

Chapter Four - Ephesians

Synopsis:

The objective for Paul in writing the fourth chapter is for the Ephesians and all future Christians to see the importance of walking in unity and purity; to appreciate the gifts Christ has given the church for our edification, and the need for each one to do their share.

Beginning with this chapter and proceeding through the rest of the epistle, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. Having described earlier how Jesus attained unity between Jew and Gentile through His death on the cross, Paul now pleads with them to walk in unity. With humility, gentleness, longsuffering, forbearance and love, they should be diligent to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Unity is defined as consisting of one, body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God.

Let's get clarity as it relates to the meaning of several words.

Question...definitions of

- Humility
- Gentleness
- Longsuffering
- Forbearance
- Love/agape love
- Diligent

Paul reminds them of the gracious gifts Christ gave His church following His ascension to heaven. Such gifts included the offices of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, which are designed to equip the saints for ministry and bring the body of Christ to maturity. In this way, it should not be misled by false doctrine, but instead by speaking the truth in love as each member does his/her share.

The last half of this chapter addresses the need to walk in purity. No longer walking in licentiousness and greediness, they are reminded to put off the old man with its deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of their mind, and to put on the new

man that is created in righteousness and holiness. Therefore, they are called upon to put away lying, anger, theft, and all forms of evil speaking, lest they grieve the Holy Spirit by whom they were sealed for the day of redemption. They are to speak with truth and grace, work hard to help those in need, and be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving just as God has forgiven them in Christ.

Because of our position in Christ we are urged to live our lives in a manner that is befitting our heavenly calling – because we are the children of the King, we are urged to walk in a manner that is worthy of our royal status – because we have been called out of darkness into His kingdom of light and have been adopted as heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ and inheritors of the kingdom of the majesty on high, we are to live and move and have our being in the liberty wherewith Christ and the Spirit has made us free – to walk by faith in Christ; and to walk in the ways of God – to His honor and glory.

This is a meaty Chapter, and it has often stirred up controversy in the church. Through this study we pray to get clarity and enlighten the eyes of our understanding of God's expectation of His children walking in unity and purity.

Verses 1 through 6

Verse 1

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called. Like all Christians, these brethren were called to faith by the gospel that Paul preached. Of course, faith without works or a “worthy walk” is nothing other than dead faith. True faith must show itself by true devotion to the Lord, and Paul is simply exhorting these Christians to live faithfully.

Verse 2

With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love. These are characteristics of walking worthily. Lowliness (humility) and gentleness (meekness) are attitudes of the mind that are naturally connected. The opposite of lowliness would be pride and self-assertive arrogance. The opposite of gentleness is violence. Longsuffering (patience) is a part of walking worthily and is associated with lowliness and gentleness. It means not taking swift vengeance nor

inflicting speedy punishment. It is prompted by our remembrance that we were called when sinners, and that the wonderful relationship we have in Christ is proof of God's longsuffering. **Bearing with one another in love.** This is the outworking of all these other things. Forbearing the faults and failings of others is the obligation our Lord demands of us.

Question...all Christians are called to walk worthy - how difficult is this for most Christians? If you had to put a percentage on it, what % do you think most Christians try to walk in unity and purity?

Verse 3

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit. Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17), which, in turn, is the sword or implement of the Spirit. Consequently, we, who are to speak the same thing (I Corinthians 1:10) and walk by the same rule (Philippians 3:16), are not surprised to be admonished to maintain the unity of the Spirit. This unity or “sameness” is articulated in the word the Holy Spirit has revealed to us in the Bible. Conversely, all human teachings, inventions, and institutions are occasions of discord, stumbling, and division in the religious world today. **In the bond of peace.** Any unity that does not secure peace between believers is not of the Spirit.

Question...why do you think all human teachings, inventions, and institutions are occasions of discord and division?

Remember, unity is not sameness. We Christians maintain our God-created uniqueness but share a common vision and goal. A football team includes players with different roles, but teammates work together for the same purpose. Paul knew that unity in the body of Christ can be threatened from without and destroyed from within. False doctrine and distorted scriptural truths can invade the Church and trivial dissensions and petty disputes can also be a destructive element that causes disunity. Christ earnestly prayed for unity (note- not uniformity) before He died.

We have the mind of Christ - to think as He did; to speak as He did; to live as He did and to behave as He did. And so individually and collectively we have the means to walk and live and pray in spirit and truth. The challenge to all believers is

to faithfully and committedly develop a Christlike character, demonstrating the same love that He displayed. We are to be united in spirit and fervent in love - looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross.

