

The Unity of the Body – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul urges a unity of maturity in the life of believers in all humility and patience
2. aim – to cause us to desire a deep unity in the church based on a humble doctrinal maturity
3. passage – Ephesians 4:1-16

b. outline

1. The Unity in the Spirit (Ephesians 4:1-3)
2. The Unity in the Body (Ephesians 4:4-6)
3. The Unity in the Gifts (Ephesians 4:7-10)
4. The Unity in the Faith (Ephesians 4:11-16)

c. opening

1. a beginning with a word of **gratitude**
 - a. my deepest thanks for the **pastor appreciation** gift
 - b. my difficulty with “public displays of affection” should not be interpreted as a lack of gratitude
 - c. my response to the gift is inward tendency to want to work harder, to meet the “expectation”
2. a beginning with a word regarding the **Protestant work ethic**
 - a. **aka.** the Calvinist or Puritan work ethic = a direct response to a *reformed* understanding of the grace of God in salvation; a natural consequence of the Protestant Reformation
 - b. a term coined in the early 1900’s = that hard work, discipline, and frugality is the natural response of the person coming to understand the concept of salvation by grace alone
 1. specifically, a desire to work towards the advancement of the cause of Christ, both personally (in sanctification) and in the world (through vocation) as a response of gratitude for grace
 2. again, a turning away from advancing one’s own cause (in sacramentalism) to advancing the cause of Christ (in the pursuits of holiness, ministry, evangelism, missions, vocation, etc.)
 3. with the net result being (historically): the rise of economic systems that are mutually beneficial and that foster an environment in which the gospel can flourish
 - c. flowing from the Reformation concept of **vocation** = the belief by the magisterial reformers that work of *every kind* is valuable to the cause of Christ, not *only* those in “the ministry”
 1. contra the Roman idea that only the “professional” clergy were used in this way
 2. specifically, that every believer has a “calling” to serve the Lord through whatever occupation he or she is gifted and responsible; to use work of every kind to minister and evangelize
 - a. especially, including motherhood and fatherhood
 3. being exegeted from the reformed idea of the redemption of “work” = that Christ came to restore the creation mandate of work established in Adam and corrupted by his sin (**see Genesis 2:5**)
 - d. **Paul will address the issue of our “calling” at the beginning of Ephesians 4, and this matter of vocation is implied within what he will address with his readers**
3. a beginning of the **imperative** section of the letter
 - a. **remember:** Paul employs an indicative-imperative rhetorical structure in most of his letters
 - b. **notice:** because of this change of structure, this message will be primarily an **introduction**
 - c. the similarity of the beginning of chapter 4 to the beginning of chapter 3
 1. Paul makes a similar “*therefore*” (or conclusion) statement (as “*for this reason*” in **3:1**)
 2. Paul makes a similar appeal to his status as a “*prisoner*” (assuming authority, **i.e.** “*Paul*” in **3:1**)
 3. Paul makes a similar “turn” to speaking authoritatively to them (as assumed in **3:1**)
 - d. **Ephesians 3** ends the **indicative** section of the letter
 1. **#1:** God decrees to adopt a people to himself and lavish them with his spiritual riches
 2. **#2:** God creates this people by raising them from their spiritual deadness to faith in Christ
 3. **#3:** God draws this people together into a new structure as living stones of worship to him
 4. **#4:** God purposes to use this work of decree and drawing to glorify himself in a cosmic drama
 5. these are the *truth statements* upon which Paul builds the flow of his argument
 - a. just as in the “work ethic” above, Paul assumes that these truths will result in great change
 - e. **Paul now turns his attention to “urging” (note 4:1) his readers to react appropriately to these great truths by living out their calling, to heed the imperatives from the indicatives**

