

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Invited to Enter The Stage ***Ephesians 4:1-6***

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PowerPoint Presentation included: NONE

SermonAudio Blurb:

I. Introduction.

- A. We come now to the practical outworking of the rich theology and truths that were unveiled to us in chapters 1-3.
 - 1. Paul made it clear that the glory of God work in Christ is found in the mystery now revealed, that in Jesus Christ the Father has made two groups who were infinitely opposite to each other into one new group, a new humanity.
 - 2. He made it clear that all who are "in Christ" are in full possession of every spiritual blessing. None are missing out on anything and none are lacking the fulness of each blessing.
 - 3. On a greater scale we learned that this letter is really more like a drama where Paul is unfolding the cosmic work God is doing both in the seen and unseen reality.
- B. That fact is important to remember as we look at this section from vss 1-16 (read).
 - 1. On one level there is the clear message of unity. Unity that we have (3) and unity that we are working toward (13).
 - 2. But while I will be speaking on the unity we now possess by the Holy Spirit I don't want you to think that is all that there is here.
 - 3. Unity is not an end in itself. Rather unity in the Church is a key pointer to the victory of God over a world that is fractured and broken.
 - 4. Remember what I have taught about how the spiritual forces are seeking to destroy humanity and through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ He has triumphed over them. Now He is putting them under His feet.
 - a. One of the ways these spiritual forces seek to destroy is through divisions and disunity.

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- b. And one of the ways we as the Body of Christ stand fast against them is in jealously maintaining the unity we were brought into through salvation.
 - c. This is accomplished as we are strengthened in the inner man to be able to comprehend and experience the love of Christ. As the power of God is exerted in the Church we are able to stand in unity and thus resist the schemes of Satan.
- C. Up to now we have watched this drama somewhat from the sidelines.
- 1. We have learned what God has done for us with the purpose of transforming us in how we view ourselves.
 - 2. We have learned what God has accomplished against the spiritual forces of darkness in Jesus Christ.
 - 3. We have learned how God is powerfully working in the midst of the shame and weakness of Paul.
 - 4. Now it is our turn to take the stage. Now we are being brought into this drama as active participants in the eternal triumph of God.
 - 5. He begins by calling us to imitate the model that he has set before us—how he embraced the shame while rejoicing in the fact that it was part of God’s plan so that His power would be seen.
 - 6. Now we are to take up our roles and we are to live out our calling and do it in positions of shame—meaning humility and meekness, bearing up with each other in love.
 - 7. Remember 3:10, it is in the Church that God is unfolding and unveiling His mind-blowing wisdom to the spiritual forces.
 - 8. That passage pointed back to 2:19-22 where the Church is God’s temple and functions like a monument to Christ’s defeat of those very powers. As Jesus said elsewhere, "I will build my Church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."
 - 9. This is the calling of the Church and we must remember it. So I invite you today to step onto the stage of this divine drama and take up your roles.
- D. The need for unity.
- 1. It was the burden of our Lord at the time of His death. In his high priestly prayer in John 17 he asks His heavenly father, John 17:20-23 "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their

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word; 21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. 22 "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.

2. The Apostle Paul consistently urges the various churches to be of one mind. That they would labor together, building one another up in the faith and growing in love for one another.

Propositional Statement

I want to show you the initial responsibilities that each of us have in this drama. As the Church of Jesus Christ we are called to be examples of the defeat of the powers of darkness in the Lord. We are to embrace that calling and in doing so live a life radically different from the way this age lives itself out.

II. Preserve The Unity of The Spirit (1-6).

- A. Note first the passion Paul has for this issue of unity, "I entreat you."
 1. It means to beg or strongly urge. It literally means "to call to one's side" with the word picture being coming along side another with the desire to be of true help to him.
 2. This is a task that your elders often find themselves needing to do. Urging you to live in certain ways, pleading with you to turn from a direction you are going; to go in a new and better way. Perhaps you have experienced that in your time here, if so, go and thank that elder if you haven't already.
- B. Note next the way we will maintain unity.
 1. First by understanding our calling.
 - a. This calling is not an individual calling. It is a corporate, or collective calling. He is saying to them and to us, that we as a church need to walk in a manner that is proper and fitting according to the one calling that all of us participate in. It is a group thing, not a private, individual effort.
 - b. And if this is not understood, then you will see little need for the Body of Christ, much less the need to preserve the unity within the Body.

