

NOON BIBLE STUDY: EPHESIANS 4 (PT 1)

EPHESIANS 4:1-6 - CHRISTIAN UNITY

V. 1 - "WALK IN MANNER WORTHY" - "WALK" IN THIS CONTEXT MEANS LIVE.

"FOR THREE CHAPTERS PAUL HAS BEEN UNFOLDING FOR HIS READERS THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD BEING WORKED OUT IN HISTORY. THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, WHO DIED FOR SINNERS AND WAS RAISED FROM DEATH, GOD IS CREATING SOMETHING ENTIRELY NEW, NOT JUST A NEW LIFE FOR INDIVIDUALS FOR A NEW SOCIETY. PAUL SEES AN ALIENATED HUMANITY BEING RECONCILED, A FRACTURED HUMANITY BEING UNITED, EVEN A NEW HUMANITY BEING CREATED. IT IS A MAGNIFICENT VISION.

NOW THE APOSTLE MOVES ON FROM THE NEW SOCIETY TO THE NEW STANDARDS WHICH ARE EXPECTED OF IT. SO HE TURNS FROM EXPOSITION TO EXHORTATION, FROM WHAT GOD HAS DONE, TO WHAT WE MUST BE AND DO, FROM DOCTRINE TO DUTY, FROM MIND-STRETCHING THEOLOGY TO ITS DOWN TO EARTH, CONCRETE IMPLICATIONS IN EVERYDAY LIVING." (JOHN STOTT, "THE MESSAGE OF EPHESIANS" PG 146)

A NEW COMMUNITY WILL NOT SURVIVE IF IT IS NOT UNITED. WITH THIS IN MIND, PAUL APPEALS TO THE CHURCH TO BE UNITED.

1 - EPHESIANS 4:2 - UNITY TAKES LOVE

- HUMILITY: "HUMILITY IS ESSENTIAL TO UNITY. PRIDE LURKS BEHIND ALL DISCORD, WHILE THE GREATEST SINGLE SECRET OF CONCORD IS HUMILITY." (STOTT, PG 148)
- GENTLENESS: HAVING OR SHOWING A KIND AND QUIET NATURE: NOT HARSH OR VIOLENT. NOT HARD OR FORCEFUL. NOT STRONG OR HARSH IN EFFECT OR QUALITY
- PATIENCE: ABLE TO REMAIN CALM & NOT BECOME ANNOYED WHEN WAITING FOR A LONG TIME OR WHEN DEALING WITH PROBLEMS OR DIFFICULT PEOPLE
- TOLERANCE: WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT FEELINGS, HABITS, OR BELIEFS THAT ARE DIFFERENT FROM YOUR OWN: THE ABILITY TO ACCEPT, EXPERIENCE, OR SURVIVE SOMETHING HARMFUL OR UNPLEASANT
- LOVE: MODELED BY CHRIST, 1 CORINTHIANS 13, ETC. AFFECTION.

UNITY WILL ONLY HAPPEN IF WE LOVE. IN A WORLD OF DIVIDED PARTIES, THE CHURCH SHOULD BE A PLACE WHERE UNITY AMIDST DIVERSITY EXISTS. THE CHURCH IS CALLED TO BE A DEMONSTRATION OF GOD'S LOVE AND PURPOSES ON THE EARTH. BUT THIS DOES NOT HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT. IT TAKES EFFORT, AND IN THIS CASE WITH HUMILITY, GENTLENESS, PATIENCE AND TOLERANCE IN LOVE.

2 - EPHESIANS 4:3 - UNITY TAKES EFFORT

- THE GREEK VERB FOR "DILIGENT" IS "*SPOUDAZONTES*" IT IS EMPHATIC. IT MEANS "SPARE NO EFFORT" AND BEING A PRESENT PARTICIPLE, IT IS A CALL FOR CONTINUOUS, DILIGENT ACTIVITY.

TO CONSIDER:

- ARE YOU EAGER/DILIGENT TO PRESERVE THE UNITY?
- WHAT DO YOU DO/SAY WHEN SOMEONE COMPLAINS ABOUT SOMETHING/SOMEONE IN THE CHURCH?

- WHAT DO YOU SAY WHEN SOMEONE WITHDRAWS FROM THE FAMILY OF GOD?
- WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN SOMEONE DISAGREES WITH YOU?

