

Ephesians 4:1-10

Verse 1:

--**Therefore.** . . . Paul has finished the doctrinal foundation of his epistles and now he is going to move on to the practical applications of these divine truths. He is going to exhort them to walk properly in light of all he has previously declared.

--***I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.***

--This is a simple exhortation. Christians should live lives fitting to their message. What we say we believe should have a worthy response in our **walk**—or everyday life.

--This was being embodied by Paul as a prisoner. What an evil world! To treat maybe the most Christlike God-appointed apostle with the message of the Gospel in such a way! This is still how the world will treat Christlike Christians.

--Luther counseled men to answer all of Satan's temptations with this: *I am a Christian*. There is supposed to be something noticeably different in Christians—salt, light, life, etc.

*Tozer (Keys To The Deeper Life): *"The true Church is a spiritual phenomenon appearing in human society and intermingling with it to some degree but differing from it sharply in certain vital characteristics. It is composed of regenerated persons who differ from other human beings in that they have a superior kind of life imparted to them at the time of their inward renewal.*

They are children of God in a sense not true of any other created beings.

Their origin is divine and their citizenship is in heaven.

They worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Jesus Christ and have no confidence in the flesh.

They constitute a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.

They have espoused the cause of a rejected and crucified Man Who claimed to be God and Who has pledged His sacred honor that He will prepare a place for them in His Father's house and return again to conduct them there with rejoicing.

In the meantime they carry His cross, suffer whatever indignities men may heap upon them for His sake, act as His ambassadors and do good to all men in His name.

They steadfastly believe that they will share His triumph, and for this reason they are perfectly willing to share His rejection by a society that does not understand them.

*And they have no hard feelings—only charity and compassion and a strong desire that all men may come to repentance and be reconciled to God."**

--Why should anyone believe the high claims that Paul just made in the first three chapters are true in our lives? What does how we worship and live say about the God we serve and our ultimate destiny? We have a high and heavenly calling that should impart a high and heavenly dignity to our lives.

Verses 2-3:

--(2) Having received such incredible riches despite our sinful beginnings and our godless lives, it is proper that we are filled with gratitude and humility. One way to walk worthy of the grace and glory God has extended to us is to extend the same to others—especially those who share in our calling.

--**Lowliness and gentleness** are words that Christ uses for Himself in **Mt. 11:29**.

--This gentle and Christlike character is displayed as we suffer long and endure **one another in love**. Every healthy church is still an imperfect community and I must not allow the sins of other Christians to tempt me to stop pressing into Christ or the fellowship of His calling. *Abraham and Lot getting into a fight and Lot's life was never the same.*

--Greater maturity and Christlikeness is reflected in greater humility and patient endurance with immaturity. *Immature maturity*

1 Corinthians 3:3: For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?

--Every healthy church will be a combination of people who are mature and immature, spiritual and carnal, growing and backsliding, elders and babes in Christ. That is why this Christlike character and patience is needed. *Think of Jesus with His disciples.*

--(3) **endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit**. . . We do not *create* this unity. Paul exhorts these believers to endeavor to **keep** the unity that already exists—the unity that has the Holy Spirit as its Author.

--It is work to endure the self-life: self-assertiveness, self-promotion, self-defensiveness, self-deception, selfishness! Often, the very timing and aim of these sins reveal their sinister nature—they are so pinpointed to break **the bond of peace**.

--Yet the **unity of the Spirit** in the church is not broken by broken people. Those with the Spirit will respond accordingly.

--(I must also add in here that Paul is not describing ecumenicalism or unity of uniformity. We must only work to keep the unity that the Holy Spirit has already created. The Holy Spirit will never unite around what is not true. Pray for the split in the United Methodist Church right now!)

--We will find unity as we walk in humble simplicity and love.