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- c. But if you see that this is our calling, as the Church functions like this monument to Christ's victory over the powers, then you will realize the importance of putting on a new set of actions and attitudes.
2. Second by living in humility.
 - a. Humility is the grease that moves the church along. In this list of godly attitudes it is the root attitude out of which the others flower and come into being.
 - b. It is a common command and expectation of all believers. Pride has no place in the church and yet it is found at the root of all sin and foolishness that the church finds herself in.
 - c. But here is the rub, humility is a position of weakness. In the world he is writing to it is a call to weakness and shame. We think of it as a virtue but in reality it would be considered a degrading trait.

According to Aristotle, [humility] had overtones of servility, small-mindedness and meanness (Rhet. 1384a4) and Epictetus places it at the head of a list of qualities that are not to be commended (Diss.3.24.56) (MacDonald 2000, p. 286)

- d. So Paul is calling us to be counter-cultural and not to allow ourselves to be conformed to the mind set and values of this fallen age.
3. Third by showing gentleness.
 - a. Perhaps your translation has the word "meekness."
 - b. This word is a wonderful one. And it is the surest indication that a person is walking in humility. Wherever humility is present, meekness is present as well.
 - c. The word was used of wild animals who were trained and brought under the control of a master.
 - (1) The word does not mean becoming weak or incapable of power or action.
 - (2) Rather, it speaks of power that is under control. The tamed horse still runs, but when and how the trainer wants him to run.
 - d. True, biblical meekness or gentleness is power under the control of the Holy Spirit.

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- (1) Go with me to Galatians 5:13ff.
 - (2) (Show them how we have great power in our freedom, but it is to be brought under control or it will become a tool of the “flesh”)
 - (3) In verse 16 Paul gives us the answer to this problem—walk by the Spirit.
 - (4) (Take them through showing how the flesh will eventually bring out dissensions and fighting.)
 - (5) (Point out that a fruit of the Spirit is “gentleness.”)
- e. A meek or gentle person is capable of great action. He is not afraid of reacting strongly to evil, to the maligning of God, to false teaching.
 - f. But he is also a person who is under control. A meek person is not quick to react.
 - g. Certainly it is obvious that if we are going to preserve the unity of the Spirit we must be meek people.
 - h. But again this is a position of shame and weakness. It means we will be taken advantage of. It means that the Cross of Jesus Christ is to be more important than our rights.
4. Fourth by being patient.
 - a. When you have a person who is humble and meek, you will find a person who is growing in patience.
 - b. A patient believer is one who has been humbled through the trials of life that God has brought about in his life (cf. James 1:2-4).
 - c. If you are patient, then you recognize that God’s will for you is a constantly unfolding work, in which there are no mistakes by Him.
 - (1) You learn to accept with humility and thanksgiving His trials, knowing that they are for your good and your growth into the image of His Son.
 - (2) You begin to soften and show more and more grace, knowing the weakness of your own strength and the ease in which you can sin and stumble.

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- d. The product of true, Christian patience is the ability to put up with others when they struggle or fall short of what they could or should be and do.
 - (1) The phrase, ‘showing forbearance to one another in love’ means to endure one another. To put up with one another.
 - (2) Paul is no fool. He knows that we rub each other the wrong way.
 - (a) In the context of our passage the greatest potential for problems was due to the union of Jew and Gentile. In almost every way these two groups were capable of creating dissension, distrust, and disturbances.
 - (b) How do we attack these issues in a cruciform manner?
 - (3) It is found at the cross of Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:12-15–take them through this passage).

Transition

And so it is with these four things: an understanding of our calling , with humility, gentleness and patience that we are called to protect the unity that is found in the Spirit.

- 5. We are called as a body to promote and preserve the unity of the Spirit.
 - a. This is not an option and it is something that we ought to throw our lives into doing.
 - b. The term means to be eager and to be hard at work to do.
- 6. So, what is the unity of the Spirit? Paul describes it in the verses that follow:
 - C. The unity of the Spirit (4-6).
 - 1. The word that jumps out in this list is the term “one.” And it is this word that brings out the idea of the unity of the Spirit.
 - 2. There are many who will try to have unity with others, but if they don’t understand the “why” of unity then the unity they will pursue or strive after will only be a worldly substitute.

