

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

Living Up to Our Calling

Ephesians 4:1-6

1998

Introduction

In the first half of Ephesians, Paul focused on doctrine, expounding on

- a. Our spiritual "privileges" in Christ (1)
- b. Our spiritual "position" in Christ (2,3)

Namely, that:

- a. God has accepted you. 1:6
- b. God has redeemed you. 1:7
- c. He has forgiven your sins. 1:7
- d. He has made known to you the mystery of His will. 1:9
- e. You have been made heirs of God. 1:11
- f. He has sealed you with His Holy Spirit. 1:13
- g. He has made you alive together in Christ. 2:5
- h. He has saved you by grace. 2:5
- i. Seated you in heavenly places in Christ. 2:6
- j. He is working in you, to prepare you to accomplish His eternal purposes. 2:10
- k. He has brought you near by the blood of Jesus Christ. 2:13
- l. He has reconciled you to God. 2:16
- m. He has given you access by the Spirit to the Father. 2:18
- n. He has made you a fellow citizen of the household of God. 2:19
- o. He now indwells you by His Spirit. 2:22

Chapter 4 represents a major shift in Paul's letter. In Ephesians 4-6, Paul will focus on our responsibilities because of the great blessings we enjoy in Christ. This pattern can be found in other letters that Paul wrote: the first half of the letter is about what God has done for us and the second half focuses on our response to what God has done (eg. Romans, Colossians).

[READ TEXT]

Illustration: President Clinton

Although there are those who defend his presidency for his policies, both friend and foe alike agree that he has failed to live up to the dignity and calling of the office of president of the United States. He diminished the office of President because of his immorality.

We as Christians aren't exempt from similar failings:

There seem to be two extremes:

1. Failing to understand our royal position in Christ

2. Failing to live up to our royal position in Christ

Paul addressed the first problem in chapters 1-3; and now, in chapters 4-6, Paul addresses the second.

I The Call of The Christian

I urge you = "Exhort, beg"

A. Live a worthy life - Phil 1:27

Worthy = literally, to bring up the other beam of the scales -- indicating equivalence.

Paul is insisting that there should be a balance between profession and practice -- what we believe and what we are.

Phil 1:27 "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."

1. Worthy of our high calling -- as Christ's ambassadors
 - a. No matter what our circumstances (Paul in prison)
Our circumstances, like Paul, may be less than ideal, but we can choose to respond with dignity and honor as Christ's ambassadors.
2. Worthy of our high position
 - a. Seated with Christ in heavenly places

For what purpose?

1. That we might display the manifold wisdom of God - Eph 3:10
2. That the glory of God might be displayed to an unbelieving world
 - a. The church is on display
 - b. You and I are on display

II The Attitudes That Lead to Unity

For unity in the body of Christ to be maintained, Paul mentions four qualities that are key to unity. These are all qualities necessary for good relationships with others in the Christian community and beyond.

A. Humility vs. Pride

Humble = Low, small, insignificant, weak

- a. The having a humble opinion of one's self
- b. A deep sense of one's moral littleness
- c. Modesty, humility, lowliness of mind

Now, to the Greeks, humility was not a virtue.

But Christ, by His life and example, changed humility into a virtue - Phil 2:6-7

Phil 2:6-8 "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!"

This virtue is a necessity if I am to properly value others around me - cf. Phil 2:3-4

Phil 2:3-4 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Rom 12:10 "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves."

Without humility, the church cannot maintain unity!

B. Gentleness vs. Harshness

Gentleness = mildness, meekness, considerateness

It was used in describing an animal who is completely disciplined and controlled

It is not a quality of weakness, but of power under control

1. Moses was a meek man (Num 12:3), but capable of great strength and boldness
2. Jesus was "meek and lowly in heart" (Mt 11:29), but we see where He drove the money changers out of the temple

"Gentleness is the attitude of someone who is so absorbed in seeking some worthy goal for the common good that he refuses to be deflected from it by slights, injuries or insults directed at himself personally, or indeed by personal considerations of any kind."

Phil 1:27 "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel ..."

Without gentleness, the church cannot maintain unity!

C. Patience

Patience = Forbearance, longsuffering, slowness in avenging wrongs or retaliating when hurt by another.

