

## **Ephesians 4:1-8 FEFC**

### **Ephesians 4**

#### **Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ**

**1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.**

**4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**

**7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.**

**8 This is why it says:**

**“When he ascended on high,  
he took many captives  
and gave gifts to his people.”**

**9 (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)**

**11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

**14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.**

## INTRODUCTION

This passage shouts an AMEN to the first three chapters of Ephesians which was all about unity among Jews and Gentiles who are in Christ. Paul just spent three chapters telling us in many different ways that there is no longer a Jewish and Gentile distinction. The only legitimate distinction in the church is whether a person has received Jesus Christ or not.

Because there is no longer any distinction in God's eyes between different types of people Paul says that there are no good reasons to fail to be united no matter how different the world says you are with others.

In chapter 4 Paul is going to tell us that if we want to live up to our calling in Christ then we have to go out of our way to protect the unity. He will give us some specific things we can do to guard the unity. He will also tie spiritual gifts to the theme of unity.

Lastly, this chapter tells us that some people are given to the body of Christ as a gift. The purpose of those who are given as a gift to the entire church body is so that we can;

1. Be trained to use our gifts
2. Mature to the point of speaking the truth with love
3. We can be equipped in correct bible doctrine

We will get into that section of the text next week, Lord willing. Today we should get to verse 8.

## PREACHING THE TEXT

Ephesians 4

**1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.**

Paul is a prisoner for the Lord. Paul is not just a fair-weather friend of the Lord. His willingness to suffer for the name of the Lord and for the Gentiles gives him credibility and authenticates his message. Paul is in prison for the Lord, not for himself. Some people denied the Lord in order to keep out of prison. Paul lived up to his calling in Christ.

Now Paul gives us specific ways that we also can live up to the calling we have received. Paul suggests to us; "if you are really a Christian,

you can do the following things to live up to your faith.” Verse 2 tell us how;  
**2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.**

The way we can live up to our faith and our calling in Christ is to make every effort to guard the unity in the church. According to this passage, our unity is greatly affected by our attitude and our actions. Let's observe the attitudes and actions that were in the text.

#### HUMBLE AND GENTLE

The first attitude and action which proves out our faith is humility and gentleness.

According To The Life Application Commentary: *Humility* in the Greek and Roman cultures were considered to be weak character traits showing a lack of self respect. Jesus raised up humility as a virtue when he said;  
***John 13:13-15; 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.***

Washing feet was the act of a servant. The greatest King of heaven and earth knelt down and washed the dirt and sweat off the feet of other people. The disciples were fighting about who should be in control have the top position. Jesus modeled servant leadership. God expected his followers to be humble toward God and toward one another not putting ourselves “above others” in our attitude.

Humility Toward God: If we are humble toward God then we will not treat God like an afterthought. Instead we will realize that Jesus is not just our Savior, He is also our Lord. People who are humble before God will ask God what to do. They will not just do what they want and expect God to bless their efforts.

Humility Toward People: Humble people look for ways to serve others. Humble people consider others worth serving and worth loving and worth investing in. If you have humility you will know people are not better than one another, but like Jesus Christ you will act like other people are greatly

honored and worth serving.

Believers are also called to be gentle. Gentleness is the action that comes out of humility. Gentle people do not grab for authority or control. Gentle people trust God to work things out. The way we handle differences of opinion reveals where we are with humility and gentleness.

In any conflict there are three levels of conflict escalation. Gentle and humble people are able to keep the conflict escalation at a low level while still making their point.

## LEVELS OF CONFLICT ESCALATION

### **1.Mutual Interests** (what is best for all of us?)

Gentle people look out for what is best for the whole body not forcing their own agenda or preferences.

### **2.Rights and Norms** (what are other people doing?)

When we hit a road block in negotiation it is proper to look at examples of what other people are doing. This might give us ideas that we can use. However, if we constantly refer to what others are doing we can become manipulative or use that as a lever. It is best to stay at level one and seek God together.

### **3.Power** (I am going to force you to do it my way)

Lastly, some people, when things do not break their way resort to a power moves. Power moves are when one person tries to get bigger than another person. This is not the same as speaking your mind with passion and feeling. That is just good communication and honest feedback.

Power moves are things like raising ones voice or getting physical in order to intimidate other people. Instead of allowing your argument or thought to have God's favor or not, a person using power would force others to back down.

And there are all types of manipulation and implied threats that are considered power moves.

