from beginning to end. One thought flowed right into another. And I'm sure that if we could read it that way (I mean read it with understanding that way), it would have greater impact than it does. But we tend to segment things because we want them to be very orderly. So putting it like this makes possible a concordance and makes finding something in there very easy. But sometimes those things are misleading and a disservice. The continuity break might have been better elsewhere.

Do you understand what Paul is telling us here with that word "therefore?" He's saying DO something! He's saying in the light of all that precedes (in the first three chapters of this book, which is the doctrinal base for unity), we ought to do something. If we believe it and we put it into practice, we can have unity! But if we don't, we won't.

So we need the guidance of those doctrines so that we know the direction to go in and we know what to do along the way. But, if we don't go in that direction and if we don't do what it says, we haven't listened to the "therefore." So that's why he says, "Therefore, do this!" And it is our business to put into practical application the doctrines given at the very beginning of the book.

Now I want to go back to the book and I want you to see some of these things (just a word or two) that he wrote about. Ephesians 1:2: "grace and peace" (peace which is unity; it's the fruit of unity); verse 9 tells us that He has "revealed the mystery of His will"; verses 12-14 says He has "given us His spirit"; verse 6 says He has "made us accepted in the beloved." He has forgiven our sins.

He has cleansed us of those things. He has justified us. He has made us accepted into His church.

In Ephesians 2:10, He tells us that we are His workmanship. The greatest inventor, the greatest creator, the greatest manufacturer in all this creation is working on you and me! We couldn't have a greater artist or any one who is more clever. We couldn't have anybody who is more powerful. We couldn't have anybody who is kinder, who loves us more, who knows our inner being (knows every thought as David said in Psalm 139), and knows exactly what we need to become when we come out the other end of the manufacturing plant. We have the privilege of having Him work on us.

In chapter 3 verse 5 Paul is driving to a grand finale, a conclusion, and he says . . .

Ephesians 3:5 Which in other ages [the mystery of His will] was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the spirit.

And then they gave it to us. Where did your knowledge of the will of God, the purpose of God (we're going to be very God), come from? Everybody in here owes it (in some regard) to Herbert Armstrong. None of you got it from Billy Graham or any of those other fellows out there. Even if you say that you got it from Garner Ted, he got it from his father. And his father got it from God and with it came all of the other doctrines that pertain to that great vision of what we are going to be. God is reproducing Himself. Paul makes it specific to the Gentiles in verse 6 . . .

Ephesians 3:6-7 That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel; whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift [In that sense, Paul was not anymore special than Herbert Armstrong. It was given to him.] of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

It was God's choice to choose an enemy, convert him and use him more mightily than even Peter. Paul said he labored harder than them all.

Ephesians 3:14-19 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father [i.e., this cause he has just described beginning in chapter 1, verse 1] of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

He's writing this to a divided congregation. He is leading up to that "therefore"—this is what you need to do, if you're going to be filled with the fullness of Christ, the fullness of God the Father.

Ephesians 3:20-21 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Ephesians 4:1 I therefore . . . beseech you [pleading, encouraging, commanding all at once] that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.

"Therefore" leads to a description of the kind of life that we are to live. It's helpful to know that this word appears in many other places in the epistles (not just this one) because all of the apostles followed a general pattern in the writing of their epistles. Generally there is first a doctrinal foundation and then a conjunction appears. It might be "for"; it might be "but"; it might be "wherefore" or "why" leading to a question to make people think. It might be an "and", but most of the time it's going to be a "therefore" or a "for". *"For this reason..." "Therefore do this..."*

I will show you two different examples. The first one is so well known—in Romans 12, verse 1. This follows eleven chapters of doctrine.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable [or spiritual] service.

Now what Paul says there is very similar to what he says in Ephesians 4:1. The wording is changed a little bit, but the sense of it is exactly the same. Because of the doctrines, do this.

In Titus, chapter 2, Paul is writing to a minister.

Titus 2:11-12 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

That follows an exhortation to come out of sin, and then the reason is given—for the gift of God has been given to us that we might glorify Him by coming out of sin.

