

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 8/25/91
Ephesians 4:1-6 "Where the Rubber Meets the Road"

Intro (of service): Theme--Unity in the church

Intro (of message): This week some 60 people from WBC went to see the outdoor drama "Tecumseh". He was a great Indian leader. He lived some 200 years ago at a time when the white men invaded the land inhabited by his people for hundreds, even thousands of years. I watched with fascination as Tecumseh unveiled his dream, his plan--to unite the Indians as one people. The tribes had existed independently for centuries--the Shawnee, Cherokee, Pawnee, Sioux, etc. But Tecumseh knew if they would survive the threat of the white man, the Indians must unite. They must become one people. They must lay aside their past hatred for one another, and become one. He traveled from tribe to tribe, year after year, to share his dream, his vision, his plan. His vision for unity took hold. And almost succeeded. Until his brother "The Prophet" became power hungry, and destroyed Tecumseh's dream for unity.

Unity is a precious thing--Ps 133:1, "Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

What creates unity? How can a church be a unified church? How can 2 Christians be united? God's Word will answer these for us this morning.

This morning, we have come in our expository study of Ephesians to a major transition. A pivotal turning point in Paul's letter. We've arrived at the place where the rubber meets the road.

4:1 "Therefore"

That word is the fulcrum which connects 2 balancing sections in Ephesians. Ephesians divides nicely into 2 parts--Ch 1-3, and ch 4-6.

For 3 chapters Paul has been dealing with doctrine. Now he moves to duty. For 3 chapters he has told us what God has done. Now he will take 3 chapters to tell us what we must be and do. For 3 chapters he has revealed the Believer's Standing in Christ. Now he explains the Believer's Walk. For 3 chapters he taught us about the New Society God inaugurated in Jesus Christ, a society comprised of Jews and Gentiles alike, reconciled to God and to each other through Jesus Christ. Now he moves from the new society to the new standards expected of it. In other words, we have spent 3 chapters pondering great, deep theological truth. Perhaps you wondered why. Well now we're going to see. Because for the next 3 chapters, Paul gets right down to earth and explains in concrete terms the implications of what he's said for everyday living.

Eg: Romans 1-11//12-16

We've spent 3 chapters unearthing our Riches in Christ. Now it's time to consider our Responsibilities in Christ.

Illust: John Rockefeller. . .

Q: What kind of church/Christian pleases God?

Proposition: In Ephesians 4:1-6, Paul shows us 2 practical areas which must be affected by our beliefs.

- I. Our Beliefs must affect our Walk (1).
- II. Our Beliefs must affect our Relationships (2-6).
 - A. What makes unity possible? Five Traits (2-3)
 - B. What makes unity essential? Seven Truths (4-6).

I. Our Beliefs must affect our Walk (1).

V 1 "I therefore the prisoner. . . beseech you. . ."

Few things are as appalling and harmful to the cause of Christ than a person who "talks" Christianity but doesn't "walk" Christianity.

Illust: 7th grade--Richard, talking about Christ one minute, and taking His name in vain the next. . .

Notice carefully what Paul says in v 1.

"I the prisoner of the Lord"--The apostle was under house arrest in Rome, awaiting his trial before the Emperor of Rome. He spent years as a prisoner. Why? Because he was serious about his walk. In his walk he was committed to Jesus Christ. No matter what the personal cost.

What did he do? "I beseech you"--interesting word; *parakaleo* - "to call to one's side" (in noun form, Paraclete, referring to the Holy Spirit in Jn 14:16). It's translated various ways in the NT: comfort, exhort, desire, call for, and beseech.

Note: Lit word order "I beseech therefore you, I the prisoner in the Lord, worthy to walk. . ." The sense here is this, "I want to get right up next to you and urge you, implore you, beg you to do something! Even though I'm here in Rome in prison, and you're in Ephesus, I plead with you to listen to me because there's something you need to do."

What did Paul want them to do?

V 1b "that ye walk worthy of the vocation to which ye are called"

What does that mean? What is a "worthy walk"? Paul is going to take 3 chapters (89 verses) to tell us. The greek word "worthy" is *axios* from which we get our English word "axis". The axis is the line on which something rotates. The earth spins on its axis. It revolves around it.

The Christian's walk is to revolve around something. What?
"the vocation (lit. "calling") to which you are called"

Q: How are we to walk as Christians?

