

# Series: Ephesians: *The Christian Mystery and Mission*

Week 11

CDOBC – beginning on 2/6/11

Title: “What Faith Looks Like”

*Ephesians 4:1-6 ~ May 1, 2011*

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**OBJECTIVE:** To help believers understand that our faith in Christ should affect how we live.

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## Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- VBS Sign-ups today
- Special Sundays in May: Baby / Child Dedication May 8<sup>th</sup> – Mother’s Day; Grads honored May 15; Baptisms May 22
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Open your Bibles to Ephesians 4:1-6

Like most of Paul’s letters, Ephesians is comprised of two primary sections. The first section (chapt. 1-3) has a doctrinal focus, and the second section (chapt. 4-6) has a practical focus. Chapters 1-3 focused on the Mystery of the Church and chapters 4-6 will focus on the Mission of the Church.

As we begin the second section this morning, we need to understand that our Christian behavior is rooted in Christian belief. This is why he first gives us doctrine, and then applies that doctrine in practical areas of life. Over the coming months, we will see how the truth in chapters 1-3 relate to the challenges of life in the church, in marriage, in parenting, at work, and in the spiritual warfare we are enlisted in.

To put this into an Easter context...these are the areas that the life of Christ – the power of the resurrection – are supposed to impact how we live.

**Our call to a godly life** vs. *I*

This is the second time Paul has referred to himself as a prisoner for Christ (3:1). The idea here is that Paul was no longer the ‘owner’ of his own life, but his life and destiny are now firmly in the hands of Christ. Paul is urging us Christians who have been called by God, to give our life completely to the Lord.

He is not simply asking us to live a certain way...he is urging us...pleading us to “...live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”

“worthy” has the idea of matching – that our actions match our status as children of God. Picture a scale, on the one side is our status, our calling...the ‘new creation’ we are in Christ. On the other side is our life. Paul wants us to match up the two sides...to make sure our life is equal to our status as believers. If you claim the name of Christ, live according to the name. If you are a believer in Christ, you have been called by God to that position...to that belief.

When you join an organization, you obligate yourself to the practices and expectations of that group.

If you are part of an orchestra or if you’re in a drama group, you submit yourself to the conductor or the leadership of the director.

If you’re part of a sports team, you follow the instruction of the coach.

As a citizen, you abide by the laws of the nation.

As a Christian, you are obligated to do the same...to abide by the leader...our Savior...Jesus Christ.

So, Paul begins this section by urging us to live our life in a way that matches our belief and standing in Christ, but he

doesn't stop there...he gives us the "how to" manual. I don't want this to be a negative example, but the Christian life is like the great Christmas gift you buy in the big box, and you bring it home, and it says "*Some Assembly Required*" and you stay up late putting this thing together. For you and me as Christians, we don't just stay up late doing this...this process takes the rest of our life! This is the growing and maturing aspect of our faith. These are the "...good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (2:10)

Are you living a Godly life? Does your life reflect the truth of Christ? Does it reflect the attitudes of Christ?

### **The virtues of Christian living** vs. 2-3

There are many more than these, but Paul lists four virtues – each of them will take a lifetime of practice. These four virtues are vital if we are to live worthy of our calling, and they're vital if we are going to have unity in the local church. The best resource on these virtues and Greek words behind them is William Barclay's commentary on this passage. Much of what I say here is due to his excellent work in defining and describing these terms.

#### #1 – Humility:

This is a long word, and one that the Christian faith actually created. In Greek, the only words for humility had negative connotations. The Greeks did not consider humility a virtue, they despised it. But Christ modeled it. Jesus said that He came "...not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

He also modeled humility when He washed the disciple's feet. Our humility is not self-pity. It doesn't mean that we put ourselves in a position to be taken advantage of. *"It doesn't mean you think less of yourself, it means you think of yourself less."* Ken Blanchard

It means that we understand who we are – that we have an accurate self-knowledge. You may be a wonderful person, but you're a sinner who can do nothing to atone for your sins. Paul held up a mirror to us in 2:1-3. Bernard of Clairvaux, a 12<sup>th</sup> century theologian, said of humility, *"It is the virtue by which a man becomes conscious of his own unworthiness, in consequence of the truest knowledge of himself."* You may be quite accomplished in all areas of life, but when you're alone with God, you are humbled because of your sinful state. This is the negative side of humility, but there is a positive side, and that is when we see what Christ has done for us. When we realize the love Christ has for us, and what He accomplished on our behalf on the cross, then we are humbled due to the immensity of the gift of forgiveness and eternal life we have been given. I have always played a lot of different sports, and I was pretty good at some of them. But eventually, I would compete against someone who was better than me or better than the team I was on. You may be a very virtuous person, full of charity and kindness toward others. But when you compare yourself to Christ, there is no comparison, and the only response is to be humble.

#2 Gentleness:

The KJV uses the word “meekness”, which in our modern English, is thought by many to be a synonym for weakness, but this is not the meaning of this word. The definition of gentleness / meekness is often stated as “strength under control” – which is a correct definition. The Greek term is *praotes* (pray-oo-tace) and it was used in describing an animal that was trained or domesticated so that it was under the control of the owner. So then the person this describes would have every instinct and every passion under perfect control (The New Daily Study Bible, by William Barclay, p. 158).

The other primary line of meaning has to do with Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher and teacher. Read The New Daily Study Bible, by William Barclay, p. 158 – section on Aristotle.

