

Ephesians chapter 4

At chapter 4 Paul shifts the focus from doctrine to very practical instruction.

The task of the church is one of unity.

Each member of the body of Christ must live faithfully with this grand result in view. How do we do?

List some practical ways you and I as members of Christ's body can work for unity.

v 1... Paul repeats the fact that he is now the prisoner of the Lord (cf 3:1).

He exhorts us to "walk worthy of the vocation to which we have been called".

walk speaks of the way one conducts their life.

NAS translates, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called¹.

This does not refer to the "call" to ministry.

Moody says,

We might think of "conversion" as approximating the idea behind the word "calling".

In v 2 Paul lists four graces of unity.

lowliness, meekness, longsuffering and forbearing one another in love.

lowliness is translated as "humility".

In the days before Christ humility was looked on as a cowering, cringing, servile, ignoble quality.

Barclay says Christian humility comes from "self-knowledge".

"Christian humility comes from setting life beside the life of Christ and in the light of the demands of God."

The Christian standard is Jesus Christ and the demands of God's perfection—and against that standard there is no room for pride.

"creatureliness"

The second virtue Paul lists is meekness

¹New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 4:1 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

The man who is "meek" or "gentle" is the man who is always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time.

meekness also speaks of an animal which has been trained and domesticated until it is completely under control.

Jesus is our supreme example of meekness.

Third Paul lists longsuffering or patience.

The Greek describes the spirit which never gives in and which, because it endures to the end will reap the reward.

It describes the spirit which refuses to retaliate.

An imperfect analogy:

We may see a puppy and a very large dog together. The puppy yaps and worries the big dog. He bites him. All the time the big dog, who could annihilate the puppy with one snap of his teeth, bears the puppy's impertinence with a forbearing dignity.

The Christian must have the patience towards his fellow men which God has shown to him.

longanimitas. The Latin word "longanimity" was roughly equivalent to our word "magnanimity".

Magnanimous is defined as "noble of mind and heart, generous in forgiving, above revenge or resentment".

forbearing one another in love is the practical outworking of a patient spirit in which we go on loving and respecting others despite their faults and weaknesses.

Beare observes, "The harmony within the fellowship, which is the harbinger of universal harmony, can be maintained only in the measure that all Christians practice the virtues here mentioned".

love is a uniquely Christian word. The Greek word is *agape*.

Eros is the love between a man and a maid. It is a sexual love.

Philia describes the warm affection which exists between those who are very near and very dear to each other.

Storge is the word used to describe family affection.

Agape is translated love or charity in the KJ Bible.
It is a love not only of the emotions but of the will.

Barclay comments,

It is the ability to retain unconquerable good will to the unlovely and the unlovable, towards those who do not love us, and even towards whom we do not like. "Agape" is that quality of mind and heart which compels a Christian never to feel any bitterness, never to feel any desire for revenge, but always to seek the highest good of every man no matter what he may be.

v 3... Christians have a unity-keeping responsibility.

Endeavouring is better translated with a stronger word like "giving diligence" or "striving earnestly", "spare no effort" (NEB), **being diligent** (NASB).

William Barclay comments:

These four great virtues of the Christian life—humility, gentleness, patience, love—issue in a fifth, *peace*.

George Herbert, "He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself".

"We cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true and that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the oneness of true Christians." - Francis Shaeffer

vv 4-6... Paul lists seven things which are the essence of the church's oneness.

There are three groups in the seven basic unities.

First: one body, one Spirit, one hope

Second: one Lord, one faith, one baptism

Last is the one God and Father of all.

one body... the church, the body of Christ

one Spirit... the Holy Spirit

The Greek word *pneuma* means both Spirit and breath.

one hope

Paul prays for a fuller understanding of their hope (1:18).

Christian hope is an expectation of confidence, a certainty, a trust in it happening (not a hoping or a wishing, but a confidence in its happening).

one Lord

Peter didn't understand that you don't use "Lord" and "no" in the same sentence.

Once you say "Lord" He is the boss. He is in charge.

Peter said in John 13, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?... Thou shalt never wash my feet.²

In Acts 10, v 14 Peter said, Not so, Lord.