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- a. This is the error of many churches, who seek to overlook all things for the sake of unity.
 - b. Sin is rampant in the church, and yet the people continue to look the other way.
 - c. False and poor teaching is tolerated because they don't want to come across judgmental.
 - d. I have spoken to many people in other churches and am amazed at how little sin is truly spoken of in the church and dealt with in a proper manner. And all of it is usually done for the sake of unity.
 - e. I know of pastors who will teach vaguely on the doctrines of the bible simply so that they do not cause problems in the Body.
 - f. I know of churches where trouble-makers are not disciplined, rather, they are promoted into positions of influence simply to keep them happy and in the church.
 - g. But if we understand the unity that Christians are to strive to protect then we will be much more better equipped to take part of this responsibility.
3. There are seven aspects of the unity of the Spirit that are written in three distinct groupings, or triads.

These verses actually are Trinitarian in nature. Notice how the Trinity is found in them (Spirit, Lord, and Father). And each of the person of the Trinity have other things associated to them.

This passage is really fascinating and worth looking at very closely at some other time. There is a flow that describes the work of salvation in the lives of all of us. It starts with the Spirit who brings us to Christ and it is in Christ's work that we are saved. And then we find that in and through all of this saving work is the presence, will and work is God the Father. So we see the Spirit in verse 4, our Lord Jesus Christ in verse 5 and our Father in verse 6.

And note that these things are not commands to be done. Rather, they are simply truths that exist. They are not points of debate, they are truths to be believed. They are not actions, they are truths that are the foundation from which proper, godly actions should spring.

- a. The first triad speaks of the work of the Spirit.
 - (1) It is the Holy Spirit that brings us into the one Body of Christ.

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- (a) 1 Corinthians 12:13 says that we are all baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Jesus Christ.
- (b) None of us are part of the true Church without going through the Spirit.
- (2) Notice the following:
 - (a) Ephesians 1:14 (The Spirit is given as a pledge of our future inheritance)
 - (b) Ephesians 2:19-22 (one temple of God in the Spirit).
- (3) It is this reality that must be in our minds if we will seek to preserve the unity of the Spirit.
- (4) We all have the same hope and the same calling and it all comes through and by the Spirit.
 - (a) Therefore we are all in the same race and in the same work.
 - (b) There is no place for silly posturing and in-fighting; rather we need to join hands and encourage one another as we press on.
- b. The second triad speaks of our unity in Christ.
 - (1) All of us believe in only one Lord. We do not have competing Lords.
 - (2) It is His agenda, His kingdom, and His will that we are to be busy doing.
 - (3) It was He who purchased us all with His blood. He owns us, He loves us, He provides for us all. We are His and He is ours. All that we are is due to His work on the Cross. And without that work of bearing away our sin, we are nothing.
 - (4) This unity in Christ creates a unique unity that goes across age, sex, race, or social position.
 - (5) There is only one faith that all of us participate in. It is faith in the One Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
 - (a) **1 Corinthians 8:6** yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we *exist*

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for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him.

- (b) Do you believe this? Do you believe that you exist only because of Jesus Christ?
 - (c) Do you believe that you are His and not your own person?
 - (d) Do you believe in Jesus as your Lord?
 - (e) This is the one faith that all believers participate in.
 - i) I can debate with many Christians on issues of doctrine.
 - ii) But if they are true believers, then we are all able to share in our love and faith in Jesus Christ. That is our key point of commonality.
 - (f) There is a common baptism that we are participate in.
 - i) There is a natural flow in this verse.
 - ii) First comes the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - iii) Then comes faith.
- c. The third triad is that of the Father.
- (1) This whole letter makes it clear that God the Father was not some angry God that was calmed down by the work of His Son.
 - (2) Rather, the reality is that we are all saved because our Father in heaven loved us before we loved Him.
 - (3) He saved us and called us and blessed us by the greatness of His grace.
 - (4) He is at the center of all things. Jesus Christ and the Spirit all do His will and all do it for the glory of the Father.
 - (5) One man said it this way, “We are God created, God loved, God saved, God Fathered, God controlled, God sustained, God filled, and God blessed. We are one people under one

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sovereign (**over all**), omnipotent (**through all**), and
omnipresent (**in all**) God.” (MacArthur, *Ephesians*)

III. Initial Conclusion.

- A. So we are now on the stage in this cosmic drama of God. We are given our places in Jesus Christ and we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish these roles.
- B. Not is our strength but rather in our weakness as we embrace the Cross and begin to walk in the way of our Lord.
- C. As these chapters unfold you will see how radical this call and walk really is. You will see how it flies in the face of the wisdom of this age.

Community Group Questions

- **How does understanding that the qualities of humility, gentleness, and patience are not points of strength but weakness change your thinking regarding them?**
- **What are ways you personally seek to preserve the unity of the Spirit? What are challenges that you have experienced in the process?**