TWO CONTEXTS OF UNITY: UNITY WITHIN LOCAL CHURCH, UNITY WITH UNIVERSAL CHURCH.

3 - EPHESIANS 4:4-6 - UNITY IS ROOTED IN SPIRITUAL REALITIES

THE THINGS LISTED IN THIS SECTION ARE ALL THINGS GOD HAS DONE/IS. THEY ARE NOT BASED ON US.

ONE BODY - ONE GROUP, ONE GATHERED ENTITY ONE SPIRIT - ONE SUPERNATURAL EMPOWERMENT & CONNECTION TO & THRU GOD'S PRESENCE
 ONE HOPE - ALL HEADED TO THE KINGDOM ONE LORD - ALL FOLLOWING/OBEYING JESUS
 ONE FAITH - ALL WAY TO BE RIGHT GOD ONE BAPTISM - ONE WAY TO JOIN THE FAMILY
 ONE GOD, THE FATHER WHO IS OVER/THROUGH/IN ALL - ONE GOD WE WORSHIP AND GLORIFY, WHO IS THE REASON FOR IT ALL

THE GOAL OF THE ADVERSARY IS TO GET US TO FOCUS ON THE THINGS THAT MAKE US DIFFERENT, RATHER THAN THE THINGS THAT MAKE US UNITED.

EPHESIANS 4:7-13 - JESUS HAS GIVEN "GIFTS" TO INDIVIDUALS TO LEAD, CARE FOR AND EMPOWER THE CHURCH.

V. 8 - WHEN JESUS ASCENDED HE SECURED A VICTORY OVER THE FORCES OF DARKNESS AND OVERCAME A LARGE HOST, NOW HOLDING THEM CAPTIVE. WITH THIS VICTORY HE ALSO GAVE "GIFTS" TO HIS CHURCH, INDICATING THE EXTENT OF HIS VICTORY. NOT ONLY DID HE DEFEAT HIS FOE, HE ALSO PUT HIS OWN AGENTS IN AUTHORITY.

APOSTLES: "SENT ONES". SENT ON MISSION FOR PARTICULAR/UNIQUE PURPOSE BY JESUS

PROPHETS: GIFTING TO TELL WORDS FROM GOD

EVANGELISTS: SPECIAL GIFTING IN THE ABILITY TO SPREADING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

PASTORS: GREEK: "SHEPHERDS". CARE AND OVERSIGHT OF CHURCH FAMILY

TEACHERS: SPECIAL GIFTING TO TEACH THE MESSAGE OF GOD AND COMMUNICATE TRUTH

PURPOSE: TO EQUIP THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE (MINISTRY), AND TO BUILD UP THE BODY OF CHRIST. THESE ROLES ARE NEEDED UNTIL WE ARE MADE MATURE LIKE CHRIST.

TO CONSIDER:

- IN A LOCAL CHURCH OF 50 CHRIST-FOLLOWERS, HOW MANY OF THEM ARE MINISTERS?
- HOW DOES THE CONCEPT OF ALL THE SAINTS BEING CALLED TO THE "WORK OF SERVICE" AFFECT YOUR VIEW OF YOUR OWN ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH?
- HOW SHOULD WE VIEW THOSE WITH SPECIAL GIFTINGS IN THE CHURCH?

EPHESIANS 4:14-16 - UNITED TOGETHER, BUILT TO LAST

V. 14 - "AS A RESULT..." - AS A RESULT OF WHAT? (LOVE FOR EACH OTHER, SPIRITUAL UNITY, GIFT MINISTRIES)

- HOW WOULD THE CHURCH BE ABLE TO "NOT BE CHILDREN, TOSSED HERE AND THERE...BY EVERY WIND OF DOCTRINE."
- WHAT DOES IT MEAN, LOOK/SOUND LIKE TO "SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE" ?
- WHAT PART DO YOU PLAY IN HELPING THE BODY OF CHRIST FUNCTION WELL AND REMAIN HEALTHY?

EPHESIANS 4 STRONGLY EMPHASIZES THE ROLE AND NEED OF EACH SAINT, EACH MEMBER OF THE BODY. DO YOU HAVE THIS VIEW OF THE CHURCH AND YOUR PART IN THE FAMILY? WHY OR WHY NOT? HOW CAN WE LIVE OUT THE VISION PAUL SHARES IN THIS SECTION?