

EXPOSITION OF EPHESIANS

Message #12

Ephesians 4:1-10

One of the arguments people use against teaching systematic theology and doctrine in church is that they just want something practical. What they don't realize is that systematic theology and doctrine is very practical. It is sound doctrine that leads to sound lives. Some people take the position that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you live right. The truth is you will not live right until you know and believe God's truth.

In the first three chapters of Ephesians, we have been instructed in the amazing deep, complex doctrines that are connected to the sovereign grace of God. Paul has developed the great theological truths about God's sovereign grace in saving us. Now we come to chapter 4 and we see how that grace should be evidenced in our lives. In fact, the key word of the next chapters is the word "walk" (4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). This is the way the theology of grace should affect our lifestyle.

Now before he launches into this practical section, he again reminds us that we have been called by God into a relationship with Him. God chose us; God called us and God saved us. What Paul says in these verses is this:

IN VIEW OF THE AMAZING GRACE OF GOD THAT HAS CALLED US INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM WE SHOULD LIVE OUR LIVES IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THIS GREAT CALLING AND PURSUE UNITY.

One commentator said it this way: "**Harmonize your conduct with your calling.**"

The adverb "worthy" (αξίως) is one that means to weigh something on a scale to show its weight worth (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 43). What Paul is saying is I want you to weigh the grace of God in your heart and mind and in view of that, live a life that reflects the scale worth of God's grace to you. In other words, calculate the worth of the grace of God and live our life in a way that reflects the value of the sovereign grace of God.

Many years ago Dr. S. Lewis Johnson read a commentary on the book of Ephesians. In that commentary he said was a simple outline of the book that impressed him. **In Ephesians chapters 1-3 we see how God sees us in Christ and in Ephesians chapters 4-6 we see how the world should see Christ in us** (*Ephesians 4:1-6*, p. 2). That simple little outline is impressive and it certainly does give us great insight into this book and these next chapters.

AFFECT #1 – God's sovereign grace calling to us should affect our attitudes toward each other. **4:2-3**

Now because this list of things sits in a context that stresses unity, we may assume that if these attitudes are absent, unity in the church will also be absent. Christian unity demands these attitudes. These attitudes should characterize our entire life view of the grace of God and they should characterize our entire church. The attitudes are to be displayed in the church toward our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is not a call for unity with the world, but in the church:

Attitude #1 - God's grace should cause us to be humble . **4:2a**

Every believer should be characterized by humility in view of the fact that God's grace touched our life. That word "humility" (ταπεινοφροσύνη) speaks of having a lowly mindset; to have a spirit that is lowly not haughty. This word is just the opposite of having a high-mindedness (*Ibid.*, p. 439).

God's grace should humble every one of us and if we see ourselves accurately we should live with a lowly humble mindset for the rest of our lives. There should never be a time when we think more highly or less highly of ourselves than we ought. We should think honestly and humbly.

Attitude #2 - God's grace should cause us to be gentle . **4:2b**

The word "gentle" (πραυτης) is one that speaks of a gentle and meek spirit (*Ibid.*, pp. 376-377). Dr. Thomas Constable of Dallas Seminary said that this particular word means that there will be an absence of a disposition that demands one's personal rights. This very attitude was demonstrated by Jesus Christ who was "gentle and humble in heart" (Matt. 11:29).

Attitude #3 - God's grace should cause us to be patient . **4:2c**

This word "patience" (μακροθυμιας) is one that means we should have a patient, longsuffering, persevering spirit about us. We should be long-tempered, not short-tempered (*Ibid.*, p. 276).

Attitude #4 - God's grace should cause us to forbear in love. **4:2d**

Now the participle "forbear" (ανεχω) presents the idea of enduring or bearing with something. The object of the participle is "one another" and that pronoun means another of the same kind. The tense of the participle is present and the voice of it is middle. What this means is that Paul is saying that each of us has the responsibility in and of ourselves to endure each other and bear with each other that are in the same family in a true context of biblical love. God's grace to us should prompt us to demonstrate God's loving grace to each other.

