

EPHESIANS FOUR, ONE THROUGH THREE

Intro: The main reason for the writing of Ephesians is to give us the revelation of the Church, the Body of Christ! Everything in the epistle must be related to that great doctrine.

Furthermore, it is important to note the three main divisions of Ephesians. It is hard to improve on the outline of Miss Ruth Paxson:

- I. The Wealth of the Christian (1-3).
- II. The Walk of the Christian (4:1-6:9).
- III. The Warfare of the Christian (6:10-24).

These always must be kept in this order.

Paul has probably more to say about his prayers for the believers and their prayers for him--evidently because of the importance of these truths and the fact that we will only be able to enter into them through the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. This is always the case, but it is especially so here.

Chapter 4, then, begins the practical section of the epistle. And what Paul has to say about a believer's practical life is presented with the use of the word, walk, which appears in the practical section 5 times (4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15). Walk means to live. THESE ARE NOT FIVE WAYS TO LIVE, BUT FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ONE LIFE WHICH EVERY CHILD OF GOD IS TO LIVE.

In chapter 4, verses 1 through 3 go together--making one statement. It is the foundational truth of a believer's life and, therefore, needs to be clearly understood. As we read them, it will become apparent that these three verses answer three questions:

- 1) What (v. 1)?
- 2) How (v. 2)?
- 3) Why (v. 3)?

I. WHAT? Cf. v. 1.

"Therefore" ties in what he is about to write with what he has already written.

Their walk, their life, must always be consistent with the object that the Lord has had in our calling.

Cf. Eph. 4:4b. See also 1:18; 1:4; Rom. 8:28, 29.

For Paul to identify himself as "a prisoner of the Lord" (see also 3:1) is to indicate that every circumstance of our lives must be viewed in the light of this calling. The Lord will never allow anything in our lives that does not fit into His plan for us--a plan which is the same for each child

(Point out the distinction in "the vocation (calling) to which ye are called.")

II. HOW? Cf. v. 2.

There are four very important points in this verse, and we need each one of them.

If we are to walk worthy of our calling, then it will call for:

- 1) A right attitude toward ourselves: "all lowliness."
- 2) A right attitude toward God: "meekness."
- 3) A right attitude toward our circumstances: "with long-suffering."
- 4) A right attitude toward our fellow believers: "forbearing one another in love."

A. Toward ourselves: "With all lowliness."

This means to have small, lowly ideas about ourselves even though we have the right to have the most exalted ideas. After all how much better can you get than to be "chosen in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world," and destined to be like Him forever!

But we must never forget what we are in ourselves. Cf. Jacob in Gen. 32:10.

B. Toward God: "And meekness."

This word is used of our Lord in Matt. 11:29. It means to accept God'sdealings with us as good, not as something to be endured, but as something to rejoice in. There will be no disputing or resisting.

The heathen used this word, but not as an occasion for rejoicing!

We see this in the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 12:7-10.

C. Toward our circumstances: "With longsuffering."

Of course, people may be involved in this, too. But this means that we chose to remain in a difficult place until such time as the Lord sees fit to remove us--even though we could do something about it ourselves!

Abraham was not longsuffering when he went into Canaan and found "a famine." But our Lord was on the Cross, when the crowds were crying out for Him to show that He was the Son of God by coming down from the cross. Cf. Matt. 27:39-44.

- D. Toward our fellow-believers: "Forbearing one another in love."

Other Christians are not always going to do what they should do, any more than we are. And when they do not, we are to keep right on walking as we have in the past.

Two things of importance are here:

- 1) We are to keep right on being obedient to the Lord even though other believers are disobedient. Their disobedience gives us no right to change.
- 2) As this expression indicates, we can bear with them, hold up under their disobedience even when it causes us trouble, KNOWING THAT THEY HAVE THE SAME CALLING THAT WE DO. It is just as true as ever that for them, as well as for us, Phil. 1:6 applies!

On love, cf. Paul's prayer in 3:17-21. Also 1:4b, 5.

### III. WHY? Cf. v. 3.

We do not establish unity; we are to be diligent to preserve it.

The only other time this word is used in the NT is in Eph. 4:13, "the unity of the faith." "The faith" is almost a technical term in the Epistles pointing to the truths of the Word--the doctrines that are distinctly NT truths!

Our unity in the Spirit of God can only be a unity based upon the Word of God. That which binds us together is "peace."

Cf. Eph. 2:14, 15, 17.

Concl: Such is the foundation of our walk.

We need to know where we are going--not just to heaven, but to be made like our Lord. Cf. 1 John 3:1, 2.

And when a child of God sets himself to walk according to that calling, it seems, as these verses clearly indicate, that he fights it himself, that the Lord is against him, that circumstances make it impossible, and even our fellow-believers hinder us instead of helping us!

But this is not true!

All of these things are divinely designed to teach us two things:

- 1) That we cannot do it ourselves. Both "meekness" and "long-suffering" are mentioned in Gal. 5:22, 23 as a part of the fruit of the Spirit.
- 2) That our walk is not just an outward performance, but the result of an inward change! What we do, and its value to God, is determined by what we are!