

I. BKGRD. – In this age of technological sophistication and complication, do you ever long for something that's SIMPLE? Paul's letter to the believers at Ephesus is refreshingly SIMPLE!

Written by Paul ca. 60 AD. He had established the church at Ephesus while on his 2nd missionary journey (49-52 AD.). While under house arrest (Acts 28) in Rome, awaiting trial.

Chs. 1-3 constitute the doctrinal portion of the letter while chs. 4-6 contain the practical exhortations; practical ways to fulfill God's purpose in the Church. So far Paul has taught that God brought Jew and Gentile into a new relationship with each other in the Church and that he called the Church to display His wisdom. Paul now shows how God made provision for those in the Church to live and work together in unity and to grow together into maturity.

II. TEXT

Read vv. 1-6 . . .

v. 1 “A prisoner for the Lord” – Paul under house arrest in Rome (ca. 60 AD; cf. Acts 28:16,30).

“**Live a life worthy**” – *axios*: “equal weight;” live a life that is equal to the gift of eternal life you have been given! “God didn't call me to find fulfillment in the quantity of my work for him but in the quality of my walk with him.”

“**Of the calling you have received**” – note that all are called, not just clergy!

- **WHAT** is our “calling?” to reveal God's wisdom (3:10), plan (3:12) and glory (3:21) –
- **HOW?** By living a life worthy!
- **HOW** do I live a life worthy? Read vv. 2-3!!!

Notice this is the first mention that Paul makes of your response to God. He has spent 3 chapters telling you what God has done for you, of what God has given to you, of what God has provided for you. He has spent 3 chapters unfolding the glorious mysteries of God's love and grace and goodness: how God has reached out to you Gentiles who were once alienated and far away, and he has brought you near, now after spending the three chapters telling you all that God has done now he turns around and he says, “Now you walk worthy.”

One of the problems in the church is that we have been emphasizing the walk first, making man the initiator and God the responder. Such as not the case; such is not the gospel.

1. The gospel is that God took the initiative: “*God so loved that He gave...*” and man responds.
2. We love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).
3. The love of Christ constrains me; I am responding to that constraining love.
4. Any work that I try to do for God that does not come from a responsive love is unacceptable. You do not initiate the relationship with God; He has initiated it. You need to respond to it. How? Read vv. 2-3...

v. 2a “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (*agape*).

- Fruit of the Holy Spirit: (Gal. 5:22ff) “*But the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*” If that's not the fruit, that's not the Spirit!

“**Humble**” -- modesty-- lowliness (of mind). The proud Greeks and Romans thought it unnatural if a person did not see himself with pride and self-satisfaction; they saw humility as a pitiable weakness.

Humility is terribly elusive, because if focused on too much it will turn into pride, its very opposite. Humility is a virtue to be highly sought but never claimed, because once claimed, it is forfeited. It is our only protection against pride, and our only source of humility is a proper view of God and of ourselves.

"Gentle": Meekness or gentleness. Mild-spirited and self-controlled; the opposite of vengeance and vindictiveness. The Greek word is *praiotes*; it has nothing to do with cowardice, weakness, timidity or indifference. It was used of wild animals that were tamed, esp. of horses that were broken and trained. Such an animal still has all of his strength but his power is under the control of his trainer. Meekness is POWER UNDER CONTROL. Biblical meekness, or gentleness, is power under the control of God. EXAMPLES: Moses, David. Jesus ("...for I am gentle..."). One of the marks of true meekness is SELF CONTROL.

v. 2b "Bearing with one another in love" -- cf. 1 Cor. 13:4ff "*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.*"

v. 3 It is incumbent upon everyone of us to **"make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace"** – the only other alternative is DIVISION, which gives Satan a foothold in our churches and in our lives, home, marriages...

- *"Inasmuch as it is possible with you, live at peace with all men"* (Rom. 12:18);
- *"Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord"* (Heb. 12:14).

vv. 4-6 Gives the REASON we should do what vv. 2-3 command . . .

v. 4 Spiritual unity cannot be created by the Church; it is already created by the Holy Spirit. It can only be destroyed by the flesh; it can't even be taken from us by the Devil; we must CHOOSE to forfeit it...

We can CHOOSE to be obedient to the Scriptural command or not: (Romans 14:19) "*Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.*"

v. 5 "One baptism" – of the Holy Spirit or water baptism? BOTH!

