

## The Church, God's Plan for this Age: Walking Together in Christian Unity

Ephesians 4:1-6

Sunday, August 9, 2020

The importance of Christian unity is emphasized in chapter 4. Verses 1-6, the apostle Paul pleads with believers to live in a manner worthy of their calling, and this means living in loving harmony with other believers. Verses 1-3 give the call to walk in unity, and then verses 4-6 reveal the basis for walking in unity.

Christians must walk in unity based upon their calling and their relationship to the Triune God.

### 1. Christians are called to walk together in unity (1-3).

- a. The standard of our walk – “beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (1)
  - i. The twofold basis of a worthy walk
    1. The word “therefore” indicates that what Paul is about to say in the next 3 chapters is based on what he has just said in chapters 1-3 concerning all that believers have in Christ. In light of these unfathomable blessings, Paul sets forth the appropriate response to God's grace.
    2. Paul also reminds us that he is “the prisoner of the Lord,” which emphasize the necessity to give his requests special consideration.
  - ii. The content of a worthy walk
    1. On the basis of the blessings of the gospel and his imprisonment, Paul implores us to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called.
    2. To walk is a reference to a person's way of life (Enoch walked with God). “Walk” suggests active, moment by moment progress towards a chosen destination along a chosen path.
    3. The word “worthy” was originally associated with scales. In this case, we should image God's blessings piled high on one side, and our behavior in response to those blessings on the other.
    4. We can never repay all that God has done for us, but we can learn to begin to walk worthy of those blessings. The first way we can begin to do this is by living in loving unity with other Christians.
- b. Three qualities of a worthy walk (2)
  - i. A worthy walk is humble – “with all lowliness.”
    1. Pride is the primary source of disunity.
    2. For there to be any hope of loving unity there must be humility (Philippians 2:3-8).
    3. Christians must be humble if they are to walk worthy of their calling.
  - ii. A worthy walk is gentle – “and meekness.”
    1. Gentleness is treating others with tenderness and kindness.
    2. Christians should learn to treat others gently, because egos are fragile and delicate people require a delicate touch. “A soft answer turneth away wrath” (Proverbs 15:1).
    3. Christians must be gentle if they are to walk in a manner worthy of their calling.
  - iii. A worthy walk is patient – “with longsuffering.”
    1. We must interact with patience, enduring provocations without being provoked.
    2. The word “longsuffering” means having a long temper, or as we say today, having a long fuse.
    3. James 1:19-20 “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”
- c. Two means to a worthy walk (2-3)
  - i. To walk worthily, Christians must lovingly show loving forbearance – “forbearing one another in love.”
    1. “Forbearing one another” means to tolerate the intolerable, to bear the unbearable, and to endure the unendurable. It is patience put into practice.
    2. “In love” – we cannot show forbearance while harboring resentment.
      - a. Marriage and parenting are great laboratories that teach loving forbearance.
      - b. The church is to be a supportive environment in which we learn loving forbearance.
    3. Christians must show loving forbearance for one another in love to have a worthy walk.
  - ii. To walk worthily, Christians must diligently preserve unity – “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (3).

1. The action is to preserve the unity that God has already provided to believers in Christ. God unites Christians, and we are to live out what is already true of us in Christ.
2. The object is the unity created by the Holy Spirit when He places us into the body of Christ. The Spirit creates the unity, and we must be diligent to preserve it. This diligence requires steady, earnest, and energetic effort. We must be diligent to preserve the unity that the devil is working so diligently to destroy.
3. The evidence of this diligence is “the bond of peace.” Relational peace and harmony are evidence that believers are diligently preserving unity established by the Holy Spirit.

d. Application:

- i. Paul assumes that Christians will live their lives in loving fellowship with other Christians.
- ii. Paul assumes that it will be challenging for Christians to live their lives in loving fellowship.
- iii. Paul assumes that Christians can overcome the challenges of living in loving fellowship by God’s grace.
- iv. Our sinful neglect necessitates the diligent obedience of others.
- v. God treats us in the manner that he demands that we treat each others; God is our perfect example.

2. Christian unity is based on the Trinity (4-6).

a. Our unity is based on the one Spirit (4).

- i. There is one body.
  1. The one body is the church of which Christ is the Head (1:22-23).
  2. The body is a unity and yet diverse.
- ii. There is one Spirit.
  1. The one Spirit places us in the body of Christ and gives us spiritual gifts to serve the body (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).
  2. All Christians are united because of the work of the Holy Spirit.
- iii. There is one hope.
  1. We have a common hope because of our common calling.
  2. Our calling produces hope because our we’ve been called out of darkness into light!

b. Our unity is based on the one Lord (5).

- i. There is one Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our Savior.
- ii. There is one faith, one doctrine, that brings us to faith in our Savior.
- iii. There is one baptism, which identifies us with Christ and with His body, the church.

c. Our unity is based on the one God (6).

- i. There is one God, and He commands everyone in His church to live together in loving unity.
- ii. The Father of all is over all, through all, and in you all.
  1. Paul ads “Father” to identify Him as the first person of the Trinity and to emphasize His authority as the one who is the source of and sovereign over all and in each of us!
  2. “Father” also reminds us that every Christian is a child of God who belongs to the same family, and our Father demands that His children all live together in loving unity.

Conclusion:

1. Which characteristic of unity do you need to focus upon most? Humility? Meekness? Longsuffering?
2. Who needs your loving forbearance most right now?
3. How diligently are you seeking to preserve the unity of the Spirit with those around you? Do you share the bond of peace with the Christians in your life?
4. Since unity is only possible through a relationship with the Triune God, do you need to establish that relationship?