A: The word "walk" refers to our lifestyle, the way we live. Used in:

2:2 "In times past ye walked" (implication--a change took place in our walk)

2:10 "that we should walk in them"

4:17 "walk not as other Gentiles walk"

5:15 "walk circumspectly" (= carefully, accurately)

"Walking" is a great word to describe the Christian life. It's used throughout Scripture. I want you to see how we are to walk, first by looking at other scriptures, then by scanning Eph 4-6, and finally by zeroing in on Eph 4:1-6.

1. How should we walk acc to the message of Scripture in General?
Gen 17:1 (to Abe) "Walk before me and be perfect"
Ex 16:4 (to Israelites) "Walk in my law"
Ps 26:11 (David's testimony)"But as for me I will walk in my integrity"
Micah 6:8 (the prophet told the people) "He hath shown thee. . ."
Jn 10:27 (Jesus) "My sheep hear. . . follow me."
Rom 6:4 ". . . We should walk in newness of life"
Rom 8:1 "Walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit"
II Cor 5:7 "Walk by faith, not by sight"
Col 1:10 "Walk worthy of the Lord"
I Pt 4:3 "In time past. . . we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess. . ."
I Jn 1:7 "Walk in the light"

2. How should we walk acc to the message of Eph 4-6?
--Walk in Unity in the Church (4:1-16)
--Walk in Purity in the World (4:17-5:17)
--Walk under control of the Spirit (5:18-6:9)
 *as reflected by our attitudes (5:18-20)
 *as reflected by our family relationships (5:22-6:4)
 *as reflected by our relationships on the Job (6:5-9)
--Walk on guard against the Evil One (6:10-20)

Key: Our beliefs must affect our Walk.

God's not impressed with how much we know. What is it that pleases Him? A walk that is worthy. A walk that is consistent with our calling. A walk that follows Jesus Christ. A walk that is obedient.

Illust: Gen 5:24 "And Enoch walked with God. . . and God took him."

Illust: Gen 6:9 "Noah was a just man. . . Noah walked with God."

Q: How's your walk?

Illust:

Tran: Our beliefs must affect our Walk. In vv 2-6 Paul shows us another practical area that must be affected by our beliefs.

II. Our Beliefs must affect our Relationships (2-6).

The main idea of vv 1-16 is Unity. Unity in the church. In fact, if Eph 1-3 tell us how we can have harmony with God, Eph 4-6 tell us how we can have harmony with one another. Unity. Healthy relationships in the church.

Illust: I read a letter this week about 2 Wycliff missionaries, Nick and Lynn Swanepoel. They are Bible translators working with the Rendille people in northern Africa. The Rendilles are desert nomads who travel in small groups across the sub-Sahara. . . Their customs differ from ours. When they are grateful for something, they don't say "thank you"--they just grab your hands and spit into them, pronouncing a blessing as they do so! If they are very grateful they spit onto your forehead! The Swanepoels said they knew they were accepted among the Rendilles when the leader spit in their drink!

Q: How can we have healthy relationships in the church?

A. What makes unity possible? Five Traits (2-3)

If the main idea of vv 1-16 is unity, vv 2-3 tell us how we can have it. We must allow the Spirit to produce these 5 traits in us:

Warning: It only takes one person to damper the unity. . .

1. Trait #1--Walk with all **lowliness** (2)

Lowliness. To be low of mind. That's humility. Humility is essential to unity. Someone has said, "Humility is that grace that, when you know you have it, you've lost it." Wiersbe says, "Humility is putting Christ first, others second, and self last."

2. Trait #2--Walk with **meekness** (2)

Meekness is not what most think it is. It's not weakness. It's power under control. Moses was meek (Num 12:3). Jesus was meek (Mt 11:29). A meek person is one who is master of himself/herself and servant of others. A meek person is someone that is easy to get along with, a person that goes the extra mile, not a harsh person, not a person with a chip on his shoulder.

3. Trait #3--Walk with **longsuffering** (2)

Lit. "long tempered". One who is able to keep his anger under control. A person with a short fuse is a dangerous threat to the unity of the church.

Listen. Lowliness, meekness, and longsuffering go hand in hand. Unity is threatened when we become "highminded" and out of control. When we focus on our desires, our ambitions, our agendas. Behind all discord lies pride.

Illust: Chuck Colson's testimony. . . Influenced by C.S. Lewis who said, "It is pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began. . . As long as you are proud, you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people. And, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you." Colson in his own words said, "Right then and there I realized it had been pride that had propelled me through life." That night he committed his life to Jesus Christ.

Pride will keep a person from Christ. Pride will keep a person from experiencing healthy relationships with people.