Verse 4

There is one body, Paul is writing of the universal church of Christ (i.e., the “My church” of Matthew 16:18). This is made clear in Ephesians 1:22,23 and Colossians 1:18. The church (i.e., the Christians) at Ephesus were part of this one body. They had been added to it by none other than the Lord Himself (Acts 2:47). **And one Spirit**. The body guided (Romans 8:14) by the one Spirit cannot be divided. **Just as you were called in one hope of your calling**. We are “called” by the gospel of Jesus Christ, who said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). The only hope of salvation and eternal life the world has is through Jesus.

Paul was not unaware of the petty squabbles and unnecessary disagreements that permeated the different churches in his care, but he was also quick to condemn such disunity in the body of Christ and stressed the importance of Christian unity - where trivial differences of race, color, nationality, culture, language, gender, and status are brushed aside, in love.

Paul was certainly not encouraging doctrinal compromise, for he was a man who contended earnestly for the faith. in all his epistles. But his letters are quick to warn against false teachers, false prophets, false doctrines, and false followers of Christ.

Question...should the church bear any responsibility for the racial disharmony in our country?

Question...would you consider race, color, culture, gender, status, etc. to be trivial differences?

Verse 5

One Lord, This one Lord is Jesus Christ, crucified, buried, risen, exalted, and invested with all authority in heaven and earth. **One faith**. Some argue that this is

subjective faith. I disagree and think Paul is writing of objective faith, which is “the faith” of Jude 3. **One baptism.** At the time Paul writes this letter, there is only one baptism, which would be baptism in water for the remission of sins, and there is absolutely nothing divisive about it. Consequently, there are not three different ways of administering it (sprinkling, pouring, and immersion). It is a burial or immersion (Colossians 2:12) in water (Acts 8:36) in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). It puts one into Christ (Galatians 3:27).

Paul goes on to list seven key elements of Christian unity, in the verses 4 to 6, where we read - There is ONE body and ONE Spirit, just as also you were called in ONE hope of your calling; ONE Lord, ONE faith, ONE baptism, ONE God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

These six verses, makes it truly clear that there can be no compromise of our Christian faith with other religions, or a modification of the gospel, to appease others as certain people, in the broad spectrum of Christendom teach today. The Bible clearly states that there is one body of believers, and one Holy Spirit of God, Who indwells each one. Just as we have been saved... by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, we have also been called into one hope of that calling - which is founded on the ONE Lord - Jesus Christ.

Question...is it Jesus’ desire that all Christians interpret the word in the same way?

Question...are interpretation and application one in the same?

Verse 6

One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Notice that this passage is not saying *one God who is the Father*. Under consideration is the *one God and Father of all*, that is, our heavenly Father. “All” equals “the household of God” (2:19) and, therefore, constitutes all those who make up the *one body*. No matter what angle one looks at the “one body” or “all,” who constitute us believers, it is God the Father who is *above, through, and in* us all.

The universal Church of believers is one Body, which is in-dwelt by the same Holy Spirit of God. The Trinity is integral in this passage, where we stand united by one faith - through believing in the one, unchangeable, body of truth, which it recorded in the inerrant and eternal Word of God.

As believers in the gospel of grace, we were all baptized into the body of Christ, by the Spirit of God, and are being built up into a holy habitation for the Lord. We all acknowledge One God and Father of all, Who is over all and through all and in all - for by grace through faith in the eternal Son of His love, we have been redeemed and declared righteous in the eyes of God - and He has made us His children.

The passage, under consideration, was written for believers in the Word of truth, and clarifies our relationship with our heavenly Father. Though He is the Creator of all things, God's relational tie, as Father, are for Christians alone. Though men like to boast that every human being is a child of God, only those that have been born of the Spirit have become children of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

The authority to call Him Father, is for those that believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting. He is Father to all, who are saved by grace through faith in Christ. He is Abba - Father to all believers - but not to all mankind.

Those who believe in the sacrificial work of the eternal Son of God are not under His condemnation but have the right to approach His throne of grace and call Him Abba - Father. However, those that do not believe in the only begotten Son of God remain under His eternal condemnation and can never be identified as God's children.

As many as received the Word-made-flesh. Jesus Christ the righteous, were given the right to become children of God. Those who believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God have been given the authority to address our Creator God as 'Father', for we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, 'Abba -Father'

Question...so do we assume that even though God created everyone in His image, only those who are born again can call Him Father?