

1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Take note of the connecting word 'therefore (v. 1a). Clearly, Paul believed that his appeal for ethical transformation is grounded in and thus the only legitimate response to the gracious redemption and the spiritual blessings that are ours because of God's work in Christ, all of which he expounded in chapters 1-3.

Second, he "implores" (NASB) us, also translated beseech, exhort, or entreat. He does not command us. Although Paul could have appealed to his authority to insist on such behavior, he rather chooses to appeal so that whatever response is forthcoming might be from our hearts and not in fearful subservience to his apostolic command.

Third, he identifies himself as "the prisoner in the Lord." Since "for Paul the whole sphere of Christian living was 'in the Lord,' his imprisonment was to be seen as no exception" (Lincoln, 234). Being incarcerated and deprived of worldly comforts and experiencing the loss of freedom and movement in no way alters or interrupts his fundamental identity or the security of his spiritual relationship. Paul wants us to know "that the iron which lay upon his limb had not entered into his soul" (Eadie, 267). That is why he is always and everywhere and under any circumstances . . . in the Lord!

Fourth, we are called "to walk worthy of our calling." For the imagery of "walking" as a way of living, of conducting oneself ethically, see 2:2,10; see also 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:1,12; Gal. 5:16; Rom. 6:4; 8:4; 13:13 and countless other texts.

Fifth, we are to walk "worthily of our calling," a word that points to the standard or measure or criterion to which our lives are expected to conform (see Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12. He is not saying that we become worthy of being called but that, having been called, we are to live in a way that reflects the glory, beauty, holiness, and great privilege of being a child of God.

Sixth, the standard or determining criterion for our lives is the 'call with which you have been called (v. 1b). The "call" is that saving activity of God by which (through preaching) he brings us into the experiential reality of his electing purpose. See esp. Romans 8:30. It is that activity of the Spirit by which we are brought into fellowship with Jesus (see 1 Cor. 1:9). Lincoln gives us this helpful reminder:

God's sovereign initiative and human responsibility for living appropriately go hand in hand, so that he would not for one moment have expected his earlier stress on predestination and election (1:3,4) and even on God's preparation of believers' good works ahead of time (2:10), to undermine the seriousness with which his exhortation was to be taken. The appeal to live worthily of God's calling presupposes that God's gracious initiative requires a continuous human response and that his call bestows both high privilege and high responsibility.

God's Church: Its Theological Foundations (the Indicative) 1:1-3:21

God's Church: Its Practical Responsibilities (the Imperative) 4:1-6:20

Please notice, the imperative flows out of the indicative and yet Paul never commands what is seen as the imperative, he entreats us, he beseeches us to be what we are because of what Christ has done. This is the ethic of the Christian life and as we will see it is caused by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

These first verses of chapter four, first of all provide an environment that is crucial for the equipping of all saints that Paul will discuss below. "It is not so much a program that is needed but an environment (an atmosphere). What does this mean?

An environment is the some total of the social, spiritual, and relational attitudes and factors in a group that influences what the individual thinks of him or herself and what he or she does. The totality of surrounding conditions, The biophysical environment is the symbiosis between the physical environment and the biological life forms within the environment, and includes ..., a term describing the relational position of a species or

Sin is a disruptive force, it always divides, separates, and splinters. It divides a man within and against himself. It has produced the constant fight and struggle that we are all aware of in our own lives and in the life of the church. Consequently, the central object of salvation, in a sense, is to re-unite, to bring together again, to reconcile, to restore the unity that God created before sin and the fall produced this terrible havoc between God and man, between men, and within man himself.

So the unity that we have in Christ is part of the grand design. Thus, one of the peculiar marks of the Christian calling is to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The Character and Nature of Unity

A Definition

Unity is not a general spirit of friendliness or camaraderie. Nor is unity some common aim or series of aims.

Unity is a Product

It is the result of all that Paul has been saying in chapters 1-3. It is the product of the cross and God's work in Christ. There can be no Christian unity unless it is based on the teaching of chapters 1-3. Since Christian unity is a result of God's work in Christ, it is not something that we are to aim at for the sake of unity.

Unity is "of the Spirit"

It refers to the unity provided by the Holy Spirit. It is a unity which we can never produce. We are not even asked to do so. Because this is true, the following deductions are true:

Unity is Organic

Unity is living and vital. It is not mechanical. It is not a coalition or an amalgamation. Such consist of a number of miscellaneous units coming together for a given purpose.

But Christian unity, the unity of the Spirit, is a unity which starts within and works outward through organic life like we see in a flower or in the human body.

