



Becoming a People Who ... Live for a Change

Growing in Unity

Message Notes, February 3, 2019

Ephesians 4:1-16

This is the last of our “Live for a Change” mini-series. We have been in the book of Ephesians, Paul’s letter to his beloved flock of Gentile Christians in Ephesus. Our series will end today in chapter 4, but Paul’s letter is actually 6 chapters long. Derrick encourages us to finish out the whole letter on our own.

Verse 4:1 is a fulcrum in Paul’s letter (like the balance point of a scale that weighs one side against the other). Paul writes – “THEREFORE,” in light of all I have written thus far - about all that God has done for you by grace, about who you are IN Christ and all you have in Him (unconditional love, forgiveness, adoption, the seal of the Holy Spirit, members of the promise, an eternal inheritance...) THEREFORE – “live a life worthy of [this] calling.” Live a life that reflects such grace, such richness, such glory. Walk in a way that honors all God has done and given, that reveals who you ARE in Christ.

How do we so walk? Paul answers with **5 specific words/expressions** that undergird the passionate call to “KEEP the unity of the Spirit.” (Notice, we do not create or form this unity, it is already true about us. God has already established that we are His one, eternal family. He calls us to “make every effort to keep [affirm, honor, uphold] the unity [we have in] the Spirit.” (vs 3)

So, back to these 5 “ways we live/walk”:

- 1. Be Humble.** A right estimation of ourselves, thoughtful of others, like our Lord Jesus. (Philipp. 2:3-8)
- 2. and Gentle.** Not weakness, but meekness – strength under control, power yielded, *kind* influence.
- 3. Be Patient.** Not quick to judge. Long-tempered. Kindly tolerating others’ differences. Paul elaborates – “*bearing with* one another.”
- 4. in Love.** Not shallow, fleeting affection, but deep, unconditional, unconquerable *agape* love. The love of God given and demonstrated by Jesus. (John 15:12-13)
All these postures towards one another embody our “every effort to keep the unity”, capped off with one final expression – “through the bond of...”
- 5. Peace.** Right relationship (peace) with God and peace with each other. Not needing to prove anything to God, who loves us perfectly, and not having to win or be right with each other (coming full circle, back to *humility*).

:4-6 Paul drives home the truth of our established unity! There is but **ONE** . . .

- Body, Spirit, Hope, Faith
- Lord – their unified declaration was “Jesus Christ is Lord!”
- Baptism – the identifying expression that we are redeemed and part of the family under...
- One Father God of us all – reflecting his loving intimacy for us and our bond as brothers/sisters.

He is OVER all – *power*. He is THROUGH all – *providence*. He is IN all – *presence*.

Our unity (IN our beautiful diversity) is central to who we are and central to God’s glory in the earth.

:7-10 Paul hearkens to Psalm 68:18 which reflects the war custom of the “Old Testament” era... Kings, victorious in battle, would parade through their home city bearing (flaunting really) the gifts they had received/taken from their defeated enemies. A display of their spoils of war. Paul flips this image – Jesus, the Conqueror (*of sin, death, and Satan*), does not TAKE gifts, He GIVES them, distributing them among His people, the church.

Then Paul tangents a bit to express the inspiring reality that Jesus is not like a high king who ascends and stays removed from his people. Jesus who *ascended* back to heaven is the one who first (lowly) *descended*, laying aside His glory, taking on our flesh, and walking our dusty streets. Yes, he is the high exalted one, with no human limitations, but He is the same humble, compassionate lover of our souls – NOW available to us always and everywhere.

:11-13 Leaving his tangent, Paul returns to the “giving of gifts”. He highlights the 5-primary leadership gifts (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) but this does not exhaust the idea. ALL believers receive spiritual gifts “as Christ apportions it”, and there are *many* gifts. The Holy Spirit shapes and uses gifts in each of us “for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”. Gifts are not given for our individual benefit, but rather for the benefit of the whole body and to bring glory to God.

And to what end? “until we reach unity and maturity – to the fulness of Christ”! (vs. 13)

Gifts can’t emerge if we aren’t engaged.

If we don’t step out to serve, we may never discover our giftedness.

We have a meaningful class – “**Gifted to Serve**” that helps people explore how God has shaped and gifted them for service. [The next one is on Sun Feb 10. Check it out!]

:14-15 When we function in unity as the body of Christ, exercising our unique talents and gifts, we are anchored and grow up into Christ our head . . .

:16 We are joined together and built up as each of us engages and “does our part” . . . IN LOVE.

Reflective Questions:

1. Are you a part of the ONE faith and family? Have you trusted in Jesus to save you from sin?
2. What are you holding on to? What are your hesitations to living a Spirit-led life?
3. Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? Are you using them?
4. Have you ever attended the Gifted to Serve class? Are you ready to? (Feb 10!)
5. How well are you “walking in a manner worthy...?”
 - Humility?
 - Gentleness?
 - Patience? Bearing with others?
 - Agape love?
 - Bond of peace?

“Holy Spirit, we cry out for your aid in all these things. We long to live lives worthy of your calling and grace towards us.”