

Ephesians 4:1-8

The first three chapters have been devoted to talking about the nature of our beliefs as Christians. Now we come to the implications of those beliefs for Christian living. This is a reminder that our lives should be lived as a response of gratitude to God's grace. So Paul begins with "therefore"....

1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, (In chapter 3, we talked about Paul's view of himself as a prisoner of the Lord.)

**1. Are you a "prisoner in the Lord"? In what way?

Perhaps you have heard the saying, "If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" **"lead a life worthy of the calling"** – In other words, be sure your walk matches your talk. ("walk" is the translation of the Greek verb.)

"worthy" – ἄξιος (axios) – literally, "having the same weight"

Picture a balance-type scale. Does the living of your life equal what you profess to believe?

"calling" – or vocation. Being a Christian is our vocation. (Not just those in "professional ministry.")

**2. What does – or should – that life...that walk...look like? What are some things that should characterize the Christian life? While our "walk" is very important, we must always remember, we can never "earn" our salvation! (If you don't remember it, review Ephesians 2:8-10)

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

Paul wrote something similar in Colossians 3:12-14

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other, just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony

Here in Ephesians, Paul gives us five characteristics, in some ways like the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.

**3. As you consider each of these, think of an example or a person who exemplifies each one.

a) Humble

Recognizing who you are before God.

"Humility is the one thing that when you realize you have it, you don't have it anymore."

Not concerned with human recognition or acclaim.

b) Gentle

Not talking about being a "doormat". "The mean between two extremes"

A might river becomes a peaceful lake by a hydroelectric dam, which harnesses the power of that river.

c) Patient

It is often said that it is through trials that one learns patience. Is there any other way?

d) Loving (bearing with one another)

The New Living Translation says, “*making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.*”

e) Peaceful

Do you remember the definition of the Hebrew word for peace, “Shalom”?

When someone used this as a greeting, it was essentially saying, “May you experience wholeness, and be filled with peace in every aspect of your life.”

**4. How do these things promote unity? The Message paraphrase says “*quick at mending fences*”!

This was particularly talking about Gentiles and Jews, who had traditionally been at odds with one another. Any time unity is lacking, look first at yourself, evaluating what part you play in the situation. (There is an implied “because” here....)

**4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling,
5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,
6 one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.**

One of my favorite anthems, “One Faith, One Hope, One Lord” is based on this passage.

You can hear it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qnTj7dA8_z4

Philippians 2:11 has often been considered the earliest creed of the Church:

“every tongue [will] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Verses 4 - 6 are also possibly an early creedal statement. (“Credo” is Latin for “I believe”).

Paul outlines seven things that would lead to unity in the Church. (Remember, 7 is the number of “perfection” in the Bible!)

- **“one body”** – This is referring to the Church, the body of Christ. Our unity is not mechanical, but because of a common love for Christ. In Romans 12:4, the Apostle Paul describes the Church as “one body with many members.” Just as the human body has many parts that all work together, so each one with different gifts and abilities work together in the Church.
- **“one Spirit”** – See 1 Corinthians 12:13. Every Christian has the same Holy Spirit dwelling within them.
- **“one hope”** – All believers have the same hope, the same goal, whether Jew or Gentile. (Remember the concrete nature of the “hope” of the Bible: it is what is yet to come, but that of which we are sure.)
- **“one Lord”** – this is what Paul emphasized in Rom 10:12-13
For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” There has, at times, been discussion about what Jesus, while on earth, was like. Some argue, “That’s not my Jesus!” There is only one Jesus – the Jesus of Scripture.
- **“one faith”** – There is one faith, because all believers come to Christ by faith; there is no other way. (Ephesians 2:8; see also Romans 5:1-2.)
- **“one baptism”** – This is not talking about the mode of baptism, but its meaning. Paul elaborated in 1 Corinthians 1:11-15...*My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”;*

another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name.

When Jesus sent out the disciples with the "Great Commission" (Matthew 28:19), He gave instructions about the proper Trinitarian nature of baptism. There are many groups in times past, as well as today, who practice baptism, but it is not Trinitarian baptism.

- ***"one God and Father of all"***

****5.** How does viewing God as Father (as opposed to just creator or judge) promote unity?

The picture of God in Christ is what Saint Patrick elaborated on...which should be our desire:

“Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.”

Unity is a frequent theme in the Bible. Some important considerations:

- a. Unity reflects the very nature of God at a Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We also see that unity specifically demonstrated in the incarnation as Christ became fully man while still fully God.
- b. When Christians fail to demonstrate their unity, they damage their witness to the world.
- c. One way to promote unity is to follow the words of James 1:19.... *Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.*
- d. Remember the words of Augustine: “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity.” (** That about the practical implications of this.)

****6.** What are things that promote unity in a local church? What are the things that hurt it?

7 But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

Each believer has received grace (a free gift) for salvation. That is how the Christian life begins. But as a result of God’s grace, we also receive special gifts – spiritual gifts – that enable us to serve the Lord and His people in the Church and in the world. (See 1 Peter 4 below.)

(We'll get to more specifics of spiritual gifts next week.)

“Each one”...no one left out...you may have more than one spiritual gift...Paul did, but everyone has at least one. We are each called individually and also gifted individually. In our unity, there is diversity!

1 Peter 4:10-11 also deals with spiritual gifts.

*Like good stewards of the manifold (varied, multi-colored) grace of God, **serve one another** with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To Him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.*

Two other places in Scripture where you will find references to Spiritual Gifts are Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12.

**7. Consider all of the ramifications of God's grace in your life. In what ways have you experienced God's grace in specific ways?

8 Therefore it is said, ...“When He ascended on high He made captivity itself a captive; He gave gifts to His people.”

As in ancient Rome, this is Christ's victory parade...from the battle of the cross to the victory over death of the Resurrection and finally the exaltation of the ascension. The triumph day celebration was Pentecost... when the gift of the Holy Spirit was given, which then led to the gifts of the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:54

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

Apart from Christ, death is the great captivity; but Christ made even that captive.

Colossians 2:13-15

And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when He forgave us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.

In ancient times – and even today – the king is the one who received gifts. But our King gives gifts!