### #3 – Patience:

We don’t need patience when things are going well...we only need it when we’re in a difficult stretch. Once again, according to Barclay, this Greek term also has two lines of meaning. First, this word refers to never giving up or never giving in. It is a persistency that no matter how difficult something was, they would never admit defeat, but they would persist to the end. This meaning was used when speaking of wars, especially what is called the Roman Persistency which means the Roman Army would never make peace under defeat. No matter what battle they lost, they never believed they would lose the war, so they pressed on in the face of difficulty. Second, this term has a usage that relates to patience with

other people in a relational setting. “*John Chrysostom* (early church father 349-407) *defined it as the spirit which has the power to take revenge but never does so. J.B. Lightfoot, the N.T. scholar, defined it as the spirit which refuses to retaliate.*” (The New Daily Study Bible, by William Barclay, p. 159-160).

Barclay states, “*It is the spirit which can suffer unpleasant people with graciousness and fools without irritation.*” (The New Daily Study Bible, by William Barclay, p. 160).

Now the most humbling truth about this word is that the N.T. repeatedly uses it of God – and His need to be “patient” toward us!

1 Timothy 1:16 “Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.”

2 Peter 3:15 “Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation...”

As Christians, we must have patience toward one another – in the same way God has been patient toward us!

#### #4 – Love:

This love is uniquely Christian, as the early Christian writers had to employ a very unusual Greek word – *agape*.

Three common words for love in Greek:

*Eros* – referred to love between the sexes – involves sexual passion.

*Philia* – referred to what we call brotherly love. This is warm affection between close friends.

*Storgē* – rarely mentioned – referred to love/affection of family members.

*Agape* – Barclay defines this as “unconquerable benevolence”

This love is not dependent on feelings. In fact, the greatest expression of agape love is when there are no feelings of love. In the face of insult, kindness is returned. When ignored, agape love accepts. When rejected, agape love embraces. Even when wronged, agape love seeks their best.

There is a reason Paul tells us to “bear with one another in love”. This kind of love is costly to the giver...it hurts to give. We must bear with those who require *agape* love!

### **Unified churches are not easy.** vs. 3

If it were easy to have peace and unity in the church, Paul wouldn't need to tell us to “Make every effort...”.

This takes effort! Why? Because of all the reasons listed above. Each one of us will struggle to be humble, gentle, patient, and loving toward one another. If we don't do these things, we won't have unity and peace, and the only way we can do these things is if we live in the power of the Holy Spirit. Notice also that we need to “keep” the unity of the Spirit. This unity is inherent in our new birth – our new status as adopted sons and daughters (1:5). Paul tells us to “keep” or guard the unity that the Holy Spirit brings to our life.

### **Our singular choice for spiritual truth** vs. 4-6

This teaching of the Apostle Paul is rejected in our post-modern world. The idea that there is only one true

religion...that there is only one true God...that there is only one way to Heaven...that you can know that the Bible is only true word from God and other religious books contain false teaching, is one of the worst sins you can commit in today's relativistic culture.

But, when we read these verses, the buffet of spiritual choices that Paul presents to us is pretty limited!

**There is one true Church (body).** The “body” is one of Paul's favorite metaphors for the church. He is speaking to the universal Church – what theologians refer to as the “Invisible Church”. This is in fact the one true Church. This is not an issue of denomination; it's an issue of faith in Christ. When you walk into a local church, the people may look like Christians – some of them may be Christians – but just because they go to church doesn't make them a Christian. It's your personal faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins that makes you a member of the Body of Christ – and Paul is telling us that there is only one Body – only one Church comprised of all those who believe in Jesus.

**There is one Spirit.** Note the capital ‘S’ – indicating that Paul is not speaking of our human spirit, but of the Holy Spirit. There is not a different Holy Spirit for different believers, but we all have the same Holy Spirit.

**We were called to one hope.** Believers in Christ have one unifying hope – the hope of our salvation and eternal life with God. The term ‘hope’ can be confusing for us in our modern vocabulary because we use the word ‘hope’ in describing something that is wishful thinking...something that might not happen, where the outcome is uncertain. But this Greek term

has not only the idea of expectation, but of confidence. The hope all believers have is a certain hope because it is based on the promises of Christ.

**We have one Lord (Jesus).** The Jesus of the Bible is the only valid Jesus. Nobody is free to create their own version of Jesus. There is only one Jesus...the Jesus of Scripture.

**We have one faith.** Only faith in Jesus and His atoning death on the cross can save you from your sins. No other faith can save you. Only faith in Jesus can save you from your sins.

**We have one baptism.** Even though each believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit at the moment of their conversion, Paul seems to be speaking here of water baptism. I say that because he has already spoken of the Holy Spirit earlier in vs. 4, and this would be an unnecessary repetition if he was speaking of the Holy Spirit here also. Water baptism has always been very important in the Church. Ironically, baptism is one of the great issues that cause division in the Church today both regarding the mode and the readiness of the candidate. But, Paul makes it clear that baptism should be one of the things that aids Christian unity, through the public identity with Christ.

**There is one God and Father of all.** The God of the Bible is the only true God. There are no other Gods! If anyone claims to have another God, they are being deceived, and their worship is false. He is not only a God of truth and holiness, but also a God of love. That He is "Father of all" communicates to us the loving and caring nature of God. Paul details some encouraging things about God for us to realize.

God is “over all” – meaning that He is sovereign over His creation. This comforts and encourages us that no problem is larger or more powerful than He is.

God is “through all” – meaning that our God is providential in our world, accomplishing His will.

God is “in all” – meaning that His abiding presence is with us always, to help us and guide us into His truth and love.

### **Application**

Repent from sinful, selfish living. (vs. 1)

God has called you to “live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”

Repent from attitudes and actions that destroy or limit unity.

Close in prayer...transition to communion