

This is a Great Mystery

A Study of Ephesians

Week 16 – Ephesians 4:1-6

Prayer – Lord Jesus, while we can never measure up to your standard of perfection, we know we don't have to. That's the beauty of the grace you have lavished on us. Work in our hearts so that we would be unified in our appreciation of your grace. Amen.

Introduction – I know I've said this quite a bit, but I want to make sure we're always on the same page: this is the sanctification section of Ephesians. Paul has gone to great lengths to show (as much as humanly possible) just how much God loves us (that's justification, essentially). You'll notice now the action will, in some ways, shift to what we do as a response to that. Certainly, there are still sections that refer to what Christ has done for us (Ephesians 5:25-32 comes to mind), but the majority of what we will read will be focused on encouragement.

Ephesians 4:1-2 – Παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς ἐγὼ ὁ δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ ἀζίως περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε, **2** μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ πραύτητος, μετὰ μακροθυμίας, ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων ἐν ἀγάπῃ,

Therefore, I urge you—I, the prisoner in the Lord—to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called: with all humility and gentleness, with patience, [always] bearing with one another in love.

1. You could say that these opening words of chapter 4 are a summary of all that is going to follow. In other words, this is the principle for all Christian living; what follows is simply going to get more specific.
2. “A manner worthy” could be translated “appropriately” or some similar word or phrase. I won't ask what that looks like for the Christian because that's what Paul talks about in verse 2 and following.
3. “The calling to which you have been called” – The word “calling” hasn't been used since Eph. 1:18. As a refresher, what are some ways we might refer to the calling to which we have been called? Feel free to look back to **Ephesians 1:18**.
4. For all three of the qualities with which Paul encourages Christians to live, let's define them by giving the *opposite* of what they are. Perhaps that will help us zero in on what kind of life is a worthy life.
 - a. Humility –
 - b. Gentleness –
 - c. Patience –

5. “Bearing with one another in love” – One Greek dictionary brought up the idea of tolerance, which we know is a word that has gotten a little hijacked. What does it mean to bear with one another in love?
 - a. I included “always” in brackets because, while it’s not in the Greek, the present tense of the verb gives a continuous scope to the action. How does that take away any excuses we might have in how we live our lives?

What questions and comments do you have?

Ephesians 4:3 – σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης ·

[Walk] (from verse 1) **[always]** (another present verb form) **being eager to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.**

6. *This is a little bit out of order, but there’s a reason for it.* In verse 3, the word that is often translated “keep” (the unity of the Spirit) has the idea of protection behind it. For what reasons is it so important to protect the unity of the Spirit? (Maybe we need to determine what the “unity of the Spirit” is first?)
 - a. Some have said that churches that have “too many rules” are causing more divisions and not aiding in keeping the unity of the Spirit. It probably won’t surprise you that WELS is sometimes seen as one of those churches. For what reasons might that be the impression we give others?
 - b. How do you respond (or how could you respond) to such thoughts in your personal witness?
 - c. Ultimately, what is our main tool for maintaining unity through the bond of peace?
7. “Being eager” – There’s urgency here. You can’t be eager and be half-hearted about the same thing. One possible definition offered is “to hurry or hasten.” What does it look like when the church (both from a church body standpoint and an individual Christian standpoint) is always making every effort to do whatever it can to maintain the unity of the Spirit? *Hint: this is less about outreach and more about work within a congregation.*
 - a. Are there instances where we see this happen in the Bible? If so, where?

Ephesians 4:4 – ἓν σῶμα καὶ ἓν πνεῦμα, καθὼς καὶ ἐκλήθητε ἐν μιᾷ ἐλπίδι τῆς κλήσεως ὑμῶν .

[There is] one body and one Spirit, just as you were also called to one hope at your calling.

8. What body is Paul talking about?
 - a. He'll come back to this "body" idea in verses 12 and 16.
9. For what reason is it important to know that there is only one Spirit?
10. There are certainly multiple things through which God gives us hope. In what way is it still one hope? From what one place does all our hope come?

Ephesians 4:5-6 – εἷς κύριος, μία πίστις, ἓν βάπτισμα, **6** εἷς θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ πάντων, ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ διὰ πάντων καὶ ἐν πάσιν.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

11. If anyone is still looking at the Greek, this might be of interest: the first six words read right off the page. So, each time "one" comes up, it looks like it's a different word (εἷς, μία, ἓν). However, numbers are governed by the gender of the word it is describing. In Greek, there are masculine, feminine, and neuter words (not to dislodge the binary system God created—it's just a language thing). That means we see "one" in each gender form in this verse.
12. If you didn't catch that Paul is talking about unity, you now know. Perhaps the simplest unifying feature to talk about here is "one Lord" and "one God and Father of all." Let's look at the following verses which agree with the "one Lord" idea:
 - a. **Deuteronomy 6:4**
 - b. **Isaiah 42:8**
 - c. **John 17:3**
 - d. **1 Timothy 2:5**
13. Now, if there's only one Lord (and there is), then what does Paul mean when he says there is "one faith"?
 - a. I've heard this question before; maybe you have, too: "If there really is one faith, why are there so many _____?" How do you respond?

14. The last unifying feature is baptism. Read **Romans 6:3-4**.

a. First, how does baptism unite and unify Christians?

b. Second, what does baptism have to do with “walking in a manner that is worthy of our calling”?

15. “over all and through all and in all” – There is a belief that this means you can “encounter God in the woods” or “find him in nature.” That is not what this verse is saying. Instead, what truth is being taught here?

What comments and questions do you have?

Closing Responses – In Unity and Peace CWS 773 v. 2 with refrains

M: How good it is and how pleasant to live in unity and peace.

C: How good it is and how pleasant to live together in one Lord.

M: Live a life that is worthy of your call;

C: Be humble, gentle, and patient.

M: Bear with each other in ways that are loving;

C: Preserve the unity of faith.

ALL: For there is one Lord, one faith, one God of us all.

ALL: How good it is and how pleasant to live in unity and peace. How good it is and how pleasant to live together in one Lord.