



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

A New Standard of Living: *Unity and Diversity* (Eph 4:1-16)

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BIBLE STUDY

Ephesians

Location:

122 CAP

Time:

TUESDAYS @ 7:15 AM

open to all

EPHESIANS 4:1-16

“A New Standard of Living — Part I: Unity and Diversity”

Introduction

The emphasis of Ephesians 4:1—5:21 is upon a new standard of living, which produces unity and diversity in the church (Eph 4:1-16) and is manifested by new characteristics for the Christian (4:17—5:21). In Ephesians 2:11—3:13, the Apostle Paul elaborated upon the union of believing Jews and non-Jews (all ethnicities) into one body. The purpose of the body of Christ is for each member to work together, with the other members, with the intent to glorify God (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-27). The reason is that God is the one *who* is most important in life (Eph 1:3), and God’s glory is *what* is most important in life (1:12).

GOD IS THE ONE *WHO* IS MOST IMPORTANT IN LIFE . . . AND
GOD’S GLORY IS *WHAT* IS MOST IMPORTANT IN LIFE. . . .

Through the cross of Christ (2:16), God made it possible for those who were enemies (Jews and Gentiles) now to be united. “The ministry of reconciliation” is not only vertical but also horizontal (cf. 2 Cor 5:18-20). The gospel of grace through faith in Jesus Christ is the true means for worldwide reconciliation.

As defined in Scripture, unity is not uniformity. Unity involves interdependency and interrelatedness. It is *impossible* for any member of the body of Christ to live independently or unrelated to other members, and still “be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (cf. Eph 6:11). The Holy Spirit unites every member of the body of Christ and makes us dependent upon one another. God’s purpose for this unity and diversity is to strengthen one another.

THE BASIS FOR UNITY AND DIVERSITY

(4:1-6) “Therefore” indicates that verse 1 is the pivot upon which the doctrinal truth of 1:3—3:21 develops into the application of 4:2—6:16. The majority of the teaching in all six chapters of Ephesians can be regarded as both doctrinal and practical. Doctrine is certainly practical (Matt 28:18-20; Rom 12:1-2; Gal 5:1; Eph 4:1; Phil 2:1; Col 3:1; 1 Thess 4:1; 1 Tim 4:6, 16; Tit 1:9; 2:10); indeed, correct living (orthopraxis) is derived from correct doctrine (orthodoxy). The practical application of 4:2—6:16, however, presupposes the doctrinal truth of 1:3—3:21.

Paul mentioned his imprisonment again (Eph 3:1) and that he was “the prisoner of the Lord.” The Apostle believed the Lord had placed him in the prison, not the Jews or the Romans. It is crucial to recognize this truth because when we feel overwhelmed in some problem, we should be mindful that God has placed us in the situation. He must have a purpose for the difficulty, and our goal is to discern what it is (based upon His Word). The importance of thinking in this manner is to direct attention from self and others, and what they may or may not have done, to the purpose of the Lord whose will in the circumstance should be primary. It is not that our actions or those of others should be ignored; you and I are always responsible for our actions. We should view our circumstances as directly related to God’s eternal purposes. The focus, therefore, should be upon God and how He is working through the problem. All the issues of life are essentially with the Lord and not anyone else. Such a perspective is not gibberish, but is the manner in which Paul (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) introduced the practical section of his epistle. With this perspective, there can be somewhat of an adventure in the midst of life’s issues.

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If Paul, as a prisoner, could “walk in a manner worthy of [God’s] calling” (4:1), with all the deprivation, humility, and suffering that such an experience would have been for him, those to whom he wrote certainly can heed his imploration. The biblical term, “walk,” means “lifestyle” (i.e. conduct); it involves Christian living. A worthy walk means to be filled

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with the Holy Spirit, and is heeding the new standard of living that is discussed in verses 1-6. A worthy walk begins with four dynamics that should be characteristic of a believer's experience. The calling of God for those who are united in Christ is for us to live "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love" (4:2).

The walk of a believer is not merely with the Lord; it is also a walk with other Christians. Paul entreats believers to maintain unity among one another with eagerness, as a consequence of God's calling. The four dynamics of verse 2 are vital because they "preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:3). Christians are already united "in one body to God through the cross" (2:16), and they must preserve that unity through continual maturity. The Holy Spirit promotes peace and is hence grieved by disorder in the body.