*St. John (Harold St. John): *“He loved to lead his hearers back to the days before sectarianism existed, to remind them that ‘the early church was very simple; all the medicine was in the bottle, but there were no labels: for instance, there were Christians in Rome, but no Romanists; men believed in bishops, but there were no Episcopalians; there was lay preaching, but no Methodists; many held the truth as to baptism, but there were no Baptists; men trembled at the Word of God, but there were no Quakers; the Church was an army of salvation, but there was no Salvation Army; Christian hearts were enlarged to one another, but there were no Open Brethren; there were those who were very careful to preserve the holiness of God’s House, but*

*there were no Exclusive Brethren. In short, the saints gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus, but no-one dared to use a name of a sectarian nature. They had the goods without the labels.'”**

Verses 4-6:

--(4) Here Paul describes in summary the unity of the Spirit.

1) **one body:** There may be many denominations but there is only one true Body of Christ. There is only one type of membership for that body—spiritual life. *There is no Biblical command to make lists, covenants, or symbolic church vows. Formal church membership is a tradition of men that goes wrong when it makes the Word of God of non-effect.*

--Spiritual life through regeneration is the prerequisite for us to join the family of God in new birth. If we are not born again we are not part of His Body no matter how organized, labeled, or historic our profession is.

2) **one Spirit:** This builds on the unity pictured. Just as our human bodies are filled with one spirit—our own—so too the Body of Christ has only one Spirit—His!

1 Corinthians 12:13: For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

--If you don't have the Spirit of God living in you, you are not born again and not part of the one body of Christ—not matter what denomination you are part of. *Calvary Chapel included!*

3) **one hope of your calling:** We have all been called together to one ultimate hope (3:5-6). It can be easy to forget that we actually only have one true hope in Christ. So many other things battle for our attention here and distract us—but death brings us back to reality.

--(5) Here Paul describes the unity we have in Christ. There seems to be a natural progression related to our public profession.

1) **one Lord:** We have one King, one Authority, one Master. There should be no confusion as to Jesus' character as our Lord and Savior.

2) **one faith:** We have one shared faith in and from our one Lord. Our faith rests in His Person but also in the teaching that comes from Him.

Acts 6:7: a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Galatians 1:23: He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.

Jude 3: I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

--A very concrete and certain message has come down to us from the Lord Jesus Christ. The faith is not up for cultural relevance or nuanced changes or debate. It is not ours to change. It is not ours to pray about, test by human experience, or vote on. If we do, it is no longer the **one faith** spoken of here. *The exaltation of human scholarship (liberal/progressive theology), human tradition (Catholic/Orthodox), and human experience (crazy charismatics/cults) are the reasons for different “expressions” of the Christian faith.*

3) **one baptism**: There is some debate here as to what is being talked about—our one baptism into the Body of Christ or water baptism? (I think the baptism of the Spirit would be included in the first.)

--To me, the context of public profession in relation to our Lord Jesus Christ and our public faith lends simply and cleanly to water baptism. We all are baptized (however we use the water!) into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

1 Corinthians 1:13: Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

--There is unity in our public declaration of our old man dying with Christ and the new man living for and in Christ.

--(6) Here the work of the Trinity is completed with reference to the Fatherhood of God. We are now under and eternally connected to His Fatherly care. This would of course bring them back to the truths of **2:18 + 3:14-15**.

--We are all under, in, and filled with Him and His work.

John 17:20-21: I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

--Our unity in the Spirit with the Father, the Son, and the Body of Christ is an answer to the Son's prayer and a worthy testimony to the world around us.

Verse 7:

--Now Paul is going to show that our unity is particularly evident in our diversity and not uniformity. Every member working together despite different functions or gifts.

--**But to each one of us**. . . Each individual member—every saved person—has a gift from Christ to be used in the Body of Christ.

--**grace was given**. . . You might feel like you don't deserve it. Like God would never use someone like you. Well, that excuse is dealt with by the fact that the gift is part of God's grace and it is given in God's grace. We are not worthy to have but He is worthy to give!

--**according to the measure of Christ's gift**. . . The Greek word for **measure** (*metron*) is used twice more in this section in **13+16**—specifically speaking about Him and us. The idea here is that Christ has the Spirit of God without measure but He gives to us in measures. Christ measures to each His own as it pleases Him.

--This means two things:

1) Whatever gift you have is a part of His own and is exceedingly pleasing to Him. If we refuse our place in the body we don't become something else. We atrophy and rot.

