

## Ephesians Chapter 4

Week 3, v.2-3

Last week we talked about what it means to walk in a manner that is consistent with being a child of God. In the next two verses, we will look at the attitudes that should accompany our walk.

Have you ever become upset by the poor witness of a brother or sister in Christ?

It should bother us when God's name is dishonored yet we can easily move from disappointment with someone and fall into having the eyes and heart of judgment and pride. (think, 'I can't believe they did that', or 'I would never say that') The next verse in Ephesians 4 addresses the heart we should have towards others as we strive to walk in a way that honors God.

Eph 4:2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love,

Eph 4:2 (KJV) with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love:

Eph 4:2 (NIV) be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

1) **humility** <tapeinophrosune> humiliation of mind, i.e. modesty:--humbleness of mind, humility (of mind, loneliness (of mind).

I love the way NIV is worded: "to be *completely* humble". This means totally, wholly, entirely, fully humble. Why is humility important as we are seeking to follow God and encouraging others to do so? If our hearts are humble, we quickly realize that when God allows us to have success in an area, i.e. "I don't often struggle with that", we know it is only because of His work in our lives and we ourselves can take no credit. Encouraging others and lifting them up becomes more important than our own personal concerns.

Php 2:3-7 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself do not [merely] look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a

thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, [and] being made in the likeness of men.

Col 3:12 And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

1Pe 5:5 You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

The KJV uses the word lowliness. Read carefully again Christ's example in [Philippians 2:5-7](#). To be lowly is to regard yourself as unimportant in rank and status. It is having a character that truly sees yourself as nothing without Christ. It is realizing we deserve none of the blessings we are given and understanding that only by God's grace have we escaped what we do deserve – eternal separation from our Father in heaven.

Have you ever found yourself pushing for your "rights" or for what is "fair"? Do you have to be in charge, telling others what to do? Do you always have a better way of doing something? How are you at following the directions of others? Being pushy or forward is the opposite of humility. James Boice says, "Humility is refusing to insist on our rights".

It is good to know how to be in charge when we are asked but we need to be able to follow with a humble heart first.

2) **gentleness** <praotes> gentleness, by implication, humility:--meekness.  
meekness: showing mildness or quietness; ant. anger, irritability

"Meekness relates to the manner in which we receive injuries. We are to bear them patiently, and not to retaliate, or seek revenge. The meaning here is, that we adorn the gospel when we show its power in enabling us to bear injuries without anger or a desire of revenge, or with a mild and forgiving spirit." Albert Barnes' NT Commentary

Questions to think about: Are you angered easily or do others irritate you? Do you find fault with others? Do you retaliate or seek revenge? How do you react when someone has a differing opinion than your own? Are you continually dissatisfied? A spirit of gentleness does not include these characteristics. Instead, it is characterized by patience, forgiveness and acceptance.

Ga 6:1 Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; [each one] looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.

2Ti 2:24-25 And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,

Mt 11:29a "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart;...

Mt 5:5 "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

3) **patience** <makrothumia> forbearance or fortitude, patience, longsuffering synonyms for longsuffering are: forgiving, accommodating, selfless

"never permitting a trial or provocation to get to the end of your patience" Adam Clarke's Commentary

Do you ever "lose" your patience? What leads up to this? Is it acceptable?

Think about those times when you have acted in a way that is unbecoming of your inheritance in Christ. Many times we justify our actions with an explanation beginning with the word 'but...' followed by our reasoning for our actions. For instance, "I became angry but (this is why)... or, "but they did this" or, "she shouldn't have done that". What we are doing is justifying our "right" to respond poorly. This attitude does not show humility, meekness or patience. We often give ourselves a counterfeit license to act in ways that are not exemplary of God.

We need to be patient of others, as God has been patient with us.

Think about the word long-suffering. It means to be forgiving, tolerant, accommodating and patient. Has God suffered long for you? What does that say about how we should act towards others?

4) **forbearance** <anechomai> to hold oneself up against, i.e. (figuratively) put up with:--bear with, endure, forbear, suffer.

