

**Living Worthy of Our Calling in Christ, Part 1**  
Walking In Unity and Oneness of Faith  
Ephesians 4:1-6

***Introduction***

In Ephesians 4 we reach a turning point. Up to this point, the letter has primarily focused upon what great things God has done in our salvation. What amazing realities we have been brought into through our faith in Jesus Christ. We have been redeemed from our sins so that we are no longer alienated from God but have now been made citizens in God's heavenly kingdom. We have been taken out of spiritual death and made alive in Christ by God. We have been adopted by God so that we are now His children and members of His family. We have received an inheritance of every spiritual blessing and been sealed the Holy Spirit so that the full measure of this inheritance is guaranteed.

And our relationships have been transformed, not because of what we have done but all because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. As Christ has fulfilled every righteous demand of God we have been given peace with God, and we have also been reconciled in one body to one another. Christ has killed the hostility between us and He is now fitting us together to become a holy dwelling in which God has made His habitation. We now have become a part of a people who enjoy the presence of God, among whom we see the hand of God in tangible ways, so that God is revealing His glory in our midst.

This is what we have been brought into solely because of Jesus Christ and His life, His death, and His resurrection. We run to Christ for the forgiveness of our sins, but we are taught in this letter that we have inherited so much more because of Christ. I encourage you to keep going back to these first three chapters of Ephesians, and ponder over all that you and I have been given, and then root your faith in these realities as you live your life.

Now as the Apostle Paul has written about these wonderful new realities in Christ, in a way he turns the corner, and he says, "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called."

Each one of us as Christians has been called into this salvation which we have experienced. It began by God choosing us even before He created the world (1:4), and He is now faithfully calling those he has chosen in Christ. And as we have experienced His call, and responded in faith, and now share in these wonderful new realities, we are then urged to live our lives in a manner that is worthy of this calling.

A person is worthy of his pay when his work merits what he is paid. And in the same way, our daily life is worthy of our calling when it corresponds to all that we have received in Christ. When our practice matches the privileges and promises we have in Christ we walk in a manner worthy of our calling. This is where you and I are urged to make a commitment to grow so that our life reflects the greatness of our Savior and His salvation.

And really, the rest of the letter teaches us what a worthy walk looks like. The attitudes of our heart, the priorities of our life and what we give our time to, the way we function as a church, the purity of our lives, the love we have for one another, the way a husband loves and leads his wife, and the way the wife honors and supports her husband, the way we relate to and nurture our children, and finally, the way we stand and fight against the evil rulers and authorities that exist beyond what our eyes can see, these are all areas that are addressed, teaching us how to walk in a manner that is worthy of our calling in Christ.

So that is what we will spend the next couple months looking at.

***1. Unity In the Way We Relate To Each Other vv 2-3***

Now to start off this morning, the Apostle Paul first focuses upon how we function as a church. He is still reflecting on how Christ has reconciled us to God in one body, pictured at the end of chapter 2

in our being fellow citizens in God's kingdom, and members of God's family, and stones that are being fitted together into a holy dwelling of God. And as Paul connects all that Christ did to reconcile people to God and then to one another, he first addresses our UNITY in the body of Christ...our unity, first in our practice and second in our doctrine. We walk in a manner worthy of our calling when we express unity in the way we relate to one another and the oneness of our faith. Lets consider the first area here-unity in our relationships.

*A. Humility-the mother of these virtues*

In verses 2-3 he identifies four attitudes which will lead to a unity in our relationships. These will be growing characteristics in our life if we truly get the gospel of Christ and are being transformed by it. They are evidences of God's true work in us. So what are they? Humility, gentleness, patience, and loving forbearance. These virtues obviously have a relational side to them.

First of all, we are urged to walk with humility. I believe Paul begins with this virtue because it is the mother of all the other virtues listed here. If we walk with humility, it will grow gentleness and patience and loving forbearance in us. We also know that humility is a fundamental virtue for the Christian because God promises to give grace to the humble.

1) What is humility?

But in order for us to pursue humility, we must understand what it is? What essentially is humility? It's striking that in Paul's day the word was rarely used and whenever it was used it was given a derogatory sense. When the Greeks talked about humility they saw it as weakness and shameful lowliness.

This is in stark contrast to how God spoke of humility throughout the OT and how Christ, Himself, saw it as a godly virtue. Contrary to Greek culture, Jesus Christ taught that people have a tendency to think too highly of themselves, but happy is the person who is "poor in spirit", in other words, the person who is humble. Therefore, humility is the virtue in which a person thinks or judges with lowliness. Repeat.

2) How do we grow in humility?

Now the million dollar question is: How do we grow to think or judge with lowliness?

Most of you are familiar with CJ Mahaney's book on humility, a wonderful book. This is how he would answer this question: "Our definition of humility must be biblical and not simply pragmatic, and in order to be biblical it must start with God." And then he quotes John Calvin who says, "It is evident that man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God, and come down after such contemplation to look into himself."

This is so vital for us, because no one can ever see himself as he ought apart from seeing God as He truly is, and then looking at himself in light of Him. I think too highly of myself if I think the world revolves around me and not God. I think too highly of myself if I think that I am in control or need to be in control and not God. And so it goes.