Contradiction. You don't say "not so" to the Lord—If He is Lord He demands our faithful obedience.

one faith

This may refer to "the act of believing" or "to that in which one believes".

This "one faith" alone saves; this faith is the one and only way (John 14:6). This one faith binds all believers together.

New Testament... "faith" usually means the complete commitment of the Christian to Jesus Christ.

one baptism

Mark 16:16

Colossians 2:12

This expression of faith through baptism brings unity to believers.

The early church practiced adult believer's baptism.

v 6...one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all³

Some words about God:

trans-scend-ent

²The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Jn 13:6 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).

³The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version, Eph 4:6 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989).

1. going beyond ordinary limits; surpassing; exceeding.
2. superior or supreme.
3. Theology. (of the Deity)

4. Philosophy:

- a. above all possible modes of the infinite.

above all philosophy.

- b. transcending experience; not realizable in human experience.
- c. beyond, direct apprehension; outside consciousness.

per·va·sive

adjective:

spread throughout
God is everywhere.

pan·the·ism

noun:

1. the doctrine that God is the transcendent reality of which the material universe and human beings are only manifestations; it involves a denial of God's personality and expresses a tendency to identify God and nature.

2. any religious belief or philosophical doctrine that identifies God with the universe.

u·ni·ver·sal·ism

noun:

the doctrine that emphasizes the universal fatherhood of God and the final salvation of all souls.

om·nip·o·tent

adjective:

1. almighty or infinite in power, as God.
2. having very great or unlimited authority or power.

noun:

3. an omnipotent being.
4. the Omnipotent, God.

omnipresent

adjective:

present everywhere at the same time: the omnipresent God.

om-nis-cient

adjective:

1. having complete or unlimited knowledge, awareness, or understanding; perceiving all things.

noun:

2. an omniscient being.
3. the Omniscient, God.

vv 7-10:

Paul has listed some of the qualities of the members of Christ's church. Now he will describe their functions in the church.

In v 7 he lays down an essential truth:

That every good thing a man has is the gift of the grace of Christ.

NIV v 7... "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it."

Bishop J. C. Ryle says:

The church of Christ needs servants of all kinds, and instruments of every sort: penknives as well as swords, axes as well as hammers, chisels as well as saws, Marthas as well as Marys, Peters as well as Johns.

Paul quotes from Psalm 68:18 with an interesting difference.

In the OT the conquering king demanded and received gifts from men: In the NT the conquering Christ offers and gives gifts to men.

The word ASCENDED triggers thoughts of Jesus. Jesus descended into this world when he entered it as a man. Jesus ascended from this world when he left it to return to his glory.

Still He _____ all men.

Still He _____ the sinner.

Still He _____ the sufferer.

Still He _____ the sorrowing.

Still He _____ men and women.

A Scottish paraphrase says,

Though now ascended upon high
He bends on earth a brother's eye
Partaker of the human name.
He knows the frailty of our frame.

Our fellow sufferer yet retains
A fellow feeling of our pains;
And still remembers in the skies
His tears, his agonies and cries.

In every pang that rends the heart
The man of sorrows has a part;
He sympathizes with our grief,
And to the sufferer sends relief

Now Paul has another thought... v 10

v 11... The gifts classified

In First Cor. 12:28 Paul gives another list.

And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues.⁴

Apostles

⁴New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 1 Co 12:28 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

Qualifications:

To have seen the risen Lord.

To have been sent by Him to preach the gospel.

To be working on behalf of the kingdom, building its foundation (Note Eph. 2:20)

Signs, wonders and miracles (2 Cor. 12:12)

Prophets

Often the prophets were itinerant wanderers throughout the church.

Often their message was not the result of thought and study but the direct result of the Holy Spirit.

The prophets were the first to vanish.

The office of prophet was often abused.

The *didache*

Evangelists were itinerant ministers who went from place to place to win unbelievers and to strengthen the church.

2 Tim. 4:5... But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.⁵

Pastors and teachers... This probably speaks of one office, describing one set of people. Barclay says they had the most important job of all. They were not wanderers, but were settled and permanent in the work of one congregation. Barclay says they had a triple function.

