

“Humility...then Unity”

Ephesians 4:1-6

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After spending three chapters to explain our identity and sufficiency in Christ by virtue of His atoning death and resurrection on our behalf, Paul commands Christians in the chapters 4-6 to live out the Christian life in light of the resources we have in Christ. Whereas there was only one imperative (or command) in the first three chapters, Paul gives Christians forty imperatives in the last three chapters. The emphasis in chapter four is on the preservation and progress of true spiritual unity for the church and individual Christians. Unity in the Body is one of the marks of true spiritual growth and maturity.

1. True spiritual unity is a deliberate, ongoing process (4:1)
“I implore you”

2. True spiritual unity is dependent on selfless attitudes (4:2-3)
“preserve the unity of the Spirit”
 - a. Humility:

 - b. Gentleness:

 - c. Patience:

 - d. Tolerance/bearing with:

 - e. Love:

 - f. Peace:

3. True spiritual unity is based on our view of the Trinity (4:4-6)
“one Spirit...one Lord...one God and Father”

Study Notes:

- “**urge**=NIV/**implore**=NKJ/**beseech**=KJV/**entreat**=NAS” (4:1)- Four different Bibles, four different translations; the word is *parakalo* (παρκαλω) and means “exhort or command” (see Luke 3:18 where the exact same word is translated “exhort” in all four Bible versions); this is an inspired apostolic decree coming from God Himself through Paul...the information about to be given is not an option for Christians; in the Greek text, this word is the first word in the sentence, making it emphatic.
- “**then/therefore**” (4:1)—this conjunction points back to the previous context (the first three chapters), and calls Christians to live in light of what Paul just spent three chapters delineating.
- “**walk**” (4:1; cf. 4:17; 5:2, 8, 15)—Paul uses this word 32 times in his letters (8 times in Ephesians), and it is always used metaphorically, referring to one’s daily conduct or lifestyle—your patterns of behavior; the context is not just your individual walk or conduct, but your conduct in conjunction with the corporate Body of Christ; everyone in the local church must “walk” together in Christ-likeness as a unified whole in order to grow and mature.
- “**worthy**” (4:1)—in a suitable manner; that which is in keeping with Christ-likeness; become who you are; walk the talk.
- “**you have been called**=NAS/ **you have received**=NIV” (4:1)—passive voice, which means that God did the calling, or saving, and we were the passive recipients in the act of salvation.
- “**humility**” [ταπεινοφροσυνης, *tapeinophrosuneis*—“lowly minded”] (4:2)—this is the greatest Christian virtue, yet this word did not exist before NT times—it was introduced to the world by Jesus and the Apostles. The ancient world despised humility and considered it a major weakness to be shunned; but God says just the opposite: “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). Today’s world is just as distorted, for our culture says, “God helps those who help themselves”...NOT!
- “**gentleness/meekness**” [πραυς, *praus*] (4:2)—power under control; this word was used of the taming and training of animals; one who controls his anger is “meek” or “gentle”; free from malice or the desire for revenge; one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5); it does not mean weakness.
- “**patience/longsuffering**” [μακροθυμιας, *makrothumias*] (4:2)—literally means “long-fused” or “long-tempered”; one of the fruits of the Spirit; the staying or delay of God’s wrath; waiting patiently without immediate results like a farmer; not a natural human trait.
- “**love**” (4:2)—*agape*, selfless, sacrificial, love shown toward others for their spiritual good; another fruit of the Spirit; not a natural human trait.
- “**peace**” (4:3)—in this context “peace” has already been established between believing Jews and Gentiles; so peace is the bond of unity; Christ has already accomplished peace for the Body.