The unity of the church is organic in character. She is not a collection of parts. She is a new creation, a spiritual body created by God in Christ. The old has been done away in the this body. There are no longer the distinctions of man. There is no longer Jew and Gentile . . .

The analogy of the human body explains the nature of this unity.

(1) The human body is first, an organic unity. It consists of many parts: toes, fingers, hands, feet, legs, eyes, ears, etc. But it is not a collection of parts put together as in an automobile or as in a house. It begins from one cell which begins to develop and to grow and shoots off little buds that eventually make up the variegated parts. This is an organic and a living unity by creation. So is the church, spiritually speaking.

True, when a person believes in Christ, he is joined into union with Christ by Spirit baptism and becomes a member of the body, but by the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit, he is not merely an add on. He miraculously and spiritually becomes an organic part of the body of Christ.

Unity is Diversity

There is diversity in unity, not a uniformity. The parts do not look alike, they do not function alike, yet, they are all important, needed, interdependent, and all work toward the same end, the purposes for which each member was designed in the function of the body as directed by the head and in accord with the creative purpose of God.

Some of the parts are covered, others are within the body and are unseen, but nevertheless, very important. Some gifts are more in the forefront, they are more obvious and others less so, but all are essential to the effective work of the body.

- A. The unity of the Spirit is important because Paul suffered for it.
- B. The unity of the Spirit is important because Christ died to secure it.

C. The unity of the Spirit is important because we are called unto it.

Practical Outworkings of Unity

A Unity of Calling

All believers are the called of God. Our calling is our responsibility to respond to what we have become in Christ. Every believer has been called to be Jesus' disciple and to serve in the body of Christ.

All are called of God. The "call" of the preacher or pastor does not make him or her more called than the carpenter . . .

Thematically, Ephesians 4 moves from one's calling to unity to one's calling to ministry (all are called to ministry = part of the one hope of your calling). Christ has given many gifts of grace for ministry (diversity) which come together in one common goal of maturity in Christ.

A Unity of Common Life and Source

The unity of the Spirit is created through our union in Christ Jesus. The word "together" appears so frequently and in such innovative ways in this letter that it deserves special mention. The prefix, "with" or "together" is joined to a number of key words to express our joint life and the impossibility of life outside of this unity (cf. 2:5,6,19,21,22; 3:6; & 4:16). This stands against the spirit of individuality so common in our country today. You know, "do your own thing, go your own way."

A Unity of Ministry

Our unity is a unity or oneness that exist not in spite of diversity, but because of it. It is the wonderful differences themselves which, when properly equipped, contribute to the function of the body and out of this function, attain an even deeper unity of maturity. Only as each part does its work can the body grow. **End part 1**

A Unity of Purpose

The purpose is maturity in Christ, being conformed to the measure of the stature of

the fullness of Christ. The ultimate goal is Christ-likeness, or spiritual maturity according to the standard of Christ. This is the primary goal of the equipping and the unity desired. The more we possess His character and mind, the more we will experience the unity of the Spirit.

(1) Humility and (2) Gentleness or Meekness. These two, both of which were considered vices (= contemptible servility, a sort of crouching submission) in the ancient world, should be explained together, for they overlap in meaning. Here are several features of what Paul has in mind:

- * Although meekness is not weakness, let us not lose sight of an essential element: tenderness and sensitivity, a capacity to deal gently and compassionately with others.

- * An essential element in meekness is the willingness to allow others to say about me the same things I readily acknowledge before God.

- * The meek person is not easily provoked: "A meek spirit, like wet tinder, will not easily take fire" (?). Again: "Those who seek my life lay snares for me; and those who seek to injure me have threatened destruction, and they devise treachery all day long. But I, like a deaf man, do not hear; and I am like a dumb man who does not open his mouth" (Ps. 38:12-13).

- * Meekness is the antithesis of hastiness, malice, revenge.

- * Meekness is living in accordance with the abilities God has given us, neither as if we had more nor less; neither pressing ourselves into situations we are not equipped to handle (for fear that if we don't people will lose respect for us), nor shying away from those we can.

- * Meekness is being like Jesus: "I am gentle and humble in heart" (Mt. 11:29; Phil. 2:5-11).

- * The key to meekness/humility is a healthy acknowledgement of and submission to the sovereign grace of God. In 1 Cor. 4:7, Paul writes: "For who regards you as superior?" And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it,

why do you boast as if you had not received it?

Meekness should always be in direct proportion to one's grasp of grace. Pride is the fruit of the lie that what I have I didn't receive. Meekness or humility is the fruit of the truth that everything is of God. See also John 3:22-30, esp. vv. 27 and 30.

Both humility and meekness are essential to the unity Paul has in mind, for "pride lurks behind all discord" (Stott, 148).