If you want to study (and I know you do), be alert to those conjunctions because they are going to give you answers. Most of the time they are going to give you answers as to what you are to do as a result of what preceded it.

So Christianity is not merely intellectual. It is a practical way of life that prepares us for living in the Kingdom of God.

What we are looking at here (in most of the rest of Ephesians) fits into that salvation process that we call sanctification. You need to understand this. Sanctification is not a gift. It occurs because of a gift, but it is not a gift. It is not a gift received. It is something that must be worked out in light of the doctrine that precedes it. This is why Paul (later in the book, beginning in Philippians 2:12) says to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Doctrines are intended by God to provide a base, a foundation of knowledge and motivation for sanctification. Sanctification is the working out of what

the doctrines teach us. And sanctification leads to holiness. Sanctification leads to us being like God in mind, in heart, in character, in the conduct of our life, in our attitudes.

We cannot stop with merely having knowledge of what the goal is. We cannot stop with merely having a vision, because God has bigger, greater things in mind. We have to go on applying what the doctrines tell us to do—what the doctrines lead us to do, motivate us to do. If we resist the motivation, if we resist the guidance and leadership that is in the doctrines, we will not be sanctified; we will not be in the Kingdom of God.

Sanctification requires WORK! Sanctification requires SACRIFICE!
Sanctification requires humbling ourselves.

Now I want to go back to Psalm 11 again and just pick the principle up, because this psalm kind of fits into what we're going through.

Psalm 11:3 If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

The doctrines are our foundation. It's what we believe that produces the faith. If the doctrines be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Psalm 11:4-5 The LORD [we've got to believe this] is in His holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids try [test] the sons of men. The LORD tries [tests, proves] the righteous, but the wicked and him that loves violence His soul hates.

We were scattered when the doctrines were changed. Confusion was produced, the doctrinal foundation was badly disturbed. But David is reminding us that, in reality, God is still on the throne! He knows what's going on and we are not to lose hope. He is testing us to see what our reaction is going to be to what we thought was so solid, being destroyed. But you cannot destroy TRUTH! And we still have to have faith in it. If we have faith in it, we will use it despite what is going on around us.

We're getting to the heart of the issue. What has happened to our faith? We can recapture it; it's still there. It's lying latent, but it's got to be used. We've got to step out and follow what Paul says here in the book of Ephesians, about creating . . . Let me take that back. We cannot create unity. In the world, they can create unity, but with God you cannot create unity. I hope to be able to explain that so that it's understandable.

But the answer is the unity already exists. We will see that as we go along. I will give you one little proof. In Ephesians 4:3, Paul did not say "create unity." He said, "guard it."

The church is still unified. Do you hear me? Despite being scattered, the church is still unified! But we aren't guarding that unity very well. We cannot create unity, but we can destroy it by not guarding it.

Let's go to Deuteronomy 13. We will stop here. It looks like a good place to stop. This is one of those scriptures we used to go over very frequently, but we don't do it much anymore.

Deuteronomy 13:1-3 If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spoke unto you, saying, Let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them; you shall not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams; for [here comes the explanation] the LORD your God proves you . . .

His kingdom is going to be peopled by sons and daughters that He has tested and found them faithful even when they are tempted by false prophets. The false prophet reveals himself through his preaching and that preaching is against the law of God. And here God does not mean necessarily just the Ten Commandments, because everything that comes out of the mouth of God is true and it is law to His children. He expects us to respond and obey it, to submit to it out of respect for Him and because we also want things to go well for ourselves, for our families and our loved ones.

Deuteronomy 13:3 . . . for the LORD your God proves you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

And there is no better place to test that than when the pressure is really on and it seems as though we are so scattered and weak. Where is the faith? Do we still believe that God is on His throne, that He is in His temple and that He is in us? That's the test. And those who believe it will not be lost. God will save those because they will be faithful and trustworthy wherever He sends them in all of His great creation. They will never turn their back on Him in any regard. So now we have to prove it to Him in this confusing time, this scattered time when we have the fellowship so weakened. But it can be done. It's His recipe for testing and proving those who are faithful.

God willing I will pick this up in the final sermon.