

**TITLE:** Household of God: The Goal – Ephesians 4:7-16

**AIM:** Consider God's goal for His household/Church.

**INTRO:** A goal: "Something toward which effort or movement is directed; an end or objective" (F&W's). Good to set goals & have goal in mind as you go about life. What is the goal of your life? Just to get by? Biologist/scientist? Member of Special Forces, teacher, historian, successful businessman/woman? Retire w/financial security, get married & raise family, be healthy? Some of our goals may be alike or they may be vastly different, but we all should have goals. If you are a Christian, what are your goals? Really should encompass all your life – not separated from rest of your life, not compartmentalized. What should be our goal as believers/disciples of Christ? Shouldn't it be God's goal is for us? Theme: HofG – gaining the understanding from Scripture that we are the HofG & seeking thru further study to understand what it means to be the HofG. I would submit to you that God has one primary goal for members of His household: growth into Christ – together. Ephesians 4:7-16 [READ] Last week we looked at the 1<sup>st</sup> part of this passage, vs7-12, learning that God the Father, thru Jesus Christ the Son/our Savior, has given gifts to His Church/household. The primary gift, after the provision of redemption & reconciliation – bringing us into relationship w/Himself – is the gift of the Holy Spirit, thru whom Christ has given spiritual gifts to the Church. Some of those gifts are leadership gifts: Apostles (thru whom established Church), prophets (thru whom, along w/apostles, laid the foundation of truth to be followed by the Church), Evangelists (gifted to reach many w/the gospel & thus add to the Church), & Pastor/Teachers (under-shepherds gifted & called to lead/nurture local congregations or groups of congregations). Purpose for these leadership gifts in the early church & now, was that the rest of the saints/believers might be equipped/furnished w/everything needed for works of ministry/service – the

work of the Church – serving, encouraging, teaching, caring for one another & being witness in the world for Christ, etc. And, the purpose for those works of ministry is that the body of Christ, the Church, might be built up/strengthened. All of that begs the question which Paul proceeds to answer in vs13-16: why? To what end? What is the goal of all these gifts & this equipping & the works of ministry each one is to do? Remember that Paul has reminded these Ephesian believers/us what God has done for us in Christ, who we are in Christ, that believing Jew/gentile alike are brought into one family, God's household. He's urged them/us to maintain the unity of the Spirit, shown us the basis of that unity. Why is all this imp? What's God's goal? The growth/development of the Church. ***“Until we all attain”*** – need to have the understanding from the beginning that there's no soloing in the Church, in Christianity. You/I are not meant to go it alone. God does work in us individually, but even as He works in you/me, He's doing it for the good of the whole Church, worldwide & local. He's doing it for the good of His kingdom work. Your spiritual growth or mine is not 1<sup>st</sup> about you/me – it's about us – the church. ***“to the unity of the faith”*** – akin to “unity of the Spirit” (vs3), but perhaps they are different facets of the same precious gem. The unity of the Spirit certainly includes faith in Christ alone, which is likewise included in the unity of the faith; but the unity of the faith perhaps includes the broader truths of faith in Christ – basic truths of the gospel & also the 1<sup>st</sup> principles of following Christ – what all Christians/the Church should believe/embrace & follow, from the truth of the inspiration, infallibility of Scripture, to the Biblical truths of putting off the old man & putting on the new – Christ-likeness, marriage, family, church relationships, the mission of the Church, the Great Commandment (love God & neighbor) & Great Commission (go & make disciples), etc. There are many denominations & many varied doctrinal beliefs in the Church [latitude allowed by Scripture], but there

are core beliefs that every Christian needs to embrace & live by if their claim to faith is real. **“and of the knowledge of the Son of God”** – that word knowledge, as seen before, is “exact & precise knowledge” (Strng’s) – not just intellectual knowledge, but a greater, growing intimacy in experience w/Christ. Being a Christian is not just knowing & acknowledging the facts that we’re sinners & that Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sin & rose again as conqueror & Lord & that His righteousness is credited to us to make possible a right standing before God – it is all that, but more. It’s relationship – a growing, every deepening relationship w/God thru Christ, our mediator. The Christian life is about walking w/Jesus, following Him closely, communing w/Him daily & continually. It’s about Him living His life in us, thru us, transforming us. The deeper we go, the more we realize how far we have to go! But most of us haven’t gone very far at all. As Kristen puts it in her blog, He’s the God we thought we knew, but there’s so much more to Him than we have yet grasped. When you think you have Him figured out, He shows you more & blows your understanding away. God wants us to have an exact & precise knowledge of Him, which takes a lifetime – really eternity. **“to mature manhood”** – that, of course, includes men & women – mature womanhood also. The word mature means “completed, finished, wanting nothing necessary to completeness, perfect; full grown” (Strng’s). Are you perfect yet? If you think so, then reading further will certainly burst your bubble: **“to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”** - The measure is Christ! Remember in vs7 Paul wrote that God gave grace to each of us “according to the measure of Christ’s gift” – not each one given differing measures of grace, but the fullness of grace given to us thru Christ – all grace, total grace, immeasurable grace – as equal to the value of Christ Himself. Here is vs13 Paul is saying that the measure of maturity is again Christ Himself. Our growth will be completed when

