

## THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

### EPHESIANS 4:1-6, *THE BASIS OF UNITY*

- A. Concerning Paul's transition.
1. Paul moves from doctrinal instruction in Ephesians 1-3 to practical application in Ephesians 4 to 6.
  2. The key to applying spiritual truth is to walk under the control of the Holy Spirit in Godly unity.
  3. John Stott, *Now the apostle moves on from the new society to the new standards which are expected of it. So he turns from exposition to exhortation, from what God has done to what we must be and do, from doctrine to duty, from mind-stretching theology to its down-to-earth, concrete implications in everyday living.*
- B. An exhortation to walk worthy of our calling (1-3)
1. The basis on which Paul makes his appeal (1a), ***I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord,***
    - a. *therefore*
      - 1) Looks back to Ephesians 1-3 where they are to apply what Paul taught them in the first half of his letter.
      - 2) Paul will teach Jewish and Gentile Christians how to live in unity in the body of Christ, the church.
    - b. Paul reminded them of his position as a prisoner for the Lord.
      - 1) He was in prison when he wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians.
      - 2) Yet, Paul considered himself a prisoner of the Lord whether he was imprisoned or free.
      - 3) Max Anders, *The point is, he had given up his freedom to follow Christ, and he was calling on us to do the same.*
  2. His appeal (1b), ***urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,***
    - a. *walk*
      - 1) It means to *behave in a specific manner*, to live out what has been taught.
      - 2) It is a lifestyle that reveals control by the Holy Spirit.
      - 3) 1 Thessalonians 2:12, *we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.*
      - 4) H. D. M. Spence, *True grace in the heart must show itself by true goodness in the life.*
    - b. *calling*
      - 1) It is a *responsibility or task* given by God.
      - 2) 1 Corinthians 1:9, *we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.*
      - 3) Here, it would include the call for Jews and Gentiles to live in unity in the church.
    - c. *worthy*
      - 1) It means *equal weight*.
      - 2) Our calling and conduct should be in balance.
      - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *He does not say, as He did to the Old Testament Jews, "If you obey Me, I will bless you." Rather, He says, "I have already blessed you—now, in response to My love and grace, obey Me." He has given us such a marvelous calling in Christ; now it is our responsibility to live up to that calling.*
    - d. An overview of Paul's appeal by John Stott, *The new society which God is calling into being has two major characteristics. First, it is 'one' people, composed equally of Jews and Gentiles, the single family of God. Secondly, it is a 'holy' people, distinct from the secular world, set apart (like Israel in Old Testament days) to belong to God. Therefore, because God's people are called to be one people, they must manifest their unity, and because they are called to be a holy people, they must manifest their purity. Unity and purity are two fundamental features of a life worthy of the church's divine calling. The apostle treats the unity of the church in verses 1-16 and the purity of the church from 4:17 to 5:21.*
  3. Virtues that enhance a believer's walk (2a), ***with all humility and gentleness, with patience,***
    - a. *humility*
      - 1) It is a proper assessment of oneself under God's sovereign grace which is the opposite of pride.
        - a) Philippians 2:3, *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*
        - b) 1 Peter 5:5, *...Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*

- 2) In Greek culture, humility was considered a vice and to be practiced only by slaves.
- 3) For Christians, Jesus is our example of humility, Philippians 2:6-8, *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*
- 4) Quotes on humility
  - a) Harold Hoehner, *This virtue is listed first because of Paul's emphasis on unity (pride promotes disunity; humility promotes unity)...*
  - b) Warren Wiersbe, *Humility means putting Christ first, others second, and self last.*
  - c) Max Anders, *...humility means to see yourself as God sees you: with infinite and inherent value but with no more value than anyone else. It means being willing to accept God as the authority over your life rather than insisting on being your own supreme authority. It means you are willing to order your life in such a way as to serve God by serving others. When all Christians do that, everyone's needs are met by others in a context of harmony and love.*

b. *gentleness*

- 1) It is *an attitude and behavior in contrast to harshness in one's dealing with others.* Other words used to describe gentleness include *courtesy, consideration, and meekness.*
  - a) Galatians 6:1, *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.*
  - b) 2 Timothy 2:25, *correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth,*
- 2) Quotes on gentleness
  - a) Thomas Constable, *Gentleness is the opposite of self-assertion. A gentle person is one whose emotions are under control.*
  - b) Leon Morris, *... meekness (gentleness) is a virtue of the strong, those who could exert force to get their own way but choose not to.*
  - c) Harold Hoehner, *It is the mean between one who is angry all the time and one who is never angry. One who is controlled by God is angry at the right time but never angry at the wrong time.*

c. *patience*

- 1) It means *a state of emotional calm in the face of provocation or misfortune and without complaint or irritation.*
  - a) In some languages it is translated, *to remain seated in one's heart* and in others, *to keep one's heart from jumping.*
  - b) Colossians 1:11, *being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy;*
  - c) Max Anders, *Patience is waiting for God to act when, where, and how God chooses.*
- 2) The New Testament uses it of God who is long-suffering concerning unrepentant sinners.
  - a) Romans 2:4, *Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?*
  - b) William Barclay, *If God had been like us, he would long ago in sheer irritation have wiped the world out for its disobedience. Christians must have the patience towards their neighbours which God has shown to them.*
  - c) Harold Hoehner, *It is the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong.*

4. The manner of conduct that preserves unity (2b-3)

a. Christians are to lovingly relate to others (2b), *bearing with one another in love,*