A NEW STANDARD OF LIVING	
<i>Biblical Dynamic</i>	<i>Contrary Attitude</i>
humility	arrogance, pride
gentleness	brusqueness, pettiness
patience	selfishness, perturbation
tolerance	bigotry, fanaticism

Verses 4-6 indicate how to preserve peace. There are seven elements that are the basis for unity among believers: (1) one body (the universal church); (2) one Spirit (one means of revelation); (3) one hope (expectation of resurrection); (4) one Lord (Jesus Christ); (5) one faith (cf. Jude 3); (6) one baptism (cf. 1 Cor 12:13); and, (7) one God and Father (the Jewish heritage, and exclusive worship). Scripture is emphasizing a unity of faith and life (cf. John 13:35; 17:21), which is essential for Christians to enjoy the wealth of relationships among each other. God established peace for humanity through the cross, and believers are exhorted to preserve that unity in peace.

THE PRESERVATION OF UNITY AND DIVERSITY

(4:7-16) The preservation of unity—even though the church is a diverse society—will continue when believers are growing and maturing in the Lord. One source for differences among believers is the disproportionate measure of grace from God. God has graciously bestowed gifts to believers; to some He gives one gift, and to others more.

The proportions of grace are the consequence of Christ's spoils "when He ascended on high, [and] He led captive a host of captives" (Eph 4:7-8). Jesus ascended to the throne of His Father, after which He gave gifts to His followers through the Holy Spirit who He sent on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Jesus came to earth to become a man, and as the God-man, He ascended to the throne of His Father, from which He fills the entire universe with His rule (Eph 4:9-10; cf. Col 1:18).

Whether the gift is one or more, they are all to be used for the glory of God. There are four primary gifts that are mentioned in verse 11: (1) apostles (lit. "sent ones"; technically, the term refers to the Twelve who were eyewitnesses of the resurrection); (2) prophets (those specially gifted to speak revelation from God or sometimes to expound God's Word); (3) evangelists (church planters and traveling missionaries); and, (4) pastors-teachers (shepherds of local congregations). The gifts have been given "for the equipping of the saints for the work to service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12).

GOD'S CONCERN IS FOR HIS PEOPLE TO BECOME MATURE. . . .
MATUREITY IS BECOMING LIKE CHRIST (4:15).

God's concern is for His people to become mature so that we are not "tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine" (4:14). Scripture alone establishes and matures our faith, so that we can live the Christian life securely. When the gifts are used, it should bring believers from infancy to maturity (4:13-15). Maturity is becoming like Christ (4:15). The entire body is united with "each individual part" and this promotes the welfare "of the body for the building up of itself in love" (4:16; e.g. 1 Cor 16:15-24). If we are children of God (Eph 1:3—3:21), then we are to act as one; it is for this reason that we have the practical application of chapters 4—6. The new standard of living for believers is to live an ethical and moral lifestyle that reflects Christ's values.

ABOUT CAPITOL COMMISSION

Capitol Commission state directors are pastors/missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. These Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. The love and grace of God compels us to proclaim the truth of the Gospel with compassion for the Capitol community, to faithfully teach and apply the Word of God, and to build meaningful relationships that bear fruit for an eternity to come. With the Bible as our foundation and authority, the mission of Capitol Commission is obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) within the Capitol communities of the world. We are not a lobbying group attempting to garner votes or reform society. Our mandate is to see the hearts and lives of elected officials transformed with the Word of God. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through the verse-by-verse teaching of Scripture. In the Bible, we see God's great love for the world, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.

The church is instructed to submit and to honor government leaders (Rom 13:1-7), and to pray for their eternal salvation (1 Tim 2:1-4). The desire of Capitol Commission is to witness God transform the hearts and lives of elected officials, lobbyists, and staff members. We apply this mandate to four major areas of making disciples: (1) *evangelize* those who have not experienced saving faith in Jesus Christ; (2) *establish* those who desire to grow in their faith and knowledge of Scripture; (3) *equip* those called to spiritual leadership; and, (4) *encourage* churches to participate with us in ministry.