

A CHURCH CHECK-UP:
Biblical Examination of Spiritual Health
Ephesians 4, part 1
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Introduction: Whether we do it or not, there can be no question that a regular health check-up is indispensable as one of the benefits for quality of life.

It should not surprise us then that a spiritual health check-up has been a standard procedure prescribed by the great Physician of souls. However, this spiritual health check-up is not just for the individual believer but also for the spiritual body of the church.

A survey of Ephesians chapter 4

Theme: The Church as the Body of Christ, note the transition from vv. 4-6 to v. 7...cf. 1:22-23, 2:14-16, 3:19-21

** Throughout the passage words are borrowed from personal body and mental health and used metaphorically for spiritual sanctification, e.g.*

v. 2 "**lowliness**" = think lowly → not a mind inflated with self, i.e. big head...

v. 3, "**bond**" = physiologically a joint or muscle → living connection...

v. 9, "**lower parts of the earth**" = mystery of conception,

v. 12, "**equipping**" = a medical technical term used for preparing/making fit for use and medically for setting a bone → with application to the body of Christ, i.e. the church...

v. 13, "**stature of the fullness of Christ**" = full age → healthy maturity...

v. 14, "**children**" = childish immaturity → either lacking mental and physical development or indulged/spoiled selfishness...

v. 16, "**joined and knit together ...**" = a healthy body of ligaments and joints → correlation to a healthy church body, "**causes growth**" = sustaining life → healthy self-growth, but not independent or self-existing...

v. 18, "**blindness**", lit. hardness = medical sense of callous hardening or scared-over → applied to conscience...

v. 19, "**being past feeling**" = cease to feel pain → morally and emotionally callous...

v.22, "**grows corrupt**" = rotting death like cadavers → graphic description of the effects of "deceitful lusts", so morally rotten...

v. 32 "**tenderhearted**" = lit. having healthy bowels e.g. opposite of intestinal flu! → applied to a spiritually healthy condition...

I. vss. 1-6, A healthy body shows unity & balance

v. 1, "**worthy**", lit. = that which balances the scales...

vv.1-2, cf. v. 4, "**calling...called**" → the calling identified and elaborated for a continuing practice based on the settled fact of God's forgiveness in Christ, cf. v. 32...

vv. 3-6, exercising the means of grace promotes spiritual health...

**note the use of comparative conjunction [Gk. καθὼς*

kathō̄s], like bookends v. 4 “just as” about calling in hope with v. 32 “just as” about being forgiven in Christ in each use the emphasis is on divine singularity producing unique unity...

ill. humanist dream/nightmare of achieving utopian singularity through AI but in human imagination there is no escape from potential evil...

II. vss. 7-16, Unity does not mean sameness, but oneness—a singularity of personhood

v. 7, each one of us is individually graced with the measure of Christ’s gift=the Holy Spirit...

vv. 8-10, Christ’s true Triumphal Entry, cf. Psalm 68 (a sermon for Palm Sunday)...

vv. 11-12, the doctrine of ordination is scripturally linked to Christ’s gifting the church...

vv. 13-16, the doctrine of ordination is appointed by Christ to complete the purpose of the Christian ministry...

III. vss. 17-24, Christian believers have a new personhood identified with Christ made known as the truth is in Jesus

v. 17, “*futility*” = vanity, emptiness, aimlessness, cf. vs. 13 telos, purpose...

vv. 18-19, unbelievers are unhealthy in body, soul, & spirit=the walking dead...

vv. 20-21, Christ is revealed through the incarnation by the person of Jesus...

vv. 22-24, believers are not deified, but ethically changed from the inside out...

IV. vss. 25-32, the new person in Christ is united to other believers and the health of the body is promoted by holiness, grace, & forgiveness

vv. 25-28, holiness is exercised by separation from sinful patterns of behavior...

vv. 29-30, grace is imparted by serving others’ true spiritual needs with gladness in the Holy Spirit...

vv. 31-32, forgiveness is God’s grace-medicine to repair spiritual heart attacks...

I learned long ago that often church folks talk about wanting “practical” preaching when what they really mean is “prescriptive” preaching of some routine, x-step program, a cause and effect system, etc.

But Christian good health comes from the sound/healthy studied expounding of Holy Scripture as the Christ ordained health-food along with faith–strengthening sacraments, i.e. mysteries, God’s holy secrets of living union with Christ, and grace medicine of repentance, confession, and forgiveness.