- (a) They were teachers.
- (b) These teachers had to open out the Christian faith to new believers.
- (c) These teachers were also pastors.

Barclay says,

The shepherd of the flock of God is the man who bears God's people on his heart, who feeds them with the truth, who seeks them when they stray away, and who defends them from all that would hurt their faith. And the duty is laid on every Christian that he should be a shepherd to all his brethren.

⁵New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, 2 Ti 4:5 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

This describes the pastor's role and responsibility.

vv 12-16... The purpose of the gifts

The Beacon Bible Commentary points out four dimensions of the divine purpose of the gifts.

(a) First the ministries are to edify or build up the body of Christ.

You and I as saints are to be equipped to do works of service, to build each other up.

So often we stand that on its head and expect the pastor to do the building up which clearly we are told to do.

The word Paul uses translated **perfecting** is an interesting one. It means to "adapt or equip".

setting a broken bone

putting a joint back in place.

mending of nets

disciplining of an offender

(b) Second, these ministerial gifts are given to "foster maturity".

Unity is the gift of the Spirit... v 3. But faith and knowledge are required to receive it.

the stature of the fulness of Christ

(c) These ministries are given to insure 'stability' in the church in the face of divergent doctrines and the deceit of men.

Paul uses picturesque words for tossed to and fro

carried about

(d) Last, these ministries are given to make possible a growth into Christ.

speaking the truth

In v 16 Paul returns to the analogy of the body to emphasize the unity which Christ the head brings to the church.

v 17... therefore resumes the thought begun in 1-3.

the vanity of their mind

vanity means "purposelessness", "uselessness" or "emptiness".

v 18... Having the understanding darkened,

So incessant sinning brings about a hardening of the heart.

Poros originally meant a stone which was harder than marble.

The terror of sin is its petrifying effect.

No man becomes a great sinner all at once. At first he regards sin with horror. There is remorse and regret. If he continues to sin there comes a time when he loses all sensation and can do the most shameful things without any feeling at all. His conscience is petrified.

v 19... being past feeling

The word translated lasciviousness in the KJ...

The words translated uncleanness with greediness are translated by Barclay as "arrogant greediness"

In the heathen world Paul saw three terrible things. He saw men's hearts so petrified that they were not even aware that they were sinning; he saw men so dominated by sin that shame was lost and decency forgotten; he saw men so much at the mercy of their desires that they did not care whose life they injured and whose innocence they destroyed so long as their desires were satisfied.

v 20... But introduces the kind of life opposite to the heathen life Paul has been describing.

vv 22, 23, 24 ask us to do something.

Believers must "put off" the old self. Then they should follow with two specific actions.

(1) To be renewed in the Spirit of your minds. And...

(2) To clothe yourselves with the new self.

vv 25-32 (Barclay)... Paul has just told us that when a man becomes a Christian he must put off his old life like a coat for which he has no further use.

Now he lists some things which must be banished from the Christian life.

(1) Paul says we must have no more falsehood.

There is the lie of speech.

There is the lie of silence.

In v 26 Paul tells us we should be angry with the right kind of anger.

John Wesley said, "Give me a hundred men who fear nothing but God, and who hate nothing but sin, and who know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and I will shake the world."

Barclay says, "The anger which is selfish and uncontrolled is a sinful and hurting thing, which must be banished from the Christian life. But the selfless anger which is disciplined into the service of Christ and of our fellow men is one of the great dynamic forces of the world."

The only way to deal with trouble is to do it at once.

Barclay says, "The longer it is left to flourish, the more bitter it will grow. If we have been in the wrong, we must pray to God to give us grace to admit that it was so; and even if we have been right, we must pray to God to give us the graciousness which will enable us to take the first step to put matters right."

Barclay suggest another meaning for the phrase "Do not give place to the devil".

The Greek word for devil is also the word for slanderer.

Luther took that to mean, "Give the slanderer no place in your life." Paul may have wished to say, "Do not slander or give the slanderer place in your life." No one in the world can do more damage than the slanderous tale-bearer.

