

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 4

Ephesians 4:1-16 – The Unified Growth of the Church into Maturity

After the doctrinal barrage from Paul explaining that Gentile believers and Israeli believers are now part of one new man. Paul is emphatic about living up to this expectation, there must not any division in the church and both Jews and Gentiles are to serve in this new administration.

Ephesians 4:1-16 – Initial Observations

Notice all the references to unity in verses 1-16

Showing tolerance to one another	Over all
Unity of the spirit	Through all
The bond of peace	In all
One Body	Building up of the Body
One Spirit	Until we all attain
Called into one hope of your calling	Unity of the faith/knowledge of the Son of God
One Lord	The whole body
One Baptism	Being fitted together with (sun)
One God and Father	Held together with (sun)
Of all	The growth of the body

Twenty references to unity and togetherness. What is the point? Doctrine without unity profits nothing. For the Ephesian saints, the Jews and the Gentiles must be able to come together for them to be effective.

Most state this begins the hortatory section of Ephesians because of verse 1 imploring the church to walk in a manner worthy of the calling. But the content of verses 2-16 is about the building up of the body together.

From verse 17 through the rest of the book, the text has direct and specific instructions to bring about the growth and unity of the church. If the church is not unified, then the work of the body in the next section is ineffective.

Ephesians 4:1-16 – Textual Observations

Seven sentences in these 16 verses.

1. I exhort you to live in a manner worthy of the calling.
2. There is one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.
3. The grace was given to each one.
4. It says when He ascended on high, He captured those in captivity, He gave gifts to me.
5. What is this “He ascended?” If not that also He descended.
6. The one who descended himself is also the one who ascended.
7. And He Himself gave the apostles and the prophets and the evangelists and the pastors and teachers.

Ephesians 3:1-3 – Exposition

Unity is the goal but not in a vacuum. Our unity is first implored by Paul.

The first word in the text is “παρακαλέω parakaleō” to call to one’s side, to encourage, comfort, to be in the trenches with someone and help them. This word pertains to a sergeant, not a general. Paul is not simply instructing them He also lived it with them.

Acts 20:4-6 – Paul’s most trusted companions and workers in the faith were two Jews, one half-Jew (Timothy), Two Asians (Probably Arab), Three Macedonians (Greek European). The other Jew is not listed by name but is the narrator (for us) that would be Luke.

Paul lived an example of unity in the ministry. It did not matter where they were from, what mattered is who they are in Christ Jesus, their qualifications as an Elder, and their dedication to the mission.

To walk worthy is to have a manner of life that is worthy of the calling by which you were called.

The calling seems to be a euphemism for the Gospel (Philippians 1:27). The gospel is the call and when they believe they are said to have the calling (1 Corinthians 1:22-31; 7:20-24).

The calling is repeated in Ephesians 4:4 which was previously eluded in 1:18-19, where we see that the hope of His calling is the inheritance of the saints.

This walk is to be done while keeping in proper Godly character.

With all humility - ταπεινοφροσύνη tapeinophrosunē – This compound word takes the typical word for lowly and adds a thinking word, to think lowly of oneself. But this is never a negative term in Scripture. The idea in every text is to place others as more important than ourselves.

Grammatically, *gentleness* is combined with *humility* in this sentence - πραότης praotēs means the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance. We can see that there is a similarity with humility.

With patience while forbearing - μακροθυμία makrothumia - state of remaining tranquil while awaiting an outcome or state of being able to bear up under provocation. The word literally means to be long to wrath; it takes a lot to get you angry.

Grammatically, *patience* and *showing tolerance* are connected. ἀνέχω anecho – to hold oneself up against, to bear with. The patience and bearing with one another is not out of obligation but out of love.

In love (ἐν ἀγάπῃ / en agapē) is probably a statement of means; the source of these qualities is an unconditional, self-sacrificial desire and activity that is for the benefit of the other person.

While being diligent – an adverbial participle of the verb “σπουδάζω spoudazō” to make haste towards, to show eagerness, to have a sense of urgency toward. This urgency is for the preservation of unity. The Ephesian church is to emphasize and have a high awareness of unity breakers.

If they were to preserve unity, we must ask what breaks unity? It is unity of the Spirit. The Spirit communicates the truth of doctrine through (verse 11) apostles and prophets. Evangelists and pastor/teachers are recommunicating the revelation (3:5).

This can also be understood as keeping or preserving spiritual unity as opposed to fleshly unity. As stated previously, our commonality is not in the flesh but in the fact that we hold to the same spiritual truth. We have a spiritual connection.

It is important to distinguish between preserving unity and being passive. Unity is established when we all can observe the truth and agree to an objective standard. In the same body, Timothy is instructed to not permit strange doctrines (1 Timothy 1:3-7).

Tolerance is not agreeing to disagree on matters of theology. This is the difference. We can disagree on a particular understanding of a verse, but when we disagree on theology, we must hash it out using the Scripture as our standard so that we come into unity about the nature, character, and attributes of God.

Tolerance, then, is being patient with others as they grow in doctrine or when they make a mistake and offend another believer. Personality conflicts should not divide if all parties are doctrinally unified.

Ephesians 4:1-3 – Conclusion

Doctrine without unity profits nothing. For the Ephesian saints, the Jews and the Gentiles must be able to come together to be effective. We may not have the same paradigm as they did but there is always a battle for unity. We also cannot be concerned with all professing believers; our responsibility is with this local body and others with whom we have close associations. This is where we fight for unity.