

Living like You Believe It – *Ephesians 4:1-3*

Introduction – “*Therefore*” in v1 is the hinge between Eph 1-3 and 4-6. Through Jesus Christ, God is creating something entirely new. The declaration of what He has done has been given to us and we still have to ask God to make it all clear, to fill us up in it. The practical outworking of this truth is what follows in the chapters and verses ahead. All of it, each and every command, must be understood and applied with reference to this word, “*therefore*,” or it will be nothing more than junk, moralistic, dead religion.

The Text – “*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*”

Straightforward, and Yet... - Consider some of the important words in this sentence and a lot of color will be added to what may appear at first a very straightforward charge.

Prisoner in the Lord – Paul had already made this point (3:1). He is in the charge of Jesus Christ and ultimately no other regardless of his circumstances.

Beseech – *Parakaleō* is something far stronger than an invitation or gentle suggestion. It is an earnest pleading, begging, or urging. The first application is primary and central to Paul’s discourse.

Worthy... – The Greek word comes from the idea of “balancing the scales.” In our common parlance, “the walk should fit the talk.” The positional truth should be balanced with a day-by-day practical lifestyle.

...Of the Calling – The church, the *ekklesia*, literally means, the “called out ones.” Think of it this way: Lazarus was “called out” of the tomb by Jesus. It would have been inappropriate and unworthy of that calling for Lazarus not to then walk out of the tomb. That picture illustrates this entire first verse. Everything we do in the Lord, in obedience to the Lord, is simply a logical outcome and a natural response to what we have become in the Lord (Rom 12:1).

Five Characteristics of Worthy Walking – The first order of business, the first application of all of this doctrine, is a radically changed quality in the character and orientation of believers, especially in their relationship to one another.

With All Lowliness – Paul, writing to a Greek world, uses a term which was considered derogatory and despised in their culture (and possibly in ours as well). Also translated “humility of mind,” it emphasizes the worth of others even at one’s own expense (Phil 2:3ff). In God’s economy, the way up is down.

Gentleness – or “meekness,” this word has nothing to do with being a weak milquetoast. It was used to describe a domesticated animal. Imagine a strong ox or horse, well-trained and controlled by its master. Spirit-given gentleness (Gal 5:23) is not a self-regulating control, but a submission of one’s strengths and assets to be used by the One to Whom you belong. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5). Lowliness and gentleness were found in perfect balance in Jesus as an intense love to lead people by coming alongside them and serve – Matt 11:29

Longsuffering – another fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22), this patience suffers long with aggravating people (like you and me), such as God in Christ has towards us (Rom 9:22).

Forbearance in Love – *Anechomai* can mean anything from “putting up with” to “suffering.” To do so in love is costly (1 Cor 13:4-7). But Peter tells us that such love covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet 4:8) without which no group of human beings can live together.

The Point of it All: Keeping the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace – One of the great testimonies of the Christian faith is that we can live with one another, that we can love one another, that we can keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This is how they will know we are the new humanity, that we are Christians.

Endeavoring – These characteristics are to be pursued in all Christian relationships with all diligence, with great labor and haste, as though it is one’s top priority. We are to keep that which we have already been given – the unity of the Spirit (Eph 2).

Globally, Denominationally, Local Church, Family – Paul had first spoken of this unity regarding Jew and Gentile; the whole world is reconciled in and only in Christ. Denominations are not sinful, but denominationalism and schismatic attitudes are. Local churches must esteem one another amidst their distinctives. And of course, Paul will spend a great deal of time on family matters where this must be applied all the time.

A Confident Calling – Consider what it is that is the foundation of these commands. What is this calling? We have all spiritual blessings, sonship, and a share in the cosmic dominion; we have been brought up into heaven and seated with Christ. When this gets ahold of you, insecurities, doubts and fears fade away. Lowly, humble, longsuffering people, who are doing so “in Christ,” are confident people. The insecure person is grasping, prideful, worried about self, defensive, feisty, petty and belligerent. They are always reactive and chronically anxious.

A Confident Hope – Recall Eph 1:10 which speaks to the unity into which Christ has brought all things. Far too many “sky-is-falling” prophets in our midst predict the collapse of the church into ruin. But God would not command what He is not giving and what He plans to expand: His kingdom, His dominion, His new creation, the salvation of the world. The smallest act of obedience to Eph 4:1ff must find its strength and leverage in the truth of Eph 1-3. *Therefore...endeavor.* Live like you believe it.