

THE POWER OF UNITY

EPHESIANS 4:1-6

INTRODUCTION:

1. It is agreed that this section 1-16 emphasizes unity.
2. This unity is not external and mechanical, but internal and organic.
3. It is not superimposed, but proceeds from within due to the power of the indwelling Christ.
4. These first six verses can be summarized as follows: "The Church is spiritually one; therefore, let it be spiritually one!"
5. v.1, Paul states that we are to conduct ourselves in association with the responsibilities which our relationship to God has imposed upon us and with the blessings which our calling has brought.
6. Our responsibility is to believe as children of God: believing His teachings, trusting His promises and obeying His will.
7. The blessings we have received are described in the earlier chapters; we are chosen, we have a new life, we are reconciled to God and to man, and we are free to access the throne of God.
8. In other words, Paul is saying, "If you are believers, live as believers. Be who you are!"
9. This is the whole idea in the word, "worthy." It means to balance the scales. My daily living must be equal to the position I have in Christ. God is not asking us to be God-like, only to be godly.
10. Paul then give a seven-fold description of the Christian life; who we should be:

I. **HUMILITY** v.2

- A. Foundational – progression follows.
- B. Compound word that means to think or judge with lowliness.
 - 1. It is easy to think highly of ourselves.
 - 2. Ill. Don Shula
- C. This was a foreign concept to the Romans and Greeks, they had no word for this idea.
- D. Pagan writers borrowed this word from Christians to speak derogatorily of Christians because humility was a sign of weakness to them.
- E. Humility begins with self-awareness. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote, “humility is the virtue by which a man becomes conscious of his own unworthiness.”
- F. Humility involves Christ-awareness. He is the only standard by which we can judge our walk.
- G. Humility involves God-awareness. Isaiah saw his unworthiness in light of God’s holiness.
- H. When Paul looked at himself in self-awareness, he saw the worst of sinners. I Tim. 1:15.
- I. When Peter looked at himself in Christ-awareness, he said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinner.”
- J. When Job looked at himself in God-awareness, he said, “Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”
- K. Pride is behind every conflict, and humility is behind every spiritual success.

- L. III. During the days of slavery in the West Indies, a group of Moravian Christians found it impossible to witness to the slaves because they were almost totally separated from the ruling class- many of whom felt it beneath them even to speak to a slave. Two young missionaries, however, were determined to reach those oppressed peoples at any cost. In order to fulfill God's calling they joined the slaves. They worked and lived beside the slaves, becoming totally identified with them – sharing their work, their beatings and their abuse. It is not strange that two missionaries soon won the hearts of those slaves, many of whom accepted for themselves the God who could move men to such loving selflessness.

II. GENTLENESS

- A. This can also be translated “meekness.”
- B. Humility always produces gentleness.
- C. Many dictionaries define meekness in terms such as “timid” or “a deficiency in courage or spirit,” but that is far from the Biblical meaning.
- D. This word refers to that which is mild-spirited and self-controlled.
- E. It was used of wild animals that were tamed, especially of horses that were broken and trained. The animal would still have strength and spirit, but its will was under the control of its master.
- F. **“Gentleness” is power under control.** Biblically, it is power under the control of God.
- G. David displayed such gentleness or meekness when he refused to kill King Saul in the cave near En Gedi, although he had an easy opportunity (1 Sam. 24:1-7).

H. It's easy to become out of control or respond with sinful anger.

I. Pr. 25:28, "He who has no control over His own spirit is like a city broken down and has no walls." NIV

III. PATIENCE

A. Lit. long tempered or longsuffering.

B. The patient person endures the promise of God but had to wait many years its fulfillment.

C. Abraham received the promise of God but had to wait many years to see its fulfillment.

D. Heb. 6:15 says, "And so, after waiting patiently, Abraham obtained the promise."

E. Noah built a ship in the wilderness far from any water. He stayed at it for 120 years building the Ark while preaching to his neighbors.

F. A Christian wife is married to an unbeliever. She stays married to him and by means of her patient love and witness she attempts to win him for Christ.

G. Patience must also be demonstrated with believers. All of us have our faults and weaknesses.

H. Each of us should say that in view of the fact that God has been so patient, longsuffering toward me though my sin is clearly evident before Him, I can be patient with my brother.

IV. ENDURANCE

A. The mention of patience is followed by endurance.

B. "bearing or enduring with one another."

- C. The person who endures tries to pay no attention to the injury he has received.
- D. He holds himself up, is not shaken but continues to stand tall and firm.
- E. We might say today, "I just have to put up with it."
- F. Sometimes we don't mean exactly what Paul had in mind here.
- G. We may simply be referring to being hurt without open resentment, though we boil within.
- H. Paul, however, is talking about an inner disposition. That is why he uses the next word or step.

V. LOVE

- A. Peter writes the "love covers a multitude of sins." 1 Pt. 4:8
- B. It throws a blanket over the sins of others. It does not justify or excuse them, but it keeps the sins from becoming anything more.
- C. Pr. 10:12, "Hatred stirs up conflicts, but love covers over all offenses."
- D. This love is agape love because only agape love gives continuously and unconditionally.
- E. Eros love is essentially self-love because it cares for others only because of what it can get from them.
- F. Philia love is reciprocal love, love that gives as log as it receives.

- G. But agape love is an unselfish love, love that willingly gives whether it receives in return or not. It is the love of the Cross.

VI. UNITY

- A. V.3, “Diligently keeping the unity of the Spirit.”
- B. v.3 “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit.”
- C. The ultimate outcome of humility, gentleness, patience, endurance, and love will be unity.
- D. Unity is a prerequisite for promoting health in the church, advancing the cause of missions and for overcoming Satan and his allies.
- E. It does not come of its own, but is the result of “effort.”
- F. It means to be diligent. It is a holy zeal that demands our full dedication.
- G. This effort does not happen once or occasionally but constantly.
- H. Lit. “making every effort.” It is continual action.
- I. Notice it is unity “of the Spirit.”
- J. Unity is not and cannot be created by the church. It is created by the Spirit.
- K. The church’s responsibility, through the lives of individual believers, is to keep the unity by faithfully living a life worthy of God’s calling manifesting Christ to the world by oneness in Him.
- L. The world is always seeking but never finding unity.

M. All the laws, conferences, treaties, accords and agreements fail to bring unity.

VII. PEACE

- A. The bond that preserves unity is peace.
- B. V.3, "With the peace that binds us."
- C. It is the spiritual belt that surrounds and binds God's people together.
- D. When there is strife there is disunity.
- E. Peace, on the other hand, promises unity.
- F. This bond of peace is described by Paul in Phil. 2:2 when he says, "make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose."

CONCLUSION:

1. These descriptions are probably the most powerful testimony the church can have, because they are in such contrast to the attitudes and disunity of the world.
2. No program or method, no matter how carefully planned and executed, can open the door to the gospel in the way individual believers can do when they are demonstrating humility, gentleness, patience, endurance, love unity and peace.