I. The Unity in the Spirit (Ephesians 4:1-3)

Content

a. the key word of this pericope

1. the combination of “unity” (vv. 3, 13) and “one” (vv. 4-6)
 - a. “unity” = a commonality; a sense of shared belief and purpose; thinking and acting alike; sharing a sense of comm[unity] in which there is a shared sense of being alike *because we want to*
 1. a “unity of the Spirit” (v. 3) = a shared sense of commonality around the **initial** work of the Spirit; a sense of *being* alike because his work is *the same* in all of us (i.e. conversion)
 - a. i.e. believers sharing a common *experience* as carried out by the Spirit
 2. a “unity of the faith” (v. 13) = a shared sense of commonality around the **ongoing** work of the Spirit; a sense of *becoming* alike because his work *continues* in all of us (i.e. sanctification)
 - a. i.e. believers maturing around a common *faith* as the Spirit builds us up
 - b. “one” = the basis of this commonality; what *causes* a shared sense of being alike (see below)
 1. a number of *specific* and *unique* realities that form the *foundation* of our unity
 2. e.g. “one hope” = that our faith in Christ creates in us a singular hope of seeing the day of resurrection, and that *we all share this same hope* as those brought together by the Spirit (i.e. the “blessed hope” of Titus 2:13)
2. **Paul assumes that the great truths of God’s decree, drawing, and drama will bring Christians together as a body as they appropriate these truths for themselves individually**

b. the sense of a common call (v. 1)

1. “calling” (n. *klesis*) = a new station in life; a new task; a new relationship – a sense of something entirely different from what was before, both in terms of *relationship with God* and in *action of life*
 - a. “called” (v. *kaleo*) = the verb-form associated with this calling; that it is by God (i.e. the Spirit)
 - b. first, the **effectual call** of the Spirit upon the dead sinner, raising him to life and to faith in Christ
“Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ ...” (1689 Confession, chap. 10:1)
 1. effectual call = an act of God, through the human proclamation of the gospel, in which he *summons* specific people to himself in such a way that they are converted and respond^(T4Y¹³)
 2. a *Trinitarian* work: the Father calls people *through* the Spirit to faith in Jesus Christ
 3. a *real* work: the call comes *through the human proclamation* of the gospel (i.e. means)
 4. a *specific* work: a specific call to specific people at a specific time (not a general call)
 5. an *effective* work: a call that *must* and *will* produce the results that God demands (i.e. effectual)
 6. Paul mentions the reality of being “called” in most of his letters – more than 50 times
“... do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who 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 ...” (2 Tim. 1:8-9)
 7. the effectual call is *central* to any understanding of salvation; to minimize the importance of a *specific* call by God upon those who are the target of his grace is to *gut* the gospel of one of its most important characteristics (Gal. 1:6)
“I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel ...”
 8. **Paul assumes that one form of unity in the body is our calling by the Spirit**
 - c. second, the **continuing call** of the Spirit upon the believer, working through him in all of life
“... good works [as God hath commanded in his Holy Word 16:1], done in obedience to God’s commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith; and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God ...” (1689 Confession, chap. 16:2)
 1. a continuation of the effectual call = the work of the Spirit through the Word to bring the fullness of God’s purpose to fruition in the lives of those called by him (i.e. their obedience)
 2. the term “calling” (then) includes the following realities for believers:
 - a. for some, a call to the ministry = the call to full-time Christian service (i.e. pastor, missionary)
 1. prior to the Reformation, this was the exclusive consideration; to *religious life* (vocation)
 - b. for all, a call to a ministry = the call to specific forms of Christian service
 1. e.g. the contention in 1 Cor. 12-14 that all are gifted to serve *in the church*
 - c. for all, a call to vocation = the call to ministry through secular occupations (see above)
 3. **Paul assumes that another form of unity in the body is our calling to continue the work of the Spirit through the various ways that he leads us to serve in the church and world**

c. the sense of a worthy walk (v. 1)

1. **the first great imperative:** “walk” in a manner “worthy” of this calling
 - a. “walk” = to behave; to live; to conduct one’s life; to be occupied with; lit. to tread all around
 - b. “worthy” = properly; suitably; after a godly sort; lit. as is befitting your station

- c. to walk worthy (then) as a **Christ-follower** (!) is to live in a manner that is befitting the fact that you have been called to Christ by the Spirit *and* have been gifted to serve his cause
- d. or, there is absolutely no excuse for any person claiming to be a Christian to either 1) live in a way that denies the power of that effectual call (in sinfulness) or 2) fail to work towards the advancement of the cause of Christ through both direct and specific ministry in the church *and* the specific vocation to which one has been gifted
 - 1. Paul would consider either of these to be evidence of a disunity brought into the body
 - 2. the unity of the body of Christ is wrapped around our common call to holiness and vocation