

11/10/24 Christ Fellowship

Unified in our Walk – Ephesians 4

I believe it was about seven years ago that I went out to San Diego to Camp Pendleton Marine Corps base with Troy Pittman to watch his son, Trey, graduate from boot camp. To say I was impressed is an understatement. I watched nearly 500, mostly eighteen-year-old boys walk out dressed all the same. They all had on tan short-sleeved shirts, perfectly ironed with navy blue pants and black shiny shoes. They moved all the same. They looked all the same. I'm sure as they were hup two threeing up and down that Trey probably passed in front of us two or three times but we couldn't pick him out because everybody looked almost identical. There were some varying shades of skin color but other than that, it looked like a computer glitch. But at the very end, their commanding officer gave one last loud command and every single one of those boys clicked their heels together and it was chilling. It wasn't clickity click click. It was one loud CLICK in perfect unison. I was impressed.

Part of what makes our United States Marine Corps such a force to be reckoned with is their unity. Every one of those young men did exactly the same thing in boot camp. They all ran the same. They ate the same. They marched the same. They went to bed at the same time and woke up at exactly the same time. They did the same number of pushups and situps. They wore the same clothes and went to the same places. And because they did, they were unified and in unity there is power. There is strength.

I was so impressed that when I got back home, I went to the local recruiters office and asked to meet with Trey's recruiter so I could ask him some questions. And I asked him how the Marines motivate those young people to be so unified. And his answer was perfect. He said anybody can motivate somebody temporarily to do something by screaming at them. And that has its place in the Marine Corps. But their goal was not so much to motivate - but to inspire. He said, "**Motivation is temporary but inspiration is forever.**"

So, what is it about unity that helps the Marine Corps be so effective in fighting the enemy? Well, being unified gives you one common goal to strive for. It gives you a plan of attack and a plan when you are attacked by the enemy. It makes it obvious what to do when one part of the corps is hurt and how the rest can help. It makes the orders you receive from headquarters understandable and obeyable. There is support and accountability. When a body is united, it has everything it needs to do what it is called to do.

Turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter four and Sergeant Paul the Apostle is going to give us our orders and inspire – not just motivate – us to do what we have been called to do as a body of believers in Jesus Christ. If we are going to fight off the enemy and help others that have been attacked in our goal of telling others about what Jesus has done for us then we have to be unified. And in chapter four, Paul tells us specifically in what ways we are to be unified.

The first three chapters of Ephesians is all about doctrine and the last three chapters are the application of that doctrine. I have heard people say in the past that doctrine isn't really important as long as we just love everybody. I think that was said by the same people that said to always preach the Gospel and if necessary, use words. They also said that God will never give you more than you can handle. And God helps those who help themselves. Those people don't have doctrine so they say things that sound good but are not truth.

Doctrine is just knowing the truth about God. That is absolutely vital or we will never be unified. And so, Paul, like he does in many of his books, lays out the doctrine first as a base for what he says as application later. And the base he has laid down in Ephesians is that we have all these resources as believers. God has chosen us. He loves us. He gives us grace. In His name we have great power. We are alive spiritually as opposed to spiritually dead. We have been grafted into the family of God along with the original family of Jews. And we have His spirit living inside of us to guide and protect. We have everything we need to do what He has called us to do. Now, in chapter 4, he starts telling us what we need to do and the importance of unity as we do it. Let's read **Ephesians 4:1-6**.

“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. ² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Did your parents ever tell you to do something and when you asked them why, they answered, *“Because I said so”*? I hated that answer as a kid. I always want to know why. Well, Paul understood that and so instead of just starting out this letter by saying, *“Be humble and gentle and patient...”* he has explained why in the previous chapters. If we have all those resources, we are fully equipped, motivated and inspired to use them. Plus, as we saw last week, we have Paul himself praying for us that we will be able to do what

we need to do. He's not just saying, "God wants you to be nice!" He's saying, "You have these resources. Now here is the goal. Here's the plan to get to the goal. And here is how you keep from getting killed if and when you are attacked."

So, what's the goal? The goal is for us to live a life worthy of the calling we have received. That's what it says in **verse 1**. But notice that before he gives us the goal, Paul refers to himself as a prisoner of the Lord. Paul is in prison in Rome but he knows and wants us to know that God is in control and has allowed or even caused him to be in prison in Rome so Paul just flat out says, "I'm God's prisoner." And in doing so, he is gently reminding us that he is not asking us to do something that he hasn't done and also that this goal may lead you to trouble like it has for him.

But our motivation and inspiration for doing all this is found in the resources he talked about in **chapter one, verse 18**, where Paul talks about the riches of God's glorious inheritance which is our eternal treasures in Heaven. We are called to live this life worthy of the calling we have received so we can be rewarded in the next life.

Let me go back to the Camp Pendleton example. When those young Marines walked out onto that huge field, you instantly went, "Wow! Okay, these guys are different. This isn't something you see every day." They had lived together and struggled together and fought together and trained together for a long time and the unity paid off. They were a force to be reckoned with.

It's the same with Christians, especially the Christians in a church who have lived their lives together and shared their struggles with each other and fought together and trained together. We have walked through life together and when people see us as a church they can tell that we are not something you see every day. We, too, are a force to be reckoned with. It's not because we are anything special but because we have all those resources that include the power of the Holy Spirit of God that lives inside of us.