we are like Christ. God doesn't want us to be good or better; He wants us to be like Christ. That's what He's working toward in every way, thru everything in our lives. Romans 8:28-29 – ***“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son...”*** Let's be clear that our growing to maturity is not something we can attain to, tho it must be our aim/goal because it is God's goal for His household. But it is God's work w/in us that will bring us to maturity & it will come thru our growing knowledge/experience of Christ, so that must be our continual focus – to know Him, as Pastor Tom has repeatedly pointed out. God has promised to finish the work, faithfully working in us until the day that Jesus comes again, when the work will be brought to a successful end (Phil.1:6). Paul continued: ***“so that we may no longer be children”*** – this is the contrast to maturity. Children are immature – we expect that of them, but not of adults. The message is clear & will be repeated: grow up! Don't be childish in your faith or walk. We are to have child-like faith, believing God to be who He says He is & to do what He says He will do, but we aren't to be childish, which we must admit we often are. Paul explains what he means by childishness. ***“tossed to & fro by the waves & carried about by every wind”*** – that's being unstable, having no moorings, no foundation. David Gudzik pointed out that same words - tossed to & fro – were used to describe a strong storm on the Sea of Galilee – up/down, side to side, becoming seasick. Carried about by every wind gives same thought – blown this way & then that way, not landing anywhere. The waves & wind that were tossing/blowing them were “doctrine” – teaching (Paul referring to false teaching), human cunning, craftiness, deceitful schemes. The early Church was plagued by false teachers, schemers who sought to lead the Church astray, & Paul's teaching about spiritual warfare in

chap6, which we'll get to in a few weeks, makes it clear who was at the bottom of it all. What Paul was saying here is that the Eph believers needed to know what they believed & be firmly planted on the foundation of the apostles & prophets (2:20) so that they would not be tossed & blown, but be stable, secure. And, of course, this is going on in our world today, in the Church. If you don't know what you believe, if you're not firmly grounded in the Scriptures, you'll fall for anything. The plethora of TV evangelists touting all sorts of nonsense is proof of that. If people weren't falling for their deceitful schemes they wouldn't have a following & couldn't stay on the air. I'm sometimes amazed at what people swallow as the truth. We've got to grow up, know the Christ of the Bible, & become stable in our Christian walk. ***"Rather, speaking the truth in love..."*** – False teachers & schemers are to be answered with the truth, in love. Bros/sis, that's what we need to do in our world today – speak the truth in love. There's too much hatred being spewed forth from the Church. The world too often knows what we're against, but they don't always know what we're for. We need to point them to Christ & speak the truth of God's word in love. The word will cut/wound, but let it be God's wound, not ours. And we need to speak the truth in love to each other as well, always pointing each other to Christ, to Scripture, to mature thinking, so that we will ***"grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ..."*** In every way – nothing left out/behind - & no one left out/behind – all of us together growing. I love that phrase "into Christ." Again, He is the measure/standard. And, we want to go deeper into Him – know Him more, His life infusing ours, until it's no longer you/me, but Jesus being seen. He is our head, from whom our life flows, from whom our order comes. From the head, the body grows, working thru the parts – ***"from whom the whole body, joined & held together by every joint w/which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow***

***so that it builds itself up in love.***” We understand from science how the human body works – a wonderfully designed organism/machine. We have joints – vertebrae, shoulders, elbows, wrists, fingers, hips, knees, ankles, feet, attached by ligaments & muscle. Those joints connect & hold the body together. The body is made up of many parts, not just the bones & joints & ligaments & muscle, but organs & glands & blood vessels & nerves. All the parts of the body have specific functions (not sure about the appendix, but I think one day we’ll find out about that) & if any of the parts fails to work properly, the whole body is affected. Each part must work properly for maximum growth & health. Perhaps in Paul’s illustration, the joints are those leadership gifts – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers – holding the skeleton of the Church together. If that is so, then the parts are individual saints/believers – each gifted & vital to the life of the Church. And each part must work properly for maximum growth & health of the Church. If you are in Christ, then you are part of the Church, the body of Christ, & you have a part to play in the work/ministry of the Church. You are responsible to encourage your bros/sis in Christ, you are responsible to help others grow, you are responsible to be a witness for Christ, you are responsible to grow in Christ, contributing to the health & effectiveness of the Church, this church. As a healthy body grows & becomes strong, so a healthy church grows & builds itself up (strengthens itself) in love. Genuine, Christ-like love is evidence of growing maturity in Christ. Division, people hurting people, people not grounded in the truth of Scripture is evidence of immaturity, instability, which not only affects an individual life, but the life of the whole body. And please understand, an individual Christian cannot grow to maturity in Christ apart from the local church! Yes, you can meet God in the woods & have meaningful communion w/Him – I encourage you to do so. Yes, you can grow spiritually at home around your family altar. Yes,

you can go to Soul Fest & Leadership Summits & others valuable seminars/retreats & be fed & grow. Yes, you can be involved in all kinds of ministry activity on your own – that's part of the work of the church. But, you cannot grow to maturity in Christ apart from the local church. It was never designed that way. You need to come together w/your local church family. You need to worship & work & walk alongside your local church family. You need to participate in a small group, w/prayer partners, accountability partners, etc, if you are going to grow to full maturity. And, a church cannot become fully healthy w/out each member faithfully doing his/her part! This church needs you. We need each other; we can/must help each other. We are the Household of God!