Rather, if I am to see myself in light of who God truly is, the eternal One, the Almighty, the Sovereign One, the gracious One, I then am able to see myself by a much better light.

And we need to add to this that we can never see God rightly apart from seeing Him through the lens of Christ and His cross. Second Corinthians 4:6 reminds us, that we are given "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." God's supremacy and holiness and love and wisdom and sovereignty are all seen in Jesus Christ and the cross.

This is what the first three chapters in Ephesians proclaim to us. See the greatness of God. See the greatness of His holiness in the way He judges your sin which brought your spiritual death. See the greatness of God's mercy in providing His Son as your substitute to pay for your sin. See the greatness of His grace which has redeemed us and then blessed us, first, with every spiritual blessing, even before

we fully obey Him. See His greatness as He took His enemies and made them citizens of His kingdom and children of His family.

The clearest reflection of God's glory is seen in the light of the cross, and if you and I are to think and judge with lowliness we must understand and believe not simply the facts about the cross but the implications of the cross in the way we see ourselves.

So humility will grow in us as we see God rightly and then see ourselves rightly, and the cross is the strongest lens to see God and to see ourselves as we should. And as it works, we could also say that humility is one of the clearest indications that we get the gospel. If you and I don't walk in humility, it tells us one thing: We are not understanding, or believing, or applying the gospel very well.

*B. With humility walk in gentleness, patience, and loving forbearance*

This humility will then lead to a gentleness—a character that is self-controlled and mild in spirit, not vindictive or demanding. It will lead to patience which literally means to be long-suffering. This is a person who faces the heat of the moment but does not respond with his own heat or anger. And finally, this humility will lead to a loving forbearance. This is the other side of patience. Patience is holding out, forbearance is holding up. It describes the person who holds up under criticism or the attacks of another person and continues to show mercy and love. This is the person who understands what God means when he says that “hatred (only) stirs up strife,” and “anger does not achieve the righteousness of God.” They are able to see beyond the heat of the moment and keep their faith fixed on the grace they, themselves, receive at the cross. Because of the grace shown to them, they walk with humility and gentleness and patience and loving forbearance.

*C. Maintain unity*

As we seek to walk in a manner worthy of our calling in Christ by putting on these attitudes, then we are urged to be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Do you remember last week how the Apostle Paul prayed for these believers to be strengthened with God's power according to the riches of His glory? But do you remember how they were to experience this strength? It was “through the Spirit.” Here again, we are reminded of the Spirit's importance in our life when we are told that this unity is “of the Spirit.” It is a unity that only God's Spirit can create. So if you and I feel like this kind of unity is beyond us, that's right. It is beyond us, but it is not beyond God's Spirit.

This past week while I was having my car fixed I overheard a conversation between two co-workers, and they were talking about how their boss was showing favoritism toward several other guys, but how they were carrying the main load of the business. There was obviously some serious conflict going on.

This same conflict is strong within each one of us, because the root of this conflict is pride. So again, in order to maintain unity we see the importance of walking with humility. But for us to walk with humility we desperately need the Holy Spirit. We need His work to give us perspective so that we bring God and the grace shown to us into the picture when we are being tempted. We also need His power so that we don't give into the desires of the flesh to just unleash our anger. And so, our unity will only be maintained by the Spirit as we yield ourselves to Him and believe the power He wants to give in these moments.

How we maintain our unity matters very much. Let me tie our practice here with what Christ came to accomplish through His own death and resurrection. We are told in chapter 2:14-18 that our reconciliation and unity has been won through Christ's death, and the uniting of all kinds of different people is a part of God's intention to unite all things in Christ, according to chapter 1:9-10. So our unity in the church is a portrait of God's purpose for reconciliation. Therefore, Peter T O'Brien concludes, “To live in manner which mars the unity of the Spirit is to do despite to the gracious reconciling work of Christ. It is tantamount to saying that his sacrificial death, by which relationships with God and others have been restored...is of no real consequence to us!”

Christ died for our unity, therefore, we should be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Now as we continue to consider how to walk in a manner worthy of our calling in Christ, Paul leads us next to the unity of our faith. This is an important contrast to what we have just been looking at. On the one hand, we honor our Lord and Savior with humility and maintaining unity in our relationships with a real peace, but on the other hand, we also honor Him by a faith which is true to what He has taught us; and as we are true to the things He has taught us we are united in our faith. Read verses 4-5.

## **2. Unity in Our Faith vv 4-5**

The oneness of faith that Paul refers to here involves seven fundamental realities which bind all true Christians together. Here we see that Paul is not interested in pursuing a unity that comes at the price of laying aside the fundamental truths of the gospel. But he asserts seven realities that all of us share who are part of the true body of Christ, what we call the universal church.

It is interesting how he expresses this, because he doesn't explain these assertions, but simply states them. And the reason that he may feel free to simply state them is that by this time, most of the Gospels along with Paul's letters had already been written, so these truths have been thoroughly explained in those writings. So here, he simply lists them.