1. It is an evidence of love

1 Cor 13:4 "Love is patient, love is kind."

2. It is the fruit of the Spirit

Gal 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

3. We are to clothe ourselves with it

Col 3:12 "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

Without patience, the church cannot maintain unity!

D. Bearing with one another in love

Bearing = To sustain, to bear, to endure, to put up with someone's faults and idiosyncrasies knowing that we have our own.

"It involves bearing with one another's weaknesses, not ceasing to love others because of faults which offend or displease us."

And what makes "bearing with one another" possible? LOVE!
Love is the basic attitude of seeking the highest good of others.

As Paul wrote in his chapter on love:

1 Cor 13:4-5 "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs."

Indeed, the virtue of love is the "tie" that binds all these virtues together:

Col 3:12-14 "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

Since the body consists of members who are not perfect, and often sin against each other, maintaining unity is not possible unless we are willing to endure each other's imperfections.

III The Responsibility of The Christian

A. Keep the unity of the Spirit

Unity is a gift of God. It is made possible by:

1. The cross of Christ - 2:13-18
2. The gift of the Holy Spirit

We can't create it, but we are responsible to keep it -- to guard it in the face of any attempts from within and without the church to take it away.

1. Requires effort

Make every effort = "to exert one's self, endeavor, give diligence"

The word that Paul chooses indicates the difficulty of maintaining unity. And it is not just a suggestion, but a command by which the believers must conform.

Rom 14:19 "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification."

Heb 12:14 "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord."

2. But how far should we go? - Rom 12:18

In essentials, unity.

In non-essentials, liberty.

In all things, charity.

Augustine

Rom 12:18 "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

B. The basis for unity

a. One body - Eph 3:6

1. The body of Christ, the church - Eph 1:22-23

2. The church in the universal sense

a. The body of believers worldwide

b. Of which Christ is the head and savior of the body - Eph 5:23

b. One Spirit

1. This is referring to the Holy Spirit

1 Cor 12:13 "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free-- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."

2. Paul describes the Holy Spirit:

a. As the Holy Spirit of promise - Eph 1:13

b. As the guarantee of our inheritance - Eph 1:14

c. By Whom both Jew and Gentile have access to the Father - Eph 2:18

d. In Whom God dwells as believers are being built into a holy temple - Eph 2:21-22

e. By Whom the mystery of Christ was revealed to the apostles and prophets - Eph 3:5

f. Through Whom God strengthens the inner man with power - Eph 3:16

g. As the One whose unity is to be maintained in the bond of peace - Eph 4:3

c. One hope

1. This refers to:

a. The indwelling presence of Christ

Col 1:27 "To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

b. The resurrection of the dead

Rom 8:23-24 "Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?"

d. One Lord

1. 1 Co 8:5-6 "For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live."

e. One faith

1. The body of truth, the faith, which Jude says was "once for all delivered to the saints" - Jude 3
2. It is that pattern of sound words that Paul taught Timothy (2 Tim 1:13), and which he was to commit to faithful men (2 Tim 2:2) and which all Christians must believe.

f. One baptism - 1 Cor 12:13

1. This is the baptism commanded by Jesus - Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16 and preached and commanded by His apostles - Ac 2:38; 10:48

It symbolizes identification with Christ in his death and resurrection, sealing with the Spirit, and incorporation into the body of Christ, so that all Christians become one person in Christ Jesus.

g. One God and Father - 1 Cor 8:6; 12:5-6; Rom 11:36

1 Cor 8:5-6 "For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live."

1 Cor 12:5-6 "There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men."

Paul stresses

God's personality and sovereignty (Father of all)

God's transcendence and omnipresence (above all, and through all, and in you all)

Conclusion

1. Have you failed to understand your royal position in Christ?
2. Have you failed to live up to your royal position in Christ?

Decide today, by God's grace that you will:

1. Live a life worthy of the calling you have received
2. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace

As believers, we are called to be the manifold wisdom of God. We are not alone or independent; what we do impacts the body of Christ. We don't always get things right but by God's grace we can pursue walking in unity in our relationships--at home, work, and church. Corporately we are the Bride of Christ and God wants us to be a people of prayer, humility, and meekness. Never give up on relationships! God has given each of us a unique set of relationships and has appointed us to be a revelation of the manifold wisdom of God. By virtue of that we become ambassadors, pointing others to Christ.