- 1) *bearing* means *to endure, to put up with.*
- 2) Colossians 3:13, *bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*
- 3) The virtues of humility, gentleness and patience are to be practiced despite difficult circumstances as we pursue relationships in love.
  - a) According to Colossians 3:14, these qualities in Ephesians 4:2 and in Colossians 2:12 are bound together by love, *And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*
  - b) Stephen Fowl, *The body of Christ is composed of people who have varying measures of maturity in their faith, varying experiences of God's love, and differing temperaments in worship... Thus, bearing with one another in love does not mean that all things are acceptable in all times and places. It does, however, mean that within this diverse body, believers need to be able to bump up against very different sorts of people, equally committed to the faith, whose differences are to be borne in love.*

- c) Robert Wilkin, *Believers are to make an effort to keep unity and peace. This suggests it takes effort to maintain this unity so that believers can walk in a manner worthy of their calling.*
- b. Christians are to be peaceable which strengthens unity (3), ***eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.***
- 1) Unity in the church is a God-given gift.
    - a) Ephesians 2:15-16, *by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.*
    - b) Unity is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, William Barclay, *...when self dies and Christ springs to life within our hearts, then comes the peace, the oneness, which is the great hallmark of the true Church.*
  - 2) Unity is maintained by pursuing peace.
    - a) *A bond is that which binds something firmly together.*
    - b) That which bonds unity in the church is peace, Colossians 3:15, *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.*
    - c) Thomas Constable, *Paul viewed peace as what keeps potential factions together. He had in mind peace between all kinds of diverse groups in the church the most basic being Jews and Gentiles.*
    - d) Harold Hoehner, *Concern for peace will mean that Christians will lovingly tolerate each other, even when they have differences.*
- C. The components of unity (4-6), ***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.***
1. One body
    - a. The one body is the church which is the universal body of believers in the church age, Ephesians 3:6, *This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*
    - b. The Head of the body is Jesus Christ, Colossians 1:18, *And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*
    - c. Warren Wiersbe, *The one body is the model for the many local bodies that God has established across the world. The fact that a person is a member of the one body does not excuse him from belonging to a local body, for it is there that he exercises his spiritual gifts and helps others to grow.*
  2. One Spirit
    - a. This is the Holy Spirit Who indwells the church, Ephesians 2:22, *In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*
    - b. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer in the church, 1 Corinthians 12:13, *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*
    - c. Max Anders, *God's Spirit speaks the one truth and guides the church to unity in theology and practice.*
  3. One hope
    - a. The hope began when God called us to salvation.
      - 1) Ephesians 1:4, *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him...*
      - 2) Ephesians 1:18, *having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,*
    - b. The one hope is our future when faith becomes sight.
      - 1) 1 Peter 1:3, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*
      - 2) Titus 2:13, *waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,*
      - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *Paul is suggesting here that the believer who realizes the existence of the one body, who walks in the Spirit, and who looks for the Lord's return, is going to be a peacemaker and not a troublemaker.*
  4. One Lord
    - a. This is Jesus Christ Who is the Head of the Church as noted in Colossians 1:18.
    - b. Romans 10:12, *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.*
    - c. 1 Corinthians 8:6, *yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.*
    - d. Warren Wiersbe, *It is difficult to believe that two believers can claim to obey the same Lord, and yet not be able to walk together in unity.*

5. One faith
  - a. This is the faith that Christians have which is expressed in the Gospel.
    - 1) 1 Corinthians 15:1-3, *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,*
    - 2) Galatians 1:8, *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.*
  - b. It is an unchanging faith.
    - 1) Ephesians 4:13, *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,*
    - 2) Jude 3, *Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.*
  - c. It is faith in the Person of Jesus Christ.
    - 1) One faith is not just a creed but complete commitment to Jesus Christ, *Jesus is Lord.*
    - 2) William Barclay, *Paul means that all Christians are bound together because they have made a common act of complete surrender to the love of Jesus Christ.*
    - 3) Max Anders, *The crucified, resurrected Lord is the object of that faith. To confess Jesus as Lord is to express the faith of the church and to unify oneself with all members of that church.*
6. One baptism
  - a. Spiritual baptism is the act of the Holy Spirit placing believers into the body of Christ.
    - 1) 1 Corinthians 12:13, *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*
    - 2) Galatians 3:27, *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*
  - b. Here, it probably refers to water baptism which symbolizes spiritual baptism. This symbolic act demonstrates spiritual unity.
7. One Father God
  - a. *one God and Father of all* where all refers to believers.
  - b. God is Creator of all mankind but only Father of those He has adopted into His spiritual family through the work of Jesus Christ.
    - 1) John 1:12, *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,*
    - 2) Galatians 3:26, *for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.*
  - c. The Father is supreme over all, through all and in all.
    - 1) 1 Corinthians 12:6, *and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.*
    - 2) Philippians 2:13, *for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*
    - 3) Warren Wiersbe, *The marvelous oneness of believers in the family of God is evident here, for God is over all, and working through all, and in all. We are children in the same family, loving and serving the same Father, so we ought to be able to walk together in unity.*
8. Observation on Trinity
  - a. The Trinity is the unifying part of this list.
    - 1) The Holy Spirit energizes every believer.
    - 2) The Lord Jesus unites every believer by one act of faith in Him and it is depicted by one baptism.
    - 3) The Father is over all and through all and in all.
  - b. The order is Spirit, Son, Father instead of Father, Son, Spirit.
    - 1) It is probably because Paul discussed the unity of the Spirit in verse 3 and the gifts of the Spirit in vs. 7-13.
    - 2) The same order is given in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, where Paul discussed the gifts of the Spirit.

<b>CONCLUSION</b>
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- A. Christians are called to walk worthy of our calling.
- B. It is a call to unity.
- C. It is exhibited by the Trinity, unity in diversity.