Gentle people look out for what is best for the whole body. They look for where God has granted favor. They do not use power moves. They trust the leaders that God in His sovereignty has placed in positions to guide and love others. And humble and gentle people default to trust one another

unless there is a very good and biblical reason to do otherwise.

## HUMILITY DOES NOT MEAN WE FAIL TO SPEAK UP

Humility does not mean we fail to have an opinion or speak the truth. It means we say what is on our minds with authentic love and let God do the convincing. I fear that after three years of trying to get on the same page and constantly speaking about unity as a church, some have gotten the idea that their opinion does not matter and their viewpoint will not be received. I want to address this further when we get to verses 11-16 which measures maturity by our willingness to speak the truth in love.

I would much rather have people saying it straight to me and to other leaders than to allow any kind of resentment to build up. True unity will never be reached if there are people here who believe they can not voice their concerns about any issue. It may not break your way, but sometimes you might carry an insight or word of wisdom that God gave to you and that I or other leaders need to hear or the whole body need to hear.

Speaking with passion is not wrong. And we need to make sure there is a context which we can do that. I love every person here and I want to hear from every single person and hear what you have to say and the elders and everyone to a person has said the same thing to me. The line is not crossed by speaking your mind and voicing ideas.

The line is only crossed when we try to force our idea or opinion. Speaking is our responsibility. Convincing is God's responsibility. God will grant favor when you present an idea that comes from Him. Sometimes it takes a while, but God is faithful and will build His church the right way.

## PATIENT, BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE

The text then tells us to be patient, bearing with one another in love. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit. So we can get our patience renewed for other people by going to the Lord and asking for the Holy Spirit to give us patience. The patience that God has for us is the same patience He will give us as a miracle of the Holy Spirit for other people.

## THERE ARE REASONS TO BE PATIENT

This text assumes that there will be good reasons we will need

patience with one another. If you want to be critical of me it is very easy to find something that I could do better. And we are all in the same boat. We could look around at the people at school or work or the church and make a list of grievances a mile long. We will come up with something if we look for it. Anytime you look at a person you will find faults, mistakes and even sins. Our unity has less to do with other people straightening up and more to do with our bearing with one another in love.

Part of our commitment to bearing with one another in love is to assume the best. Give the benefit of the doubt. And if someone really screws up our choice is to assume that they did not realize what they were doing or how it affected others. Let's be very very slow to join the accuser of the brethren in His work of seeking out faults and assigning blame. That is the work of the devil. That is not the work of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes we grudgingly bear with one another because we know we should and we don't want God to be upset with us. So we are forced to bear with one another.

A better and more godly way is to "bear with one another in love." Galatians 5 tells us love is also a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Is there anyone you can think of in your family or work place or the church that you do not honestly love? If the answer is yes, then you have not fully taken hold of the love that The Holy Spirit wants to give you.

#### EVERY EFFORT TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

Next the text says to make EVERY effort to keep the unity of The Spirit. I have seen people break unity and erect barriers over one careless word that was taken to heart.

And I have seen people break fellowship time and time again throwing away their relationships with no honest and passionate effort at restoration.

**Hebrews 12:14**

***Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.***

**Romans 12:18**

***If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with***

**everyone.**

There are times when peace is not possible. But that is very rare. “As far as it depends on us” means that we are not the ones that give up on seeking peace and restoring relationships.

The world teaches us that if someone offends us or expresses a different point of view, we keep the peace by going somewhere else. That is not living at peace, that is the definition of a broken relationship.

HAVE I MADE EVERY EFFORT TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT THROUGH THE BOND OF PEACE?

If an offense affects our relationship with a someone then we are obligated to Jesus Christ to forgive that person and let it go. And if the offense has harmed our relationship and we can't seem to let it go then we need to go to that person and talk about the issue and make every effort to guard the unity of The Spirit.

WHAT DO I SAY?

If you have to go to another person, a helpful hint is to ask questions instead of making accusations. For example; if someone offended me by something they said, I could ask them a question like this:

*“can you help me understand what you meant by that statement?”* Or you could say something like;

*“I did not have a positive experience as we served on that team together, it might help me if I could get your perspective. Would you mind if we meet sometime very soon?”*

This type of communication is not an invitation to get lectured but is an invitation to be heard and understood. Who would turn that down?

DON'T GIVE UP ON RELATIONSHIPS

If your past efforts at reconciliation have failed, don't give up. We have too many disposable relationships in our culture. For example; we all hate divorce and we see how it brings great harm to families. When relationships are thrown away it affects the lives of children and adults for the rest of their lives.