So, Paul is telling us as a church to live - or as some versions say "walk" - in a manner that is worthy of our calling. Then he goes on to describe what that unified walk looks like. Look at **verses 2-3** again. "*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*"

We should be humble like Moses was humble. Do you know how we know Moses was humble? It says so in the book of **Numbers, chapter 12, verse 3**. It says, "*Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.*" That's pretty

humble, right? Now...do you know who wrote the book of Numbers? Moses! I love that. But think about it. All scripture is inspired by God so it was God that told Moses to write that and it must have been absolutely painful for Moses to write it but he was obedient.

You know, I could give you illustrations and examples of how to be humble. I could look up the word in the original Greek (and I did but can't come close to pronouncing it) but you know what the word means. You know what the word "gentle" means. I don't have to explain that. Same with "patient." I'll not insult your intelligence trying to explain those simple words to you. But while they may be simple and easy to understand, the difficulty in walking in those ways is what separates the spiritually mature from the spiritually weak.

In the last part of Paul's prayer for us in the last chapter that we looked at last week, he says he prays that we would be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. In other words, Paul wants us to look like Jesus, to walk like Jesus in all His humility, gentleness and patience. That's the goal. We have the resources. We even have a model. Now, we need to be unified in our walk that looks like how Jesus walked. And Paul closes these verses by saying we do all of that by bearing with each other in love. And who is our model for love? Jesus.

The good news about unity is that it does not mean uniformity. It does not mean unison. We don't have to all look like each other or talk like each other. Unlike those Marines that graduated boot camp that day, there is room in Christianity for people to express themselves differently and to look sound and smell unlike other people. Paul talks a lot about how we are one body but different parts. We do different things and have different responsibilities.

But Paul goes on in **verse 4** to list all the ways that we are to be absolutely unified and all agree upon. If you believe in any other way than what Paul describes here, you are not a true believer. We call these the spine issues. These are not negotiable. There is no room for disagreement on this. Now, when it comes to what version of the Bible is best to read or how often we should take the Lord's Supper, those are rib issues. We can agree to disagree on some things. Some people don't think dogs should be in church and that's their view. I just can't look LilBit in her big brown eyes and tell her that. If you can, well, see ya.

But starting in **verse 4**, Paul lists seven spinal issues that we need to all agree upon. There is one body. There is one body of believers, one church. When Paul talks about the church, most of the time he is not just talking about one, local church like Christ Fellowship but

the whole body of believers worldwide. Some parts of the body do some things and some do others but we are all one body.

There is one **Holy Spirit**. Believers are individual temples of the Holy Spirit but Paul has already said in chapter 2 that we are being built together into a dwelling of God through the same Spirit.

Then Paul says there is one **hope**. Yes, we have some hope about lots of things but Christians have one main hope and that is the hope that we know is going to happen but just hasn't yet and that hope is the hope of Heaven. It's what the book of Titus *calls the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ* (Titus 2:13).

Then Paul says there is one **Lord**. Who is our one Lord? Of course, it is Jesus. There can be no disagreement on that.

The next one is one **faith**. And what Paul means by faith is not the act of faith by which we are saved but instead what **Jude 3** calls, *“the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”* He's talking about the body of doctrine revealed in the New Testament for which we contend. This passage is part of that doctrine of faith.

Now, the next one I can understand can be confusing but try not to overthink it. When Paul says there is one **baptism**, he's talking about the outward baptism with water that we all should go through after we become Christians. Paul talks in other places about being baptized with the Holy Spirit and that is what happens at the moment we are saved. We all get that. Some people think that means you have to be dunked twice, once to be a Christian and once for the Holy Spirit but that's not true. Jesus said in **Matthew 28** that we should go and baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. That's one baptism.

The last one is one **God and Father**. I guess this could be confusing as well but, again, don't overthink it. Yes, God is Father, Son and Spirit but there is one God and Father and He is over all and through all and in all. It's all about God. It's not about you. It's not about me. It's not even about the church. It's about God.

I want to end by saying that I think that's why last week was just such a powerful time of worship. We came together as a small part of the body of Christ and in unity said, *“It's not about us. It's sure not about a building. It's not about our comfort or about the view or the neighborhood or any other outward issue.”* It was about God being in our hearts and being worshipped for who He is in spite of who we are or where we are or anything else. And so,

you can see the importance of you being here as often as possible. Because if you are AWOL, the church can't be unified.

music

So, God, we come to you right now asking you humbly to continue working in and working through our church. Lord, there are lots of other churches in this world, and most of them have more people, more talent, and more money than we do. But Lord, you can have all of us that you want. You can have our people, our building, our talent and our money. We give to you all that you ask for and we ask for nothing in return, just because we trust you. Thank you, Lord. We love you. Amen.

Maybe some of you are here today thinking that this passage doesn't really describe you. You don't have the Spirit of God living inside of you and so therefore you don't have the power of God to do what God has called us to do as Christians. Let's all bow our heads again and if you have never asked God to truly be your Lord and Savior then today is the day. Ask Him to forgive you of all your sins and then repent – turn away – from those sins and that lifestyle. Do it right now as the music plays.