

Ephesians 4:1-6

Introduction:

Tonight we are going to consider the unity that is to be maintained among God's people.

Through the redemptive work of Christ, God has brought a people together to worship and serve the Lord.

It is extremely important that we evidence that unity so that God's purpose will be fulfilled and God will be glorified.

But what is that unity to look like? On what ground is that unity based? How is that unity to be maintained? How will that unity be beneficial?

Theme: Tonight we consider Paul's encouragement to the people of God to evidence the unity that God has established.

I. Paul exhorts the Ephesian believers to unity.

A. Paul understands that unity does not come without a cost.

Ephesians 4:1 (ESV) **I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord**, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called

1. Paul was a prisoner as a result of seeking to reach the gentiles.

Ephesians 3:1 (ESV) For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—

2. The point is, that Paul made personal sacrifices for the sake of others and so should we.

B. The calling of God is call to unity. God is reconciling all things to Himself and as a result all things to each other.

Ephesians 1:9 (ESV) **making known to us the mystery of his will**, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ

Ephesians 1:10 (ESV) as a plan for the fullness of time, **to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.**

1 Thessalonians 2:12 (ESV) 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.**

- C. The Ephesians are exhorted to conduct themselves in a way that is consistent with and glorifies their calling.

Ephesians 4:1 (ESV) I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge **you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling** to which you have been called

“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.”

Lincoln, Andrew T. Ephesians. Vol. 42. Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990. Print. Word Biblical Commentary.

1. The Christian’s walk is a central element of the book of Ephesians.

- a. Stated negatively - how we should not walk.

Ephesians 4:17 (ESV) Now this I say and testify in the Lord, **that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do**, in the futility of their minds.

Ephesians 4:18 (ESV) They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.

- b. Stated positively - how we should walk.

Ephesians 2:10 (ESV) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, **that we should walk in them.**

Ephesians 5:2 (ESV) And **walk in love**, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 5:8 (ESV) for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. **Walk as children of light**

Ephesians 5:15 (ESV) Look carefully then how you **walk**, not as unwise but **as wise**,

2. The Christian’s walk should “adorn” the gospel of Christ.

Titus 2:9 (ESV) Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative,

Titus 2:10 (ESV) not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior.

D. Paul describes the character traits that are consistent with our call to unity and which will actually promote unity

1. First, we are to have a lowliness of mind.

Ephesians 4:2 (ESV) **with all humility** and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

a. The word “humility is literally lowliness of mind. It is to be contrasted with arrogance or “high mindedness”. It is not to be self-promoting or self-seeking. Not to see one’s self better than or deserving more than others.

b. The word all reaches to all situations, experiences, times and people.

Ephesians 4:2 (ESV) with **all** humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

Romans 12:16 (ESV) Live in harmony with one another. **Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.** Never be wise in your own sight.

2. The second characteristic is to be considerate of others.

Ephesians 4:2 (ESV) with all humility **and gentleness**, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

“Gentleness involves the courtesy, considerateness, and willingness to waive one’s rights that come from seeking the common good without being concerned for personal reputation or gain”

Lincoln, Andrew T. Ephesians. Vol. 42. Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990. Print. Word Biblical Commentary.

3. The third characteristic is to be “long tempered.”

Ephesians 4:2 (ESV) with all humility and gentleness, **with patience**, bearing with one another in love,

- a. It is the opposite of being “short tempered.”

“This ability to make allowance for others’ shortcomings this tolerance of others’ exasperating behavior is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22) and again a quality essential for communal living”

Lincoln, Andrew T. Ephesians. Vol. 42. Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990. Print. Word Biblical Commentary.

- b. Now, we have an intensification of what this “patience” involves.

Ephesians 4:2 (ESV) with all humility and gentleness, with patience, **bearing with one another in love,**

“bearing with one another in love,” is an amplification of what is meant by patience

“The writer knows that in the midst of tensions and conflicts the patience required will not be passive resignation but the positive attitude toward others that he will expand on later in 4:32.”

Lincoln, Andrew T. Ephesians. Vol. 42. Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990. Print. Word Biblical Commentary.

Ephesians 4:32 (ESV) Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

- c. Application:

(1) The scriptures anticipate the difficulties that will be involved with God’s people dwelling together in unity.

(2) There will be clashes of character, attitudes and actions.

(3) None of which are to be allowed to affect our commitment to the Lord and one another.