- (1 Cor. 12:13) "*For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*" This was inward and invisible.
- (Rom. 6:3-4) "...don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." This was outward and visible; this is prob. what the apostle meant.

v. 6 God controls the circumstances of our lives. So when we complain about our situation we're murmuring against God.

So, in review, Paul tells us WHAT to do in v. 1;

HOW to do it in vv. 2-3; and

WHY we should do it in vv. 4-6.

Unfortunately, we live in an age when people will run and change churches rather than have to actually DO this . . . or change, or be corrected in their behavior. Is grace not ever being held accountable for your behavior? NO??! Grace is not given so you can refuse change and correction!

vv. 7-10 A sign? None except the sign of Jonah. As he was in the belly of the fish 3 days and nights, so the Son of Man shall be in the heart of the earth 3 days and nights.

v. 7 "Grace" here is a special empowerment that brings responsibility for service.

v. 8 The orig. context of Psalm 68 speaks of God's triumphant procession to His throne in the Temple at Jerusalem, a symbol of His heavenly throne. Paul now applies this to Jesus' ascension, His victory over all spiritual foes (Col. 2:15) and the gift of grace given to men (v. 7).

vv. 9-10 Appears to refer to Christ's coming from heaven to earth, then His ascension back to heaven (Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-11). While the NIVSB says, "this passage prob. does not teach, as some think and as some translation suggest, that Christ descended into hell," see 1 Peter 3:18ff:

"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built."

Apparently, between Jesus' burial and resurrection Christ went to the prison where fallen angels are incarcerated and there preached to the angels who are said to have fallen from their first estate and had sexual relations with the women of Noah's day (Gen. 6:1-4; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). The "sons of God" (Hebrew, *bene elohim*) in Gen. 6:2,4 are said to have been fallen angels (demons), as they are in Job 1:6; 2:1. The message preached was a declaration of victory. What about "angels are neither given nor taken in marriage" (Matthew 22:30). They can't have sex, can they; they're spirits? But often capable of very physical actions: Lot; killing of 185,00 Assyrians in Hezekiah's time; Balaam's confrontation, etc.

What is this place called "Sheol"?

Luke 16:19ff *"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' "'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"*

vv. 11-13 In 1 Cor 12:8-28 the Holy Spirit is seen as enduing the members of the body of Christ with spiritual gifts, or enablements for a varied service; here certain Spirit-endued men, i.e. apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are themselves the gifts whom the glorified Christ bestows upon His body the Church. In 1 Corinthians, the gifts are spiritual enablements for specific service; in Ephesians, the gifts are men who have such enablements.

What is the primary mission of the Church -- evangelization of the world? No -- the building up of the saints. vv. 12-13 represent our ONE GOAL! Doing this will guarantee the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20 which says to "make disciples", not followers, or big buildings, or money or even "converts").

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v. 15 "Speaking the truth . . . in LOVE!" It's easy to speak the truth harshly or unlovingly – any pagan can do that! Only Christians can do it "in *agape*."

v. 16 Teamwork is essential! Christianity is TEAM sport and each of us has a unique and necessary place on that team! There are no unimportant Christians! YOUR LIFE MATTERS!

Back in 1957 the First Brethren Church of Sarasota, Florida had a ground breaking service. Instead of the usual shovels for special people to use in digging, they brought an old one-horse plow. Recalling the words of Jesus, "*Take my yoke upon you,*" they borrowed an old yoke and two stout laymen were hitched up. But the two were unable to pull the plow. Then the entire Building Committee of the congregation were put on the rope, but even then the plow did not move. Other church officers were added, and the Sunday school officers and teachers, but still the plow did not move. Finally every member of the congregation who was present each took a hold of the rope. With every member pulling together, the plow moved, the ground was broken.