(3) Patience or longsuffering, literally means 'long temper, the opposite of having a short fuse! It is the ability to make allowances for the shortcomings and often exasperating behavior of others. See Gal. 5:22. It means enduring wrongs "rather than flying into a rage or desiring vengeance" (O'Brien, 278).

(4) Showing tolerance for one another in love is an elaboration of what patience entails. It is one thing to tolerate or endure another person; it is another thing entirely to yield to their weaknesses (but not necessarily to their sins) and immaturity and to do so in a way that they feel valued and loved by you.

(5) Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Note: a) Although we are already a unified body, one new man (Eph. 2:14-18), this unity must be preserved and promoted visibly and publicly. What is already true in principle must be transparently evident in experience. b) This unity is not of our human "spirits," one with another, so to speak, but refers to the Holy Spirit, i.e., it comes from the Spirit and what he has done in bringing us together. c) There is an urgency in Paul's exhortation: 'being diligent = spare no effort, make it a priority, be urgent about it, make haste! d) Peace has a bonding effect; it is that which enables us to get along and support and sustain one another. Thus, 'the bond of peace is the means by which we demonstrate to the world that unity which the Spirit has created among us. Thus, this unity already exists by virtue of what the Spirit has done, but we must be diligently committed to preserving it.

2) elements of unity 4:4-6

Unity, however, as precious as it is, does not come at any price (contrary to much thought in the body of Christ). Unity is crucially important, but not at the expense of the fundamental truths of the gospel. What are those elements of Christianity on which our unity is based? Paul proceeds in vv. 4-6 to list seven of them. Observe the Trinitarian structure of Paul's argument.

(1) God the Holy Spirit: one body, one Spirit, one hope 4:4

* "one body" This is a reference to the church, the one "body of Christ" (see Col. 3:15 and 1 Cor. 12:13).

* "one Spirit" An obvious reference to the Holy Spirit.

* "one hope" Says Lincoln, "the hope of his calling earlier in the letter in 1:18 is a reference to the same reality as the hope of your calling here. It is simply that the former describes it in terms of the one who calls; the latter, in terms of those who are called" (238). His point is that we have been called by God unto one hope; we all share one common expectation of what being called by God will bring us in the future consummation (and what is that hope? Cf. Eph. 1:9-10; 5:5; etc.).

(2) God the Son: one Lord, one faith, one baptism 4:5

* "one Lord" It is a stunning theological reality that the title used exclusively in the OT of Yahweh ("Lord") is now so freely applied by Paul and other NT writers to Jesus! What are the doctrinal, and particularly Christological, implications of this?

* "one faith" This refers not to our subjective experience of faith or believing but to the objective content of what is believed. See 4:13 (also Col. 1:23; 2:7; Jude 3). There is not one "faith for Jewish believers and another for Gentile believers: we are all bound by one body of revealed truth. Paul has in mind those essential truths revealed in the gospel to which we are all called and the essence of which we should all believe and defend and enjoy. Of course, this raises the question of how much doctrinal diversity should be permitted in any local congregation (or within a larger denomination) and what particular doctrines are "essential" or "non-negotiable."

Examples . . .

* "one baptism" The reference is most likely to water baptism, the public rite by which we make open confession of the one faith and the one Lord. "This baptism is one, not because it has a single form or is administered on only one occasion, but because it is the initiation into Christ, into the one body, which all have undergone and as such is a unifying factor" (240).

(3) God the Father: over all, through all, in all 4:6

This echoes 1 Cor. 8:6 ("for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him"). It is an exalted affirmation both of God's transcendence (he is "over all") and his pervasive immanence (he is "through all" and "in all"). Who or what is the "all?" Some say it is masculine in gender, hence = believers in the church. More likely, though, in view of 1:10,22,23; 3:9; 4:10, Paul has in mind the whole of the cosmos, everything that is that has been created by this one God.

There is a sense in which both are true and if it is true that Paul is talking about the church then he means that God is the Father of all regenerate believers. He is over them in a personal sense as their Sovereign Lord. He is through all believers in the sense of working through them. He is in all in the sense of personally indwelling us. We are His dwelling place in the Spirit (Eph. 2:22; see, John 14:23).

Paul's fourfold use of "all" emphasizes the common unity that we share with all true believers. If God is the Father of all believers, we are brothers and sisters. If He is over all, then we all submit to Him as our Sovereign Lord. We hold His Word as the authority for faith and practice. If He is through all, I must trust that He is working through my brothers and sisters, as well as through me. I am not His only servant; He has many others. If He is in all, then I must respect my brother or sister's experience with God and I must see God in them. When I serve them, I am serving Him. When I love them, I am loving Him.