If we are to maintain unity we must have these 3 qualities in our lives--lowliness, meekness, and longsuffering. Next Paul tells us there are 2 activities we must practice (2 participles).

4. Trait #4--Walk by **forbearing** one another in love (2)

V 2 "forbearing one another in love"

"forbear" = to be patient with; to endure

II Tim 4:3 ". . . won't endure sound doctrine"

II Th 1:4 Endure persecutions and tribulations

Listen. God's Word never teaches that Unity is easy. Nor does it come natural. When God saves us, we don't become clones. We have different, and at times divergent, personalities and interests.

Illust: Roommates in college, "I can't stand it any longer! I want out!"
Too often we approach relationships in the family and in the church that way. . .

But what does God's Word say? Although unity is not natural nor easy, it is vital. Essential. And if we're to enjoy it, we must choose to forbear with one another. Put up with one another in love.

5. Trait #5--Walk by **endeavoring** to keep Unity (3)

Q: How much effort should we put in to keeping unity in the church?

A: Paul says "Endeavor"--What does that mean? Used in. . .

Gal 2:10 ". . . which I was diligent to do"

II Tim 2:15 "Study to show thyself approved unto God"

II Tim 4:9 "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me. . ."

To endeavor means "to do your best, to work hard, to spare no effort." And it's a present participle which means we're to do it continually. It's the kind of energy you exert when you're homesick. . .

Illust: When you're homesick all you can think about is what? Being home! Being back in the presence of your family. Getting rid of the distance that exists between you so you're together.

Listen. We ought to have the same intense, heart-throbbing desire in our relationships in the church. When some misunderstanding takes place, and we become emotionally separated from a brother or sister, we ought to endeavor to restore unity! To spare no effort. To do our best to protect the Unity for which Christ died.

Illust: Look out for "Telephone Booth Christianity"-Me and God

And notice carefully. We are to endeavor to what? **KEEP** the unity. Keep it. What does that imply? Unity can be lost! Easily. Quickly. As soon as we what? As soon as we stop striving to maintain it.

One of Satan's great devices to harm our Lord's reputation is to put Christians at odds with each other. When 2 believers have a "tiff", when sharp words are said, when they stop endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit, do you know what happens? Satan creeps in with his destructive arsenal. And what began as a small conflict between 2 believers, festers, and spreads like gangrene, and infects the rest of a Body that once was healthy!

Illust: Like putting on a wardrobe--see Col 3:12-13

Tran: What makes unity possible? Five Traits (2-3). Another question.

B. What makes unity essential? Seven Truths (4-6).

Why is maintaining unity in the church so vital?

**The Law of Seven 'ones"

There are 7 truths that make unity not only possible, not only commendable, but essential for us. 7 'ones'. These are not exhortations, but declarations. Not "There should be", but "There is!". . . 7 foundational, doctrinal realities.

Note: Unity is impossible w/o a doctrinal foundation. Look out when someone says, "We're not interested in doctrine but in love. Let's forget our doctrines and just love each other!"

1. One Body (4)--universal church

Rom 12:5 "For we being many are one body in Christ, and members of o.a."

2. One Spirit (4)--the Holy Spirit. He indwells each believer.

I Cor 12:13 "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." Did you realize that sins against unity are sins against the Holy Spirit? (see 4:30-31)

3. One Hope (4)--All believers hope for the same thing, the return of

Christ! So until He comes we should be peacemakers, not troublemakers!

4. One Lord (5)--Lordship involves 2 qualities, possession and authority.

We are not our own. We belong to our Lord. We don't call the shots in our lives. He does. We are His slaves. He bought us with His blood. Loyalty to a common Lord ought to unite us!

5. One Faith (5)--one creed. THE faith. In Gal 1:23 Paul says he

preached THE faith. Jude calls it "the faith which was delivered unto the saints (3)". Christians may differ when it comes to minor matters of polity, but not when it comes to the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

6. One Baptism (5)--either Spirit or water baptism; the point is this--we

all became part of God's cov't people the same way, through the same baptism.

7. One God and Father (6)--We are all children in the same family,

serving the same Father.

Conclusion:

Paul hit 2 specific areas this morning--our walk, and our relationships.

Q: How is your relationship with Jesus Christ?

Q: How are your relationships with other people?

Illust: I read that one drafthorse can move 2 tons of weight. But 2 drafthorses in harness, working together, can move 23 tons of weight. But 2 drafthorses in harness, fighting each other, working against each other, will accomplish nothing productive.

A unified church is a strong church. A divided church is a church sapped of its strength.