The NASB translates, Your words have helped the tottering to stand,
And you have strengthened feeble knees.⁶

Such are the words that every Christian ought to speak.

Do my words help keep men on their feet? Or do they cause them to fall?

It is so easy to use hurtful words, to tear down. Let's build up; let's be encouragers.

v 30 exhorts us not to grieve the Holy Spirit.

How do we grieve the Holy Spirit?

- By _____ Him
- By _____ Him.
- By _____ evil of Him of His work.

v 31... bitterness

There are outbreaks of passion (Gr. *thumos*), (wrath, KJ) and long-lived anger (Gr. *orgē*) (anger, KJ).

⁶New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Job 4:4 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

There is "loud talking" and "insulting language". Barclay says, "Whenever in any discussion or argument we become aware that our voice is raised, it is time to stop."

The Life Application Bible Commentary sums up v 31:

- *Bitterness*—a spirit that refuses reconciliation.
- *Rage*—outbursts of anger or quick temper for selfish reasons. This could mean continual and uncontrolled behavior.
- *Anger*—a continuous attitude of hatred that remains bottled up within. This could refer to what is under the surface, while "rage" refers to what bursts out. Anger would destroy harmony and unity among believers.
- *Brawling*—loud self-assertions of angry people determined to make their grievances known.
- *Slander*—destroying another person's good reputation by lying, gossiping, spreading rumors, etc. Malice often manifests itself through slander. This defamation of character destroys human relationships.
- *Malice*—doing evil despite the good that has been received. This word is a general term referring to an evil force that destroys relationships, and it can mean anything from trouble to wickedness. It is a deliberate attempt to harm another person. Thus, *every form of malice* must be destroyed.

tender-hearted

Forgiveness is so important to the Christian. When we begin to understand the great depth of God's forgiveness to us it should cause us to willingly forgive others.

About grieving the Holy Spirit, G. Campbell Morgan says, "How would you like to live with somebody who was everlastingly grieving your heart by his conduct?"

He lives in us! Do we grieve Him by our conduct?

Chapter 5

v 1... The newer translations translate **followers** as **imitators** (NKJV, NAS).

v 2 continues the thought from 5:1.

v 3... Paul has described the putting off of the old self and the putting on of the new in 4:25-31.

v 4 **filthiness**... lit., "immoral conduct", could also mean "filthy talk".

vv 5-7... The penalty for perversion of love

Paul gives two exhortations and two penalties.

The two exhortations:

v 6 is the first exhortation: **Let no man deceive you with vain words**

v 7 is the second exhortation: "Be not... partakers with such people; who are among the children of disobedience" (6b; cf 2:2)

The two penalties:

v 5... no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God

v 6b... liability to the wrath of God

vv 8-14... Walking in light

v 9... **fruit of the Light**

The best manuscripts have "the fruit of the light" instead of "the fruit of the Spirit".

v 9 is a parenthesis, so v 10 completes the thought begun in v 8.

Every action should be made with the thought that "God lives here. My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Would Jesus be comfortable doing this thing with me?"

vv 11-13... The light reproves

The children of light must **reprove** or **expose** the ways of sinful men (darkness).

This can be done in two ways:

1. Oral reproof, pointing out their evil ways with our mouths.
2. Living the Christian life before them.

We should do both.

v 12 shows the exceeding sinfulness of the works of darkness

v 13... Light exposes darkness.

v 14 is apparently a quote from an early Christian hymn.

v 15... Paul warns

v 16... Redeeming

v 17... Don't be unwise

v 18... be filled with the Spirit

vv 19-20... Expressing the Spirit's joy

spiritual songs

v 21... Submitting to one another

Paul has already stated his desire for all members of the body to be mutually submissive to one another in v 21.

Now in 5:22-6:9 he begins a wide-ranging set of instructions for the "family" or "household" relations.

vv 22-24... The wife's submission

Two important ideas are evident...

1. Headship denotes primarily controlling authority and the right to obedience.
2. Control and obedience take place within a living organism where the two parts are complementary each to the other.

vv 25-33 speak of the love of husbands.

