

## Studies in Ephesians: Attitudes for Maintaining Unity

Ephesians 4:1-3

### Introduction:

1. In recent studies we have been examining Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. Our studies, to date, have taken us through the third chapter. The most recent lesson was entitled "Paul's second prayer for the Ephesians," and it was based upon Eph. 3:15-21. With regards to these brethren, Paul prayed:
  - a. That they would be "*strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man,*" Eph. 3:16.
  - b. That Christ would dwell in their "*hearts by faith,*" Eph. 3:17.
  - c. That the saints at Ephesus would be "*rooted and grounded in love,*" Eph. 3:17.
  - d. That the saints at Ephesus would "*know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge,*" Eph. 3:19.
  - e. That the saints at Ephesus "*might be filled with all the fullness of God,*" Eph. 3:19.
2. This lesson is entitled "Attitudes for Maintaining Unity," and it is based upon Ephesians 4:1-3.

### Discussion:

#### I. Walk Worthy of the Vocation, Eph. 4:1.

- A. This charge was prefaced with the words "*I therefore...*"
  1. "*Therefore*" is a participle which relates to consequences of truths previously discussed.
    - a. In view of the great blessings which had come their way.
      - (1) They were recipients of "*all spiritual blessings...in Christ,*" Eph. 1:3. Cf. Eph. 1:5,6,7,11.
      - (2) They had been dead "*in trespasses and sins,*" but were made alive in Christ, Eph. 2:1-6.
      - (3) They had been saved "*by grace...through faith,*" Eph. 2:8.
      - (4) They had been reconciled unto God in the "*one body,*" Eph. 2:16.
      - (5) They had become "*fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God,*" Eph. 2:19.
      - (6) They were able to experience "*the love of Christ which passeth knowledge,*" Eph. 3:19.
      - (7) They were in the church "*in*" which God might be glorified "*throughout all ages,*" Eph. 3:21.
    2. "*I therefore the prisoner of the Lord...*" Eph. 4:1.
      - a. Physically, he was a prisoner of the Roman government, probably bound or chained to a Roman guard, but Paul regarded himself as a prisoner "*of the Lord*" (*en kurio*), literally "*in the Lord.*" He was not seeking pity for himself, but stressing the fact that Jesus was really His "*Lord,*" or master, and that to Him his commitment belonged.
  - B. "*Beseech you that you walk worthy...*" Eph. 4:1.
    1. "*Beseech*" means to entreat, admonish, exhort, persuade, encourage.
      - a. Note that he was admonishing rather than commanding.
    2. "*Walk*" (*peripatesa*) means to maintain a certain manner of life or conduct.
      - a. "*Walk*" is a key word in Ephesians,
        - (1) "*Walk worthy of the vocation,*" Eph. 4:1.
        - (2) "*Walk not as other Gentiles walk,*" Eph. 4:17.
        - (3) "*Walk in love,*" Eph. 5:2.
        - (4) "*Walk as children of light,*" Eph. 5:8.
        - (5) "*Walk circumspectly,*" Eph. 5:15.
      - b. Our lives as Christians must be consistent with the **claims** we make; our lives must be consistent with the **character** of the Christ we serve!
    - C. "*Worthy of the Vocation wherewith ye are called,*" Eph. 4:1.
      1. "*Vocation*" (*kleseos*) "is used especially of God's invitation to man to accept the benefits of salvation," Vine. Cf. Eph. 1:18; Phil. 3:14; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 3:1.
      2. This worthy "*walk*" requires us to develop the proper attitude for maintaining unity, and that we exert the proper effort in that direction.

#### II. The Proper Attitudes which Make for Unity, Eph. 4:2.

**Note:** Without these qualities there can be no real unity. We can be 100 percent right on doctrine; yet without these qualities true unity cannot really exist!

- A. Lowliness, or humility, Eph. 4:2.
  1. From *tapeinophrosune* (Gk), "lowliness of mind, humbleness," Vine.
  2. Phil. 2:3, 7-8; Rom. 12:16; Jas. 4:10; I Peter 5:6.
  3. In view of Rom. 3:23, no one should be proud! Yet many are! Rom. 12:3; Luke 18:10-14.

4. Note the attitude of Paul, Eph. 3:8; I Tim. 1:15.
  5. One who is humble is willing to submit in matters of judgment for the good of the group, Phil. 2:3-4.
- B. Meekness or Gentleness, Eph. 4:2.
1. From *Prautes*, "that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting," Vine. "It is closely linked with humility." *Ibid*. Properly understood, meekness is "strength under control."
  2. Numbers 12:3; Matt. 11:29-30; Matt. 5:5; I Peter 3:4. Meekness is not weakness!
- C. Longsuffering, Eph. 4:2.
1. From *makrothumia*, *makos*, long, and *thumos*, temper. Literally, it means "long tempered."
    - a. It is "that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy," Vine.
    - b. It is "that quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial; it is the opposite of despondency and is associated with hope," I Thess. 1:3. *Ibid*.
  2. God is longsuffering, 2 Peter 3:9; Rom. 2:4; I Peter 3:20.
  3. We need to be longsuffering with each other, 2 Tim 4:2; Jas. 5:10; I Cor. 13:4; Gal. 5:22; Col. 3:12.
    - a. This, among other things, means we must learn to deal with the shortcomings of others with patience, being fully mindful that we expect them to deal patiently with our own shortcoming, Heb. 10:36.
    - b. One who is truly longsuffering tries to build good relationships with others, instead of magnifying their weaknesses, James 1:4.
- D. Forbearance, Eph. 4:2.
1. From *anochē*, "a holding back, denotes forbearance, a delay of punishment," Vine. "To forbear is to deal patiently to suffer tolerantly, to hold back reaction, to evidence self-restraint," Dan King, **Commentary on Ephesians**.
    - a. "Unity is destroyed by fault-finding, Gal. 5:15; I Cor. 13:7; Rom. 15:1,2-4. Bearing with or forbearing is enduring the faults of brethren with an attitude of holding up, sustaining, and seeking to help, rather than criticize," *ibid*.
- E. Love, Eph. 4:2.
1. From *agape*, meaning "active good will."
    - a. It describes the attitude of God toward His Son, John 17:26; His attitude toward the human race, John 3:16, as well as the essential nature of God, I John 4:8.
  2. Love is known by the action it prompts, John 14:15; I John 4:9-10; it is described in I Cor. 13:4-8.
  3. We must:
    - a. Love God, Matt. 22:35-38.
    - b. Love our neighbor as ourselves, Matt. 22:39-40.
    - c. One another as Christ loved us, John 13:34-35.

### III. Effort is Involved!

- A. "Endeavoring," Eph. 4:3.
1. From *spoudazo*, means "to make haste, to be zealous, and hence to be diligent," Vine. Cf. 2 Pet. 1:15.
    - a. Unity is neither obtained nor maintained by accident!
- B. "To keep," Eph. 4:3.
1. From *tereo*, means "to watch over, preserve, keep, watch.
- C. "The unity of the Spirit," Eph. 4:3.
1. That which is commanded by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures.
    - a. It relates to attitude, Eph. 4:2.
    - b. It relates to doctrine, Eph. 4:4-6.
- D. "In the bond of peace," Eph. 4:3.
1. "Bond," *sundesmo*, is that which binds together.
  2. "Peace," *eirenes*, denotes harmonious relationships.

### Conclusion:

1. Unity is desirable, Psalm 133:1. Jesus prayed for it, John 17:20-21. He died to make it possible, Eph. 2:16. It is commanded! Eph. 4:3. It behooves faithful Christians to both attain and maintain unity.

--Bobby Witherington, Jan. 18, 2015