Paul said in Colossians that we are to "forebear one another and forgive one another" just as Christ forgives us (Col. 3:13).

AFFECT #2 – God's sovereign grace calling of us should affect our pursuit of unity with each other. **4:3-6**

In a true church where God is working, Satan will try to destroy unity and he will work through people to do it. In view of God's grace to us we should always strive for unity in the church.

Verse 3 says we are to be diligent to preserve unity, which is produced by the Holy Spirit.

What is so interesting here is what Paul uses as a basis for unity and it is doctrine. This is so foreign to the religious world that says we need to be ecumenically unified but we don't want to stress doctrine. Let us all be one big, loving family, but forget about any divisive doctrines.

Now Paul does just the opposite here. He builds a doctrinal basis for true biblical unity. As A.S. Wood says, Paul uses a “crescendo of nouns” (*Ephesians*, p. 55). He brings out seven unified theological elements which become the basis for our pursuing unity. Every believer here tonight is united by these seven theological realities regardless of where the person is spiritually.

Theological Element #1 - We are all part of one body .

Every believer is part of the universal body of Jesus Christ. Paul said elsewhere for by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body (I Cor.12:13). This is a reference to the fact that every single true believer is in the body of Jesus Christ or the Church universal. In this world are multiple religions and religious cults, but there is only one body of Jesus Christ and every believer is a member of that body. That thought that we are part of the body of Jesus Christ should promote a unity among us.

Theological Element #2 - We all have one Spirit .

Every single believer was convicted by the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity and when the person believed, that same Holy Spirit was given as a down payment pledge (1:14) and indwelt every believer and baptized every believer into Christ and sealed every believer forever, which guarantees we are part of the family of God forever.

Theological Element #3 - We all have one hope .

Now we know that Jesus Christ is our hope (I Tim. 1:1): The hope of our sins being forgiven, and the hope of us going to heaven, and the hope of us reigning with Him. He is our one hope. We also know that the fact that Jesus Christ will come and end the Church Age by the Rapture and take us to be with Him is called our blessed hope (Titus 2:13). So the one hope we all have is the hope of Jesus Christ.

The one hope that we all have is that Jesus Christ will not leave us here forever, but He will take us out of here to be with Him. We all have one hope that we will have the honor and the privilege of sharing the glory of God at the end of the Church Age through Jesus Christ.

Theological Element #4 - We all have one Lord .

The one Lord that we have is Jesus Christ. He is the one to whom we all owe allegiance because He is our sovereign master and ruler and Savior. He came to this earth for us, He died for us and He will come and get us.

Theological Element #5 - We all have one faith .

Now faith is the matter of what we believe. Our faith is critical on two fronts. **First**, there is only one saving faith and every believer has faith in Jesus Christ which saves him. Every single believer here tonight is united by the fact that we all believe that only Jesus Christ can save us from our sins and that it is only by faith in Him by which we are justified.

Second, there is only one body of truth that presents a faith system worth believing and that body of truth is inspired Scriptures. As Paul said elsewhere, faith comes by hearing the Word of God. So every believer here tonight is united by a faith in Jesus Christ, which is a faith that came through the written Scriptures.

Theological Element #6 - We all have experienced one baptism .

There are multiple ritual water baptisms in Scripture but there is only one real baptism that is truly common to every believer here tonight. There are people here tonight who have been baptized in water more than once, but there was only one real baptism that put them into Christ once and that was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Paul said for by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body (I Cor. 12:13).

There are some who take the position that this is a reference to believer's ritual water baptism. However, I agree with Dr. Chafer who believes this is a reference to Spirit baptism. We know that in Ephesus some of John's disciples were baptized twice (Acts 19:1-7).

