

The Worthy Walk (Part IV)

December 13, 2002

Ephesians 4:1-6

1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 [There is] one body and one Spirit, just as also 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 over all and through all and in all.

- *What are the five essential characteristics that Paul identifies in verses 2 & 3?*

1. Humility

- *How did we define humility?*

2. Gentleness

- *How did we define gentleness?*

3. Patience

- *How did we define patience?*

Remember: Patience is that long-suffering which makes allowance for others' shortcomings, faults and failures. It endures wrong rather than flying into a rage or desiring vengeance. It is the ability to endure discomfort, pain and trial without fighting back.

4. Forbearing Love

Paul has already acknowledged the love that the Ephesians have shown for all the saints (Ephesians 1:15). He has already discussed God's great love with which He loved us (Ephesians 2:4) and He has prayed that the Ephesians might come to a full knowledge of the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:17-19). Now he emphasizes the need to demonstrate the necessary characteristic of forbearing love in the worthy walk.

The NASB translates this *showing forbearance in love*, while the NASB Update translates *showing tolerance in love*. The NIV translates it *bearing with one another in love*.

Forbearing love is really the action side of patience. *Forbearance* is very similar in meaning to patience. It emphasizes a willingness to forgive and involves empathizing with the other person.

To show patience requires love, which ought to be the guiding principle for all of a believer's actions.

- *Is this necessarily easy to do?*

The idea of bearing with one another presupposes that, at times, loving others will be a burden. Believers must be willing to carry the load without expecting reward or thanks. It requires real work and a real effort!

The term used here is AGAPE. It speaks of a thoughtful, volitional, and purposeful love that wills to love even the unlovely. It speaks of the very love of God Himself. It speaks of loving a person as God loves him. It speaks of a genuine and sacrificial love. Paul describes this kind of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8:

"Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."

5. Unity

The ultimate outcome of humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearing love is *being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (vs. 3).

- ***What do you suppose that it means to be diligent?***

The Greek term is in the present tense, which emphasizes a continuous action.

We should be constantly endeavoring, striving or working toward unity. The term describes a holy zeal that demands full and consistent dedication.

- ***What kind of unity is Paul speaking of here?***

True unity is only possible when we submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit—the Spirit originates and sustains oneness among believers. If we are all submitting ourselves to the Holy Spirit and setting our minds on things above (having a heavenly mind-set) then we will be unified. But when we acquire a selfish mind-set, the result is usually disagreement and disharmony (cf. Philippians 4:2-3).

- ***What is the bond that preserves unity?***

Peace is the spiritual belt that surrounds and binds God's holy people together. It is the bond that Paul described in Philippians as "being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose" (Philippians 2:2).

Humility gives birth to gentleness, gentleness gives birth to patience, patience gives birth to forbearing love, and all four characteristics preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. In other words one characteristic leads to the other and all have unity as their ultimate outcome.

- ***How does Paul emphasize the need for unity in verses 4-6?***

Paul emphasizes unity of the Spirit by reciting features of oneness that are germane to our doctrine and life. Notice that he does not develop these here but simply lists the particular areas of oneness/unity that should be the basis for our commitment to live as one. Everything that relates to salvation, the church, and the kingdom of God is based on the concept of unity.

- ***What are the particular areas that Paul lists and what is particularly interesting about this list?***

Clearly Paul's focus was on highlighting the characteristics of the worthy walk with the ultimate goal of motivating believers toward unity. As Dale emphasized Sunday we are to strive to live in harmony (have an unselfish mind-set) and encourage each other to live in harmony in the Lord.

Application:

- *Have you recently become agitated by someone? How did this manifest a selfish mind set?*
- *How would you like to respond in the future in that very same situation?*