### *A. One body, Spirit, and hope*

The first three are found in the triad, "There is one body and one Spirit-just as you were called to one hope that belongs to your calling." A common metaphor for the Church is the body of Christ, and we are called Christ's body because in essence we are now the manifestation of Christ in this world. We are now Christ's representation.

And we are told here, once again, that this body is ONE. By now we realize that this is an emphasis in the letter. Paul is not going to let us miss this point: Christ has shed his blood to make us all one body before God.

And we are one body who all possess one Spirit, the same Spirit. This was such a key issue when God began to take His salvation to the Gentiles, and not just the Jews. Peter saw the first Gentiles come to faith. These included Cornelius and his family and close friends, and they all received the same Holy Spirit that the Jews had received, and he knew this when he saw them speak with the same gift of tongues that had been manifested at Pentecost. And the receiving of the Spirit was evidence that God's salvation was going to the Gentiles as well. So being a part of the same body and receiving the same Spirit are intimately connected. And the dynamic of what happens in the body has much to do with how we allow the Spirit to work in our lives.

John MacArthur is right on target when he says, "If all Christians were walking in obedience to and in the power of the Holy Spirit, first our doctrine, and then our relationships would be purified and united. The spiritual unity that already exists would be practically manifested in complete harmony among the people of God" ( John MacArthur's Commentary on Ephesians, p. 129).

Now we are not only one body and possess one Spirit but we are also called into one hope. According to Galatians 5:5, it is the "hope of righteousness", a righteousness that stands before God. Not our own righteousness, it is a righteousness that is given to us through Jesus Christ, His perfect righteousness. And because we have been given Christ's perfect righteousness we have a sure hope.

There is one body, one Spirit, and one hope. Next, we have assertions that focus around our Lord. Again, it is stated in a threefold expression-There is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

### *B. One Lord, one faith, and one baptism*

The term "Lord" is the name given to Yahweh in the OT and now it is the favorite

acclamation given to Jesus Christ. It designates His sovereignty and rule over the church. We are told in Romans 10:12-13—"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing His riches on all who call on Him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." It is the Lord, alone, who can give us salvation, and therefore, if you are here this morning needing the salvation of God, understand, it is Jesus Christ, and Him alone, who has died for your sins, therefore, He alone is the Lord who can forgive your sins and reconcile you to God.

And it is only one faith that can save you. You must believe that it is not through your own works that you can be saved, because God says even your best works are like filthy rags before Him. And it is not by any other faith, not faith in Allah or Buddha, that can save you, but it is only faith in Jesus Christ God's Son. "For there is no other name given among men whereby we must be saved."

This is the one faith. If you and I have come to this one faith, we are called to participate in one baptism. The reason that faith and baptism are connected here is that our baptism is the initial act whereby a person confesses their faith in one God, and one Savior, and one salvation. So we have one Lord, and we hold to one faith, and we participate in one baptism.

### *C. One God and Father*

This takes us to the last assertion made in our text. There is "one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." This statement takes us back to the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4. The Shema is the call to Israel, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one." This is fundamental not only to the Jewish faith but it is to our faith as well. There is one God who is our Creator, and He alone is to be worshipped and loved, because He transcends over everything and because He is all pervasive through and in everything. What is amazing is that this great God has become our Father as we have put our faith in Jesus Christ.

These are the fundamental beliefs of our faith. We are united around these realities, and we cannot change these things. To do so would lead only to our separation from God, again.

### **Closing**

Now let me close by coming back to the main exhortation we find in our text. It has to do with living in the "therefore." The therefore points us back to all that we have because of Christ and His salvation, and it connects this with how we now live and relate to one another.

So I would like to close by drawing three application to living in the therefore.

1) To live in the therefore is to make the cross and its realities the center.

What this means is to see that God calls us to be His child before He calls us to be His servant. It is living with the perspective that our practice grows out of our privilege, and God's grace toward us is the base for all our life and the way we relate to one another.

2) To live in the therefore is to see the indissoluble union between faith and holiness.

When Paul says, "Therefore, walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called", he is inviting us to walk by faith and not by sight. He is inviting us to live with a conviction of heart that God's Word and what Christ has accomplished on the cross defines reality for me, and not my present circumstances or what my flesh is telling me to do.

So when my child does not obey me, I am able by faith and in the Spirit's power to arrest the temptations to unleash my anger by recalling the mercy I AM shown at the cross and the measure of God's love which patiently cares for ME when I am not seeing life the way I should.

Are you walking by faith so that the heat of the moment does not define reality for you, but God's Word does?

3) Finally, living in the "therefore" leads us to live with a God-ward heart.

We once lived to satisfy every craving of our flesh. We lived for ourselves because we wrongly thought we were the ruler of our life and we were at the center of the universe. But God has delivered us from this spiritual death and made us alive in Christ. THEREFORE, we live not for ourselves but for God's glory, not for our personal gratification but for the good of others. We walk in humility that we might grow in gentleness and patience and loving forbearance, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And yes, with humility we hold fast to the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

Are you living your life in the "Therefore?"