



Time to Reflect

- What are some of the reasons for the existence of disunity in Christian communities? How can disunity be avoided?
- What do you understand Christian unity to be? How can we, as believers, grow closer together in today's world?

Last week we focused on a great prayer that was prayed by Paul and we were encouraged to pursue spiritual depth. We reflected on some big issues. For example, how our understanding of God affects how we pray. This week's passage really encourages us to think about Christian unity and what it means to walk together as Christians. It also challenges us to be faithful to the call that God has placed on our lives.

"The first three chapters (of Ephesians) deal with doctrine, our riches in Christ, while the last three chapters explain duty, our responsibilities in Christ. The key word in the last half of the book is walk...In these last three chapters, Paul admonished us to walk in unity...purity...harmony...and victory."

(Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p105)

Specifics

- (v1-3) speak of the importance of calling and what it means to live out God's call with authenticity. We are reminded, from the very beginning, that Paul was in prison as he wrote these words. This is important as it offers depth and power to the charge he issued in (v1).
- Paul urged the Ephesians **"...to live a life worthy of the calling you have received"** (v1). He reminded them about the call that God had placed on their lives. He also challenged them to live and behave in ways that reflected the Christianity that they professed.
- This is a challenge to be authentic followers of Jesus Christ, and this authenticity is to be the defining trait of our Christian journey as we seek to live out our faith in an ever-changing world.
- Paul offered some practical instruction as to how the Ephesians could do this (v2-3). These verses refer to a series of spiritual graces that reflect a depth of Christian faith.
- Humility is the first trait to be referenced (v2a). Warren Wiersbe contends, **"Humility means putting Christ first, others second, and self last. It means knowing ourselves, accepting ourselves, and being ourselves to the glory of God."**¹
- Paul also mentioned gentleness and patience, as well as the need to bear **"...with one another in love"** (v2b). This conveys a beautiful picture of Christian unity. Yet, this can be challenging and it is an instruction that needs to be adopted by every believer.
- Wiersbe reflects on this more fully as he writes, **"The spiritual unity of a home, a Sunday school class, or a church is the responsibility of each person involved, and the job never ends."**²

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians* (David C Cook, 2009), p107.

² Ibid, p108.

- (v4-6) speak of what we could refer to as ‘*The Grounds of Unity.*’ These are fundamental Christian realities that should be the basis for proper unity.
- We are united in one body, which is the body of Christ. We may have different local congregations but we are actually united in Christ as opposed to denominational labels.
- There is one Holy Spirit who indwells each believer and one hope of our calling – that is, the eternal assurance of God’s great promise (Ephesians 1:13-14).
- (v5) speaks of how there is one Lord, one faith and one baptism. We are united in Christ and Wiersbe rightly observes, “**Acknowledging the lordship of Christ is a giant step toward spiritual unity among His people.**”³
- The early Christians recognised a series of basic doctrines that they taught, guarded and passed on to others (2nd Timothy 2:2). Today, there may be differences relating to interpretations and practical procedures, but the basics of the Christian faith should be non-negotiable. They are first order issues – for example, the means of salvation.
- The baptism that is mentioned by Paul is the baptism of the Spirit (v5). This reminds us of the wonderful events that occurred on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) when the Holy Spirit engulfed the whole house and the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Paul also referred to “**...one God and Father of all...**” (v6). The incredible oneness of believers in the family of God is referenced in this verse. Christians are all children of the One who is over all and works through all.
- Interestingly, Paul moved from reflecting on unity to highlight ways in which Christians are different from each other as he considered spiritual gifts.
- Wiersbe highlights, “**A spiritual gift is a God-given ability to serve God and other Christians in such a way that Christ is glorified and believers are edified.**”⁴
- Gifts are given by God’s grace (v7) and they are spiritual tools to build with. There are three lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament – 1st Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-28; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:11.
- God has given each believer at least one spiritual gift (1st Corinthians 12) and it is to be used to build up and grow the Kingdom of God.
- Five roles are mentioned in (v11) and it is made clear in that they are “**...to equip his (God’s) people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...**” (v12).
- Our passage ends by considering the blessing of spiritual maturity (v13-16). Paul gives us something of a snapshot of the blessing of spiritual maturity. When we reach this stage of faith development then we are no longer infants (v14).
- We can face the storms of life (v14). We can overcome the scheming and craftiness of worldly people (v14). In other words, we become increasingly wise and discerning.
- To reach this place we need to develop a God-focus in our thinking and our living. Paul refers to this (v15). We follow the example of Christ.
- This is position of spiritual maturity and is a wonderful place to be. It’s the place where we put the will of God ahead of our own personal desires. It’s a sacrificial place to be, a selfless place, a humble place, but also an eternally rich place.
- Where we focus on God, where we pursue His will for our lives, then the brilliance of (v16) can be experienced.
- The process of growth and the pursuit of maturity need to be God-focused, God-driven and God-honouring. The outworking of all of this will enable Christians to walk together.

³ Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p109.

⁴ *Ibid*, p111.