But some people think nothing of throwing aways a relationship with a person whom God calls a brother or sister without making EVERY effort to

heal and forgive.

If we don't like the state of affairs in the world, then let's model healthy relationships by making EVERY effort to guard the unity of the Spirit. We should freak out about divorce and broken families, but to break fellowship and turn against another brother or sister in Christ is modeling disposable relationships. We can't hate one and do the other.

If you have divorced your love from another brother or sister in this body or in your family you are not in the will of God. Begin by insisting in your heart that this relationship will work out. It is too important to our witness to give up on relationships.

If you hate broken relationships within families then I beg you, please hate broken relationships within the family of God. Refuse to give into a broken relationship.

Paul now moves on to give theological reasons for unity and peace.

**4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**

ONE BODY AND ONE SPIRIT

Here is the first theological reason for keeping unity and true peace. There is only one body of Christ. There are not two bodies and there are not two Spirits. We are part of the same body of Christ.

ONE LORD ONE FAITH ONE BAPTISM

We have one Lord and one faith and one baptism. A theological reason to pursue unity is that there are not two Lords. We have the same Father and same Lord and were baptised by the same Holy Spirit into the same body of Christ. Jews and Gentiles needed to see how there were not two tracks, one for the Jews and another for the Gentiles. And the bible actually says that we belong to one another just as in a human family members belong to one another.

....vs 7 segue...

Paul just spent six passages telling us how we are exactly the same. Now Paul is going to turn the page and acknowledge that in some ways we are different from one another. Even our differences can be used to build

unity and love with one another.

**7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.**

This sentence begins with the word; “but.” That means Paul is going to contrast something. Paul is stating that we are the same in that we share the same Lord and baptism and faith and Holy Spirit. However, there are some ways we are not the same. The context tells us that Paul is referring to spiritual gifts. Each of us were given grace but each package of grace came with a different gift for each of us. And our gifts were given to bring us together. Our spiritual gifts are used to strengthen and encourage other people in the body of Christ. And that creates love and biblical unity.

**WHY WRITE ABOUT DIFFERENCES AND UNITY?**

Each of us has a different spiritual gift and passion and temperament. We each have a unique calling that no one else can fill. As each of us do our part we act like a body that is in synche.

**BODY ANALOGY**

After several knee surgeries my knees are out of cartilage. When my cortisone shots wear off I walk up and down the stairs like I have polio. My mind wants to go upstairs, and my feet and hips do their work and my arms swing, but my knees refuse to follow the signals sent by my brain. And because my knees do not follow the impulses of the brain, my body does not function as well as it could. There is no unity of function.

It takes fluidity and unity of purpose of all a persons limbs working together in order to have all the different parts of the body work together.

Sometimes we have people who for one reason or another are not willing to take the directives from our head, The Lord Jesus Christ and they will not work together to serve. Or they need healing so bad they can not serve others. Or they are so fixated on the faults of others they refuse to serve. And so a church begins to walk with a limp because we have lost our fluidity and unity of purpose.

*...transition...*

Verse eight is a quote of Psalm 68. The churches at the time this letter was written did not have a New Testament. So Paul used Psalm 68 as a proof text to show the Ephesians that spiritual gifts were always part of

God's plan for unity among His people.

## MINISTRY FOCUS

Next week we will continue with verses 8-16. Right now I would like to finish by going over some of the work that the elders have been doing over the past four months in the area of casting vision. It goes right along with this passage.

### **Restoring Broken Relationships in: THE SANDBOX MINISTRY MODEL**

## CORE FOCUS

Our core focus is to restore broken relationships with God and each other by:

- 1) WINNING souls to Christ
- 2) LEADING them to maturity in Christ
- 3) ENTRUSTING them with ministry to the church and our mission field

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- *WE EXTEND GRACE, MERCY, AND FORGIVENESS*

We encourage actions that lead to wholeness, conflict resolution and unity.

## TAKING IT HOME

1. What is God revealing to your heart about your humility, gentleness, patience and the way you bear with others in love?
2. Will you commit today that when you want to get your point across you will refuse to escalate to power?
3. In all that you do, will you ask the question; "what is best for the body of Christ?"
4. Would you say you have made EVERY effort to keep the unity of The Spirit and the bond of peace? If not, what are you willing to do?
5. How can you treat your broken relationships with the urgency you would use to save a marriage or a family?

6. Will you join the elders and myself in our ministry focus of restoring broken relationships with God and with others?