Too many churches expect the preacher or a few officials to do the work and pull the entire load to keep the church going. If we want to see progress we must all work together.

vv. 17-18 Purpose of Life; The Purpose Driven Life (2002 – 60 mill copies sold!) Saddleback Cmty Church pastor Rick Warren. People want to know they have a PURPOSE and reason for being here...most people are still looking.

v. 18 Universal principal: sin separates (cf. Isa. 59:1-2) "*Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.*"

"Hardening" (*porosis*). Late medical term (Hippocrates) for callous hardening. In Exodus (chs. 7-11), Pharaoh '*hardened his heart*' in the first 5 plagues. God confirms that hardness with the 6th plague.

v. 19 Cable television, the Internet and DVD's now make pornography available to nearly everyone regardless of age. TV is addictive (try to pry any 3 year old away from the TV); pornography is addictive (Dr. Doug Weiss, Heart-to-Heart Ministries); combine the two and you have a toxic cocktail!

v. 20 **"YOU..."** is emphatic; marks a stark contrast.

v. 21 LOVE!!! 2 powerful motivational forces in our world: love or greed. The effects of both are obvious.

vv. 22-24 Conversions of CC pastors Raul Reis, Mike MacIntosh, Greg Laurie and the evangelist, Nicky Cruz, the Apostle Paul!

v. 22 **"Put off..."** like removing a badly stained and soiled, moth-eaten, moldy garment and exchanging it for the pure, spotless robes of Jesus' righteousness! BAPTISM is a perfect picture of this...

"Deceitful" because the enemy tells us we will be happy, contented, fulfilled, etc. if we just...

v. 23 **"and be made new"** or "renewing" (KJV) is a present passive infinitive..."*to continuously continue to allow yourself to be renewed* [by God}." The battle is for the MIND: "*helmet of salvation*" (Eph. 6).

v. 25 Includes exaggeration, deceiving, "1/2 truths."

v. 26 Quoting Ps. 4:4. The commercialization / merchandising of Christianity angers God; Jesus was angry when He drove out the moneychangers. Again, the man w/ the withered hand. His anger very controlled; used on behalf of others (God and Gentiles). The emotion is not the sin; it's what you do with it.

Today: best sellers, music:

- Third Day / Hootie & Blowfish;
- 4Him and Plus One / N-Synch;
- Stacy Orraco / 14 y.o. Leann Rhimes;

- Chris Rice / James Taylor,
- Jennifer Knapp / Melissa Etheridge, etc.)

v. 27 Unresolved anger can lead to division: gives Satan a foothold. After reading the story of Adam and Eve to our youngest, when she was about 5, I asked what the moral of the story was. "Don't play with snakes," my daughter replied without hesitation.

v. 28 Even pencils at work?! Loss due to employee theft is said by retailers to exceed that of shoplifters! It is not enough to cease from sin; one must actively pursue doing good. Someone once said, "The dictionary is the only place where success comes before work."

v. 29 **"Unwholesome"** – used of rotting, putrefying fruit... A minister (I won't tell you who) was making a wooden trellis to support a climbing vine. As he was pounding away, he noticed that a little boy was watching him. The youngster didn't say a word, so the preacher kept on working, thinking the lad would leave. But he didn't. Pleased at the thought that his work was being admired, the pastor finally said, "Well, son, trying to pick up some pointers on gardening?" "No," he replied. "I'm just waiting to hear what a preacher says when he hits his thumb with a hammer."

Vacation w/ the Reynolds' and hit my shin on trailer ball...no cussing!

"The most influential of all educational factors is the conversation in a child's home." They will always follow what you DO more than what you say: "But Daddy, YOU do that..."

v. 30 Can only grieve a Person, not a 'force' (*ala* Star Wars). How do we grieve Him? Unresolved anger, conflict, willful sin and disobedience, "unwholesome talk" and the sins listed in v. 31.

v. 31 Anger unresolved creates a root of bitterness; "I can't stop the birds from flying close to my head, but I CAN stop them from building a nest in my hair!"

v. 32 The opposite of the negative qualities listed in v. 31. "Forgiving" is the most basic of Christian tenets.

III. SUMMARY / APPLICATION / RESPONSE -- Ch. 4 begins (v. 2) and ends (v. 32) with exhortations to LOVE and FORGIVE one another.

Unity and maturity are the twin goals of the Church; God has brought these into existence through the death of Christ. But they are perfected through PRACTICE in the Church, as each part does its task. Maturity is not defined by what you know or how long you've been a Christian, but by the amount and quality of the fruit of the Holy Spirit we see in your life! SHOW ME YOUR FRUIT!!!

SIMPLICITY! SIMPLIFY! Do it God's way. Commit. Dale Carnegie's How To Make Friends and Influence People.