2) He has more to give than we could ever imagine. If you desire the best gifts—go to Him and ask! *Don't complain to other humans or about other humans. Anyone complaining about their gifts being "held back" or not given "opportunity" by man is in the flesh.*

Verses 8-10:

--(8) **Therefore.** . . . clearly ties us back to the idea of Christ giving gifts to His body.

--Here Paul quotes from **Psalm 68:18** and applies it to Christ as the Messiah. There is a bunch of scholarly debate here because Paul changes a word or two from the psalm. I think the answer to this supposed problem is very simple:

*Hodge (Ephesians): *"The divine writers of the New Testament, filled with the same Spirit which moved the ancient prophets, are not tied to the mere form but frequently give the general sense of the passages which they quote."**

--Paul is proving Christ, as the Giver of these spiritual gifts, was foretold. This means that Christ is the Messiah of the OT and proves His deity by showing that such a prophecy could only be fulfilled in Him—the only One to descend and ascend.

--(9-10) There are two basic ideas here in what is said that are debated. Both depend on our interpretation of the phrase—**the lower parts of the earth.**

1) The phrase can describe this earth as opposed to heaven or the womb as it is used in: **Ps. 139:15; Isa. 44:23; Jn. 3:13; Phil. 2:8-9.** This would make the emphasis Jesus' incarnation and the captivity and captives spoken of sin, death, and Satan (**Col. 2:15-16**).

2) The phrase can also describe the grave and the realm of the dead, or Hades as is used in: **Ps. 63:9; Ez. 32:24; Acts 2:29-33.** This would make the emphasis Jesus' descent into Hades after His death on the cross (not that He suffered in hell which the Scriptures say clearly He did not), His proclamation of victory, and His triumphant procession of those waiting outside of God's direct presence back into the Father's direct presence (**Mt. 16:18; 1 Peter 3:19-22; Rev. 1:18**).

--Even the illustration doesn't give totally clarity because the Roman Victory Parade would include both captive enemies and those freed from their reign. Either interpretation fits, but I would personally lean toward to second because the context fits Christ's relation to His own, more than His victory over Satanic forces or powers which seems more imported into the text.

--Either way, Paul's teaching here is that this prophecy could only be fulfilled by Jesus Christ. His victorious Ascension secures for Him the right to pour out the gift of the Holy Spirit on His Church and to fill all things with His rule and reign.

Romans 14:9: For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord or both the dead and the living.

--Christ is doing His work in the world and **to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.** We have received directly from His resurrected hand and we will be held accountable to return what He has given to Him.

*Saphir (The Compassion of Jesus): *"The Holy Ghost is the dew, the heavenly power which gives form, and freshness, and color to all.*

Here is endless variety. Not every believer is like a stately cedar or majestic oak; but the tiniest and weakest flower shows forth God's praise. The gold of Sheba and the cup of cold water are alike to the glory and joy of God. Some have the gift of knowledge, profound wisdom in meek and lowly hearts, spiritual understanding (the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him); others excel in the ministry of love, in acts of kindness and brotherly help. Some have the gift of prayer and the priestly heart of intercession; others are sons of consolation to the afflicted. Some are led into deep views of sin and high views of divine sovereignty and grace; others walk in the lower yet divine valley of the peace-breathing promises of the Savior's grace. Some can

*feed the strong with knowledge; others are more skillful and gentle in giving milk to babes. Here we have manifold life and beauty. The hosannas of little children and the wisdom of Paul the aged; the active service of Martha and the meditation of Mary; Peter, the man of rock-like firmness and strength; John, leaning on the Savior's bosom in loving adoration. Mary anoints the body of Christ for His burial, and the Master pronounces her praise, "She hath done what she could." Onesiphorus refreshed Paul, and is not ashamed of his chain. All glorify Him; one Spirit inhabits them; they are constrained by one love. In a thousand various ways God's children live to Him and glorify His name. Manifold, and yet one life; variety, and yet harmony; for all is in Christ—in Him every holy desire, every good word, every righteous and loving act. As the apostle says: "I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." And thus all are one in Him, who filleth all in all."**