

“The distinctions between Virginians, Pennsylvanians, New Yorkers and New Englanders are no more. I am not a Virginian, but an American.”

-Patrick Henry

Speech in the First Continental Congress, Philadelphia (14 October 1774)

The statement in the red box above is not what people think of first when they hear the name Patrick Henry. He is known most for his speech to the House of Burgesses in Richmond, Virginia in which he boldly shared his convictions - “Give me Liberty or Give me Death!” The speech was March 23, 1775, a month before the start of the Revolutionary War. This speech rallied Virginia to form a militia that would fight against the British Army.¹

The statement in the red box above, “I am not a Virginian but an American” was six months before “give me liberty or give me death.”²

Patrick Henry was focused on America. America was the dream of those who at life risk crossed the ocean seeking freedom of religion and freedom of speech. When Patrick Henry spoke these words, the impending threat of Britain’s presence and control, “no taxation without representation” threatened the very reason people came to this land. Patrick Henry was calling for the preparation for just war.

The point: His convictions and passion at the House of Burgesses came out of his “identity to something great-er.”

One can only think of what would happen had he prioritized Virginia, or his heritage. But he prioritized his identity to America.

Our text in this devotion calls the believer in Christ to see where his/her identity lies.

Ephesians 4:1–6 (ESV)

¹I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Introduction

Chapter four is the dividing line of the book of Ephesians. Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest explains;

The first three chapters contain doctrine, the last three, exhortation. This is the proper order, for only in doctrine can one see the sweet reasonableness of the exhortations, and obtain the necessary power and technique to obey them. In brief, God says in chapters 1–3, “I have made you a saint.” In chapters 4–6, He says, “Now, live a saintly life.”³

The first verse is a pleading to the believer to see his calling. Wuest continues;

“[Urge] is *parakaleō* (παρακαλεω), “I beg of you, please.” ...“Therefore” reaches back to all the blessings and exalted positions in salvation which the saints enjoy (ch. 1–3), and reaches ahead to the obligations which such privileges put upon the saints⁴

Therefore the call to believers in chapters four through six is to live in view of your greater identity.

How does a believer in Christ live out his greater call as a member not of a heritage, denomination, but rather as living as a citizen of heaven?

Paul exhorts:

1. Bear with One Another

This would translate, “tolerance”. You could say that there are things about your circle of friends you appreciate and some you tolerate. Paul is calling for forbearance. How? By the believer putting on, all over, these character traits.

Humility – the disposition of valuing or assessing oneself appropriately; especially in light of one’s sinfulness or creature-likeness. Now contrast this to the work of Pride, a chief characteristic of the enemy of God, Satan. It exalts

¹ “Speech to the Virginia Convention - Extended Summary” eNotes Publishing Ed. Scott Locklear. eNotes.com, Inc. eNotes.com 7 Jan, 2018 <http://www.enotes.com/topics/speech-to-the-virginia-convention#summary>

² https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Patrick_Henry

³ Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Eph 4:1). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

⁴ Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest’s word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader* (Eph 4:1). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

itself above everything. Humility is the primary garment of bearing with one another.

Gentleness – acting in a way that is mild, even tempered. Gentleness of attitude and behavior, in contrast with harshness in one’s dealings with others—‘gentleness, meekness, mildness.’⁵ This is strength under control. It is being passionate about the problem, but not harsh toward the person.

Patience - a state of emotional calm in the face of provocation or misfortune and without complaint or irritation—‘patience.’⁶

In context, this was a civility code for the early church. It is guiding people with a “how to get along with each other” plan!

How do you and I pray for ourselves and for the leaders of our nation? We pray...

God help me to be, and give us in this nation humble leaders who are; passionate but strong under control, not attacking people but rather the problems, keeping myself (themselves) in a state of emotional calmness when provoked.

This cannot happen naturally, but only supernaturally allowing the Spirit of God to control. This putting on occurs as a believer is controlled by the Spirit of God. Here is fruit of the Spirit’s control. Galatians 5:22–23 (ESV) ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The calling of the believer is to be filled with the Spirit, this is a daily surrender to the Lord, asking God to rule in the person’s life. Ephesians 5:18.

The power to bear with each other is the power of God working within, ask God to give you humility, gentleness, and patience so that you can be tolerant.

Seeking tolerance without these traits is not tolerance at all. It is an agenda, a manipulation. Paul was calling each believer to forbear each other in love.

2. There is a Oneness that is Greater

Jesus prayed, “...the glory you gave to me I have given to them, that they may be completely one, so that the world will know that you sent me, and you have loved them just as you have loved me. John 17:22-23.”

⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—

⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

This oneness is fact.

The true “body” of Christ is already “one,” as joined to the one Head. But its unity is as yet not visible, even as the Head is not visible; but it shall appear when He shall appear (John 17:21–23; Colossians 3:4). Meanwhile the rule is, “In essentials, unity; in doubtful questions, liberty; in all things, charity.”⁷

Oneness is your calling

Paul is pleading with those in Christ in the first century to live, crossing their lesser identities, to join in oneness as the body of Christ.

Notice Paul’s expanded translation of this thought in Colossians 3:11, “Here [in the body of Christ] there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all in all.”

That first century call is your calling today. Pursue crossing the boundaries of lesser identities and embrace your greater identity in 2018.

If the body of Christ worked together on the needs and problems that are around us and if the body of Christ sought out together the counsel of God on the perplexities that are before us, what a wonderful year it would be!

The final three chapters of Ephesians call the believer in Christ to live as a saint. This is not a position of being “so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good.” It is rather being light in a dark world.

You have the truth, join across boundaries with other believers and resolve the problems of this sin cursed world. God’s counsel will guide you. God’s presence within you will embolden you and God Himself will fight for you.

As Patrick Henry built his convictions and passion on the greater, so let each believer in Christ in 2018 do the same!

God has called you to a greater calling, live as a saint in America!

⁵ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 748). New York: United Bible Societies.

⁶ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 306). New York: United Bible Societies.

⁷ Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 349). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

