

Pastor Lenard Tavernelli—Ephesians 4:1-6---Walk in Unity

Main Idea: Walk in a manner worthy of your calling in Christ to maintain Spirit-imparted church unity.

Sermon Summary: In John 17:21-23 hours before the cross Jesus prayed for the main thing on His heart—the unity of Christians (including us at Bethel!). Paul emphasizes this in Eph. 4:1-6 where he exhorts believers to preserve the unity of the Holy Spirit. He begins 4:1 with “Therefore” which takes us back to the earlier incredible doctrinal truths of: being chosen, predestined, elected, redeemed (paid for), adopted with an inheritance and sealed with the Spirit. These are true of Christians. Therefore, walk like a child of the King of the universe because that’s who you really are now. 2 Tim. 1:9: “God saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began”. God did it all—therefore no boasting at all on our part. Walking is slow, not flashy, routine, etc. That’s how we live out our faith-day to day.

A. Paul then gives 5 ways we are to walk worthy in ways that promote unity (in Spirit’s power):

1. Humility

- Paul is an apostle--but instead he calls himself a prisoner of the Lord willing to suffer and obey. Humble.
- Humility is the beginning step of unity. Greatest threat to humility is pride. 2nd fiddle hardest instrument to play!
- Pride started with Adam/Eve—they thought they knew better than God. Pride in myself is a killer of unity and is anti-gospel.
- Humility is not self groveling/abasement. It’s to view ourselves as God does. Rom. 12:3 “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

2) Gentleness

- Meekness—not weakness. This is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) Think a horse/Ferrari under control. Matt. 5:5: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Matt. 11:28-29; “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”
- Sadly, too often churches and Christians cannot be described as gentle—but rather biting and stubborn.
- Christ can change an argumentative, complaining, quarrelsome, combative person into someone gentle. Miracle.

3) Patience

- Means long-suffering. Another fruit of the Spirit. One good measure: how patient is God with you?

4) Bearing with one another in love

- Eg: trees (or Christians) that grow close together rub branches often. “If I haven’t offended you yet, give me a moment”. Not to excuse it at all, but as fallen humans, we are easily offended—and offend others easily.

- We are not to be doormats for others. But we are to contend for the “essential” tenets of our faith. An analogy would be a soldier fighting to protect his homeland. Satan constantly attacks our essential doctrines and unity.
- Overlook small slights, address larger offenses and must address sin—all done biblically. And in love.

5) Eager to maintain unity

- This cannot be manufactured on our own—its Spirit given. Its not uniformity or unanimity. But it is oneness of purpose and mission. Eph. 4:32: “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

B. The motivation for a walk that maintains unity (Jude 3, Col. 3:11, 1 Cor. 12:13)

- We do this because there is one Father, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one hope, one church. And because God is over all, thru all and in all. And He is a God of patience and long-suffering.

Questions (select some to discuss):

We measure godliness by 4 Cs: biblical content (see vv. 4-6), godly character (see vv. 1-3), loving competence, and compelling community (which is why we need to maintain unity). Consider the following questions in light of these measures.

- As sinners, it’s hard to “walk in a manner worthy of the gospel”. Practically, how do you fight discouragement here?
- In your opinion, is Bethel a humble church? Why or why not? Where could we improve here the most? What step can and will you personally take to grow in humility?
- Have you ever seen someone mature as a Christian from argumentative/complaining into more gentle/agreeable? Explain.
- A tougher question: where would you rate yourself (10 is very and 1 is never and 5 is in the middle): (1) humble vs proud (2) gentle vs harsh/hard (3) patient vs impatient/irritable/discontented (4) bearing in love vs intolerant/exacting (5) eager to maintain unity vs combative/my way only/tolerant. How would others rate you in these areas?
- Should we suffer fools? How patient should we be? Is Jesus still patient in John 14:9 (or Matt. 7:6, Luke 16:31)?
- What are the “essential” tenets of our faith (see EFCA statement perhaps)? What kinds of things are worth fighting or contending for—which are not?
- Can you give an example of how you have been a peacemaker—trying to protect unity within Christ’s church?
- In what specific area (or two) do you believe you need to grow to “walk in a manner worthy of your calling”?