- E. We are to make every effort to guard and protect the unity that is produced by the Holy Spirit.

1. We are to make every effort.

Ephesians 4:3 (ESV) **eager** to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace

(1) This word has to main emphases.

(a) The first is to be quick, hasten.

(b) The second is to be zealous, making every effort imaginable.

(2) Thus, we are to be quick to make the commitment and renew the commitment to go the distance in our unity.,

2. We are to guard and protect the unity

Ephesians 4:3 (ESV) eager **to maintain the unity** of the Spirit in the bond of peace

(1) We are to be careful that we do not allow anything to stain or weaken that unity.

(2) We are not to allow inconsequential things or irritants to become divisive.

3. The unity is has already been established by the Holy Spirit's having made us one.

Ephesians 4:3 (ESV) eager to **maintain the unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace

(1) It is important to understand that we do establish or create the unity that exists among believers.

(2) God establishes that unity through the Holy Spirit. He has made us one.

(3) Now we are to act that way. We are to live out the reality of our union.

4. The unity of the Spirit is seen in the peaceful bond that we have to one another.

“the bond of peace.” The means of maintaining and demonstrating the unity of the Spirit is through peace, which has a bonding effect.

Lincoln, Andrew T. Ephesians. Vol. 42. Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990. Print. Word Biblical Commentary.

I think it better to see the emphasis of the “bond of peace” as a descriptive genitive. The bond that the Holy Spirit produces is a peaceful bond.

Thus to be argumentative and dismissive does not glorify our calling nor is it consistent with our calling.

- II. The ground of the Christian’s unity. What is it that we have in common? What is that we are to guard and protect? Notice the repeated reference to “one.”

Ephesians 4:4 (ESV) **There is one body** and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—

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Ephesians 4:5 (ESV) **one Lord**, one faith, one baptism

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Ephesians 4:6 (ESV) **one God and Father of all**, who is over all and through all and in all.

- A. There is one people of God.

Ephesians 4:4 (ESV) **There is one body** and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—

- B. There is only one and the same Holy Spirit that is at work in every child of God.

Ephesians 4:4 (ESV) There is one body **and one Spirit** —just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—

- C. There is only one shared expectation that we all have in respect to our calling.

Ephesians 4:4 (ESV) There is one body and one Spirit —just as you were called to the **one hope** that belongs to your call—

D. There is but one Jesus Christ who is the one and holy head of the church.

Ephesians 4:5 (ESV) **one Lord**, one faith, one baptism

Ephesians 1:22 (ESV) And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

Ephesians 1:23 (ESV) which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

E. There is one corpus of truth. The faith that is spoken of is the content of what we believe.

Ephesians 4:5 (ESV) one Lord, **one faith**, one baptism

Ephesians 4:11 (ESV) And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

Ephesians 4:12 (ESV) to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

Ephesians 4:13 (ESV) **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,

Ephesians 4:14 (ESV) **so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.**

Ephesians 4:15 (ESV) **Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,**

Jude 3 (ESV) 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.**

1. Unity is not a shared commitment to one another, regardless of what we believe and practice.
2. The unity is the product of a shared commitment to the truth of God's word.

Ephesians 1:13 (ESV) In him you also, **when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation**, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

Ephesians 4:15 (ESV) **Rather, speaking the truth in love**, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

Ephesians 4:20 (ESV) But that is not the way you learned Christ!—

Ephesians 4:21 (ESV) **assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,**

Ephesians 6:14 (ESV) Stand therefore, **having fastened on the belt of truth**, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

- F. There is one common expression that is given of our commitment to Christ and to each other.

Ephesians 4:5 (ESV) one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**

Romans 6:3 (ESV) Do you not know that **all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?**

Romans 6:4 (ESV) We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, **we too might walk in newness of life.**

- G. There is only one true and living sovereign God.

Ephesians 4:6 (ESV) **one God and Father of all**, who is over all and through all and in all.

III. Conclusion:

- A. The exhortation is that we are to live our lives in a manner that promotes and glorifies the unity that the Holy Spirit has achieved in uniting us to Christ.
- B. It is that unity that is to be prized and maintained above all else.

Colossians 3:12 (ESV) Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,

Colossians 3:13 (ESV) 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.

Colossians 3:14 (ESV) And above all these put on love, **which binds everything together in perfect harmony.**

Colossians 3:15 (ESV) And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, **to which indeed you were called in one body.** And be thankful.