

Welcome To

Malvern Bible Chapel



Walk in Unity

Part of the Ephesians Series

Ephesians 4:1-16

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Walk in Unity

Introduction:

- Glad to be home again after our 50th Anniversary trip!
- Along with Romans, Ephesians is a vital book for every mature Christian to know in depth.
- Review 1st half of Ephesians (see outline): Doctrine—The Believer's Blessings in Christ (1-3)
- Preview 2nd half of Ephesians: Duty—The Believer's Behavior (Walk, v.1) in Christ (4-6)
- The Christian life is compared to a walk. It begins with the first step of faith, it involves progress, and it demands balance and strength. Walking comes before running (Heb. 12:1-2) or standing in battle as we'll later in this series (Eph. 6:11-20).

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Ephesians 4:1-3 (NKJV)

4 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

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Body of Lesson:

A. Walk in Unity (4:1-16)

One sentence to distill today's lesson would be: "Unified individual Christians make a unified mature local church."

1. Paul pleads for Christian unity (vv.1-3)

- We are called into one body; therefore as we seek to walk in unity, we are walking worthy of the calling (vocation) we have from God. (v.1)
- Paul described this high calling in chapters 1-3; now he pleads with us to live up to those blessings. How do we do this? (vv.2-3)
In at least 5 ways:
 - With all lowliness (humility)—putting Christ first, others second, and me last
 - With gentleness (meekness)—strength under control (not weakness)
 - With longsuffering (long-tempered)—endure discomfort without fighting back

Walk in Unity

A. Walk in Unity (4:1-16)

1. Paul pleads for Christian unity (vv.1-3) (cont.)

- How do we live up to the blessings? (vv.2-3) In at least 5 ways:
 - With all lowliness (humility)—putting Christ first, others second, and me last
 - With gentleness (meekness)—strength under control (not weakness)
 - With longsuffering (long-tempered)—endure discomfort without fighting back
 - Bearing with one another in love (forbearance)—Love suffers long and is kind (1 Cor. 13:4)
 - Endeavoring (eagerly and constantly work) to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace—when the peace of God rules in our hearts, then we build unity (Col. 3:15)
- We don't live for Christ to get something; we live for Christ because He has already done so much!
- We don't manufacture unity, but we maintain the unity which already exists in the body. It is an organic, living union and unity. (see John 17:20-23)

Walk in Unity

Ephesians 4:4-6 (NKJV)

⁴ *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in 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 you all.

Walk in Unity

A. Walk in Unity (4:1-16)

1. Paul pleads for Christian unity (vv.1-3)

2. Grounds for unity in the universal church (vv. 4-6)

There are seven basic spiritual realities that unite all true Christians:

- One body (the body of Christ in which every believer is a member, the church universal, with many local churches as expressions of it)
- One Spirit (the same Holy Spirit indwells each believer, so we belong to each other in the Lord)
- One hope of your calling (the return of the Lord to take His church to heaven)
- One Lord (central in the list of seven unities)—this is our Lord Jesus Christ. If we all agree that He saved us, lives for us, and will someday take us to be with Him in heaven for all eternity, how can we not walk together in unity in all the other details of our Christian life?

Walk in Unity

A. Walk in Unity (4:1-16)

1. Paul pleads for Christian unity (vv.1-3)

2. Grounds for unity in the universal church (vv. 4-6)

There are seven basic spiritual realities that unite all true Christians: (cont.)

- One faith (The faith)—the body of fundamental doctrine that is taught, guarded, and committed to others (2 Tim. 2:2)
- One baptism (most likely the baptism of the Spirit when He places the believing sinner into the body of Christ at conversion) (1 Cor. 12:13). This is not an experience after conversion (we will look at the command to be filled with the Spirit later, Eph. 5:18).
As far as the local church is concerned, we also have water baptism of believers to publicly identify with what has already taken place at the moment of salvation.
- One God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all—the marvelous oneness of believers in the family of God. This is a unity to be constantly worked at; it is especially difficult for believers who did not grow up in a loving Christian home where the father was not modeling God the Father to comprehend this!

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Ephesians 4:7-11 (NKJV)

⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore He says:

“When He ascended on high,
He led captivity captive,
And gave gifts to men.”

⁹ (Now this, “He ascended”—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

¹¹ And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

Walk in Unity

A. Walk in Unity (4:1-16)

1. Paul pleads for Christian unity (vv.1-3)
2. Grounds for unity in the universal church (vv. 4-6)
3. Gifts for unity in the local church (vv. 7-11)

- When Christ ascended to heaven, by grace he gave various motivational spiritual gifts (see Rom. 12:3-8). These are fundamental gifts and each believer has at least one. A spiritual gift is a God-given ability to serve God and other Christians in such a way that Christ is glorified and believers are edified.

Walk in Unity

- Christ also gave gifted individual Christians to minister in the local church, listed here:
 - He gave some to be apostles (v.11a)—one sent with a mission; lay foundation
 - He gave some to be prophets (v.11b)—proclaim the Word of God when needed
 - He gave some to be evangelists (v.12c)—bearers of good news; win converts
 - He gave some to be pastor-teachers (v.12d) (list complete? See 1 Cor.12:28-31)—one office with two ministries: shepherd the sheep (Acts 20:28); feed and lead the sheep using God’s Word (1 Pet. 5:1-4, where “elder” is the same as “pastor”)
- He also describes the public manifestation (effects that can be seen in the local church as a result of gifted Christians using their individual spiritual gifts) (see 1 Cor. 12:4-11).

Walk in Unity

A. Walk in Unity (4:1-16)

1. Paul pleads for Christian unity (vv.1-3)
2. Grounds for unity in the universal church (vv. 4-6)
3. Gifts for unity in the local church (vv. 7-11)
4. Goal of the unified local church (vv. 12-16)
 - The pastor-teacher(s) must nourish the saints with Word of God (Bible) and equip them (bring them to spiritual maturity) which in turn edifies the body of Christ (the church).
 - Each saint shares in the growth of the church. The local church is built up by the Word, not man-man programs, entertainment, etc. (v.12)
 - A mature local assembly, walking in unity (not uniformity), is thus described (vv.13-16):

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Ephesians 4:12-16 (NKJV)

¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect [mature] man [or woman], to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint [part] supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Walk in Unity

- Members of the local church grow by feeding on the Word and ministering to one another. Notice the evidences of spiritual growth in this passage: (1) Christlikeness (v.13); (2) Stability (v.14); (3) Truth joined with love (v.15); and (4) Cooperation (v.16).
- So then spiritual unity is not something we manufacture. It is something we already have in Christ, and we must protect and maintain it. Truth unites but lies divide. Love unites but selfishness divides. Speak the truth in love to equip and edify one another!

B. Walk in Purity (4:17-32)

(Stay tuned for this next week, Lord willing.)

Walk in Unity

Application:

Four questions each one of us must answer after studying this passage:

1. Am I living up to my blessings in Christ?
2. Am I demonstrating the spiritual realities that unite me with all true Christians?
3. Am I using my spiritual gift to unify and build up our local church?
4. Am I promoting unity by feeding on God's Word and ministering to others?