



LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

“Outpouring: God's Ministry Gifts”

Bishop Rice Brooks – Mar. 16, 2014

WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. *No right or wrong answers.*

- What skill do you have that is important or special to you?
- How do you like to serve others?
- What would you like to learn more about?

WORD (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at bethelbrentwood.org/media.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.” (Ephesians 4:1-8 ESV)

In light of what Jesus has done for us, we are to walk in a manner worthy of the eternal calling he has secured for us. We are to bear Christ's image and honor the Father. To help us do this, Jesus blessed all of us and each of us with grace according to his gifts.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 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, 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. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 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. (Ephesians 4:8, 11-16 ESV)

Jesus walked in his earthly ministry as the chief apostle, the chief prophet, the chief evangelist, the chief pastor, and the chief teacher. When he ascended to heaven after his death and resurrection, he gave measures of his ministry to various disciples to serve his people. Those who are given are themselves gifts from Jesus to the church. They are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Their purpose is to serve the church by equipping the church. They are to equip the church to do the work of ministry. In other words, every believer is called to the work of ministry. There is no one who isn't called, privileged, and honored to be involved in the great work of the kingdom of God.

The goal is for the entire church to grow up into maturity, even the maturity of Christ himself. Paul, later in chapter five, tells us that Jesus gave his life up as a sacrifice in order to present to himself the church in all her glory without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. To grow to such maturity we must be joined together with other believers in the community of the faith. Only as we serve one another and do God's work of ministry will we be able to grow together to become the mature church God has destined us to become.

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. 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. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (Ephesians 4:17-24 ESV)

There is great danger in becoming callous toward God, the truth, and the conviction of the Holy Spirit. To do so is to walk the path that leads to destruction, destruction that often comes in this life and certainly in the next. Instead, we must put off the old, sinful way of life that comes naturally to us, and replace it by embracing the new life of godliness that God brings to us through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Given the flow of Paul's writing in this letter, it is clear that the way we do this is by walking closely with other believers, by continuing to be equipped by spiritual leaders, and by doing the work of ministry that expresses and advances God's kingdom.

To sum up Paul's exhortation, we should...

1. Walk worthy of the calling.
2. Walk closely.
3. Walk wisely.

PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.

- Who are you walking closely with? How can you take it to a deeper spiritual level?
- How are you being equipped to do God's work for your life?
- What area of your life is God wanting to bring to greater maturity?

PRAYER (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- That God himself would equip us through his spiritual leaders to be good workers for the ministry of God's kingdom.
- That God would bring us into stronger, deeper spiritual relationships that both protect us and mature us.
- That God would reveal any areas of our lives where we have become callous to God's truth and the conviction of the Holy Spirit.