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer said this concerning this text: "Apparently no one ministry of the Spirit accomplishes so much for the believer as does His baptism, by which we are joined to the Lord, and, being thus in Him, we are made partakers of all that He is, even every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. Certainly this all-important real baptism is not here set aside as unworthy of consideration and as secondary to ritual baptism; nor could it be said of any form of ritual baptism that it is a unifying agency" (*The Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 109).

Theological Element #7 - We all have one God .

Now Paul ends with this because this is the crescendo that leads to God the Father who is the head of the blessed Trinity and who is responsible for sovereign grace that saved us. Every believer has a relationship with the one true God who is the Father of all believers. We are connected to the one and only true God who is the Father over everything.

God's unity in His grace theology should affect our unity with each other based on this unified doctrine. Sound doctrine should unite us not divide us. As Dr. Chafer said, Paul presents here the strongest possible argument for our unity in that the Sovereign God let us be united to Him.

AFFECT #3 – God's grace should affect our concept of our grace gifts which was given by Jesus Christ. **4:7-10**

Paul now moves from the theological elements that produce unity of spirit to the gifts that are to be used in the unity of spirit. We all are to have unity in the church but this unity does not mean uniformity in gifts.

If any church is to have unity, it needs to realize this very important grace/gift point- every believer receives a grace gift from Jesus Christ but not the same measure of the grace gift. This point is clearly stated in verse 7.

Apparently the gift issue was causing some problems in the church of Ephesus. If you spend your entire Christian life worrying about someone else's gift or wanting their gift, you will never demonstrate the wonderful grace calling of God in your life and you will not have the unity you should have in your own life nor will you promote the unity that is to exist in the church. This is a critical point. People can become so jealous of someone who has a particular grace gift that they want it so bad that they miss their own gift and are not at peace with themselves or anyone else.

Let us say there is someone with a gift of giving and God prospers this person at a very unusual level so that person may utilize the gift in God's work. Others see the prosperity and envy it and want it and as a result don't go to work on the gift God has given them and they don't strive for unity with the one who has the gift they want. Someone else sees a minister who is being used of God and they want his gift and his ministry. The problem is they were not given his gift or ministry and if you spend your life wanting someone else's gift, you will miss the gift that God has for you. I have been in churches where someone is teaching and it becomes evident that their gift is not teaching. Paul says a key to unity is to realize that Jesus Christ gives different spiritual gifts to the members of His body.

Now **verse 8** begins with the strongest inferential conjunction in the Greek language "therefore" ($\delta\iota\omicron$). According to Dana and Mantey it has very strong causal meaning. We could understand this to mean "for which very reason" (*A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 245). What this contextually means is that **verses 8-10** gives us the reason why He is in a position to give His gifts to His body. In fact, Paul begins **verse 8** by quoting Psalm 68:18 which says God has the right to receive gifts from men and God has the sovereign right to give gifts to men.

Paul says that Jesus Christ has every right to give any measure of gift to whomever He wants because He is the one who paid the full price for the Church. It is His body, which He paid for with His own body and He has every right to give anyone in the body the gift and part He wants him to have, and who in the world are we to question Him or someone's gift?

He has the right to give whatever gift He wants to whomever He wants, because He left heaven and descended to earth and then He went to the cross, took all of our sin and God's wrath upon Himself, was buried and then descended into the earth and made a triumphant display of Himself, and led captives free from sin and saved them and is still saving them and then ascended back up into heaven. Now notice what **verse 8** says, He came to this earth and captured sin captives out of pure grace and made them His grace captives and has ascended back up into heaven and those who are saved by grace are already seated there with Him.

I would say He has every right to give any gift to whomever He wants. Jesus Christ is in charge of everything. As **verse 10** says "He is above all things and He fills all things." He can give any gift to any person and if we waste our time envying someone else's gift or wanting their gift, we are the worst level of stupid. What every believer should be thinking is God's grace included me. Jesus Christ included me in His plan and He has given me a gift and I want to develop it and use it for His glory for the rest of my life. I want to walk in a manner worthy of my grace calling.