We have all been wronged, mistreated or offended by others, even by other Christians. (It is important to remember here that we also have wronged, mistreated and offended others.) The word forbearance is not just simply

“putting up with” someone. We can all learn to “put up” with someone but this comes with a very prideful attitude. Kind of like a “martyr” syndrome. Like “I’ll suffer through this but boy I want everyone to know how difficult it is”. This attitude just elicits sympathy and attention from others. Instead, forbearing with one another is allowing ourselves to be wronged. Think of the saying “swallowing your pride”. 1 Cor 13:5 says “[love] does not take into account a wrong [suffered]”. Listen to this explanation of the word forbearance:

“sustaining one another – helping to support each other in all the miseries and trials of life: or, if the word be taken in the sense of bearing with each other, it may mean that, through the love of God working in our hearts, we should bear with each other’s infirmities, ignorance, and so on, *knowing how much others have been or are still obliged to bear with us.*” Adam Clarke’s Commentary

Col 3:13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

We have looked at the characters of humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance. The rest of verse 2 goes on to say that these things are to be acted out toward one another in love. Our eyes should be focused on our greatest example of love, Christ.

John 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Eph 4:3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

When you think of being diligent, what comes to mind?

In the KJV the word used is “endeavouring”. *Strong’s* definition is “to use speed” as in to make effort, to be prompt or earnest.

The idea of being quick to preserve the unity of the Spirit makes me think of the times we look back at situations with a “coulda, woulda, shoulda” remorse. Instead of initially responding with humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance, sometimes our first response (without thinking) is to act from our flesh displaying pride, impatience and selfishness.

The word diligent then is more than being persistent and hard working; it means *to be quick in our efforts* to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

What does it mean to preserve something?

Preserve <tereo> to guard (from loss or injury, properly, by keeping the eye upon); hold fast, keep, preserve, watch

The dictionary defines the word preserve this way: to make sure something lasts, to keep something protected from anything that would cause its current quality or condition to change or deteriorate or cause it to fall out of use.

According to Eph 4:3, it is our responsibility to be quick to keep the unity we have as believers, not only in Spirit, but also in goals – focused on the cause of the gospel. If this responsibility is always on our mind, the necessity to act in accordance with Eph 4:2 is clearly the key: *“with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love”*.

Why would it be important for Paul to remind the Ephesian church of being united in their interests?

Is it possible that we struggle with the same issues today? What is your response when someone thinks, acts or looks different than yourself? Have you ever been judgmental of someone? Who is the only One who can truly see a heart?

We need to be willing to lay aside differences that have no significance in order to maintain a focus on what is truly important. *What kinds of things harm the unity of believers? Are you active in promoting peace?* You can easily form an honest answer to this question by looking at your conversations with others. *Do you do more complaining and grumbling than assuring and encouraging?*

John 17:22-23 *“And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.*

Ro 14:17-19 *for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who in this [way]*

serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

1Co 1:10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you, but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

## Application Questions

Week 3, Eph 4:2-3

**Small group prayer: take 5 minutes and quietly think about the study this morning. What is God saying to you personally? What one area do you need to focus on?**

The themes we discussed today might help formulate your prayer:

- 1) Having a heart of humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance
- 2) Being quick to encourage unity in Christ within the church

**You will have an opportunity in your small group to pray about your personal application following ACTS. Your leader will begin each section with scripture.**

Adoration – “I praise You for...”

Confession – “Forgive me for...”

Thanksgiving – “Thank you for...”

Supplication – “I pray for...”

**If your group is done before 12pm please use the time individually to quietly work on memory verses or begin working on the questions below. Our time for visiting will begin at noon.**

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**This week: Read through Ephesians 4; use the “Apply It” bookmark; the questions below may help you with personal application. Pray for the concerns of those who were in your small group. Pray for your growth in the areas God has brought to your attention. Memorize Eph 4:1-6.**

Are you quick to give God the credit for any success you have?

How concerned are you about listening to others and encouraging them? How does this show? Listen to yourself in a conversation – who or what is the main subject?

What is your response when your “rights” are trampled on? Are you able to follow or do you always have an opinion to share? Take some time reading Phil 2:3-7. What is Christ’s example to us?

How quick are you to forgive? Do you hold grudges – does your attitude change towards others who have challenged you? Do you exhibit an attitude of gentleness characterized by patience, forgiveness and acceptance? Look at 2 Tim 2:24-25

Take time to thank God for the patience He has shown you. In what specific relationship can you exercise more patience?

If you often find yourself in conflict, are you willing to lay aside insignificant differences to be unified in what truly matters? Read Ro 14:17-19.