- (a) Christ's love was a self-giving love... v 25
- (b) Christ's love was a sanctifying love (vv 26-27).

by the word (4 possibilities):

1. The words spoken by the new believer confessing his faith in Christ.
2. The marriage vows where love is pledged.
3. The confession at baptism where words of the Bible are repeated by the baptizer and the new believer.
4. The gospel message—being made clear by believing in God's Word given in the gospel message.

The 3rd choice seems most likely here.

- (c) Christ's love was sustaining and caring love (vv 28-31).
- (d) Christ's love is a mystery (vv 32-33)

Chrysostom expresses the meaning here with discerning words:

And of what nature is this fear? It is that she should not gainsay thee, or set herself against thee, or love preeminence; if fear govern to this extent, it is enough. But if thou lovest her, as thou art commanded, thou wilt achieve more than this; nay rather, thou wilt achieve this no longer by fear, but love itself will have its own effect.

Chapter 6, vv 1-4:

Paul now turns to the relationship of parents and children.

The Roman father had absolute power over his children.

- He could punish them in any way he pleased.
- He could sell them as slaves.
- Under certain circumstances he could put them to death.

1. The obedience of children... vv 1-3

v 4... The duty of fathers

vv 5-9... Masters – slaves

v 5... The word obedient is the same strong word Paul uses for the wife.

vv 5-8... In a series of pithy phrases the apostle characterizes for the slaves what obedience is.

v 5... with fear and trembling

in singleness of your heart

as unto Christ

Not with eyeservice

With good will doing service (vv 6-7-8).

v 8... Every good thing will receive of the Lord its just reward.

v 9... The forbearance of masters.

v 10... The source of strength.

v 11... The armor

wiles

vv 12-13... The enemy

Paul teaches us two facts about the powers of evil in the universe:

1. They are personal (Don't let anybody tell you there is no devil).
2. They are well-organized.

in high *places*

v 12 is a reminder that no Christian is immune from the attacks of the wicked spiritual hosts.

the evil day is variously interpreted...

- The day of judgement
- The approach of death
- The period immediately preceding the second coming

v 13c... Here we see the apostle's optimism break through.

and having done all, to stand
having done all

In vv 14-17 the pieces of armor are listed.

v 14... the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness

the breastplate of righteousness

v 15... The sandals of the gospel

preparation can mean:

1. Preparation in the sense of making ready
2. A state of preparedness
3. Foundation or steadfastness
4. Readiness or preparedness of mind.

It is this last meaning that Paul seems to have in mind.

v 16... the shield of faith

v 17... The helmet of salvation

the sword of the Spirit

In vv 18-20 Paul speaks about prayer.

Praying always (v 18)

In vv 10-18 Paul suggests several key factors in the Christian's warfare.

- Determination and steadfastness (13)
- Truth (14)
- Right conduct (14)

- Peace with God and our fellows (15)
- Faith (15)
- A personal experience of salvation (16)
- Use of the Bible (16)
- Prayer (18)
- Personal witness and intercession for others (18)

"Pray for me"... vv 19-20

- Wisdom that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth⁷
- He desires boldness to make known the mystery of the gospel.

Final greetings... vv 21-24

The messenger's commendation... v 21

The loyalty of Tychicus in serving Paul created a bond of fellowship between them until Paul could call him "a dear brother" and trusted him with this assignment. He could be sent anywhere by Paul, and he would fulfill the task.

- May his tribe increase!
- What a challenge for us.
- How like today. There are so many quiet, faithful, beloved brothers and sisters quietly doing the work of Christ's kingdom behind the scenes without fanfare or recognition.

Tychicus will convey two pieces of information:

He will make known Paul's affairs

- He will give them word about Paul's health.

Benediction... vv 23-24

Peace
love with faith
Grace

in sincerity⁸

Though the word is not in the oldest Greek manuscripts the reader can join some devout copyist who added a ringing Amen to the message of Ephesians.

⁷New American Standard Bible : 1995 Update, Eph 6:19 (LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

⁸The Holy Bible : King James Version., Electronic edition of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Eph 6:24 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995).