

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabible.org.

Date: **October 11, 2009**

Title: **The Consequence of an Overflowing Love: Unity - Part 1**

Text: Ephesians 4:1-6 (vv. 7-16)

Theme: The believer's lifestyle should reflect salvation's unity. God has given to His Church gifted men who will be used by Him to facilitate growth in Christ likeness that is seen by inter-body unity.

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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in **the Storyline of the Bible**. She is determined by design to have a **God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching** focused on personal **discipleship** through intentional and systematic instruction; a **Global-impacting mission** that resolves to be a **church planting church**; and a **Grace-based fellowship** where disciples are invited to live under a **reigning grace** characterized by a **Gospel-driven sanctification** that celebrates a divine **monergism** to the Christian life.

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Introduction:

The paragraph runs from 4:1-16. Because of its length we will note verses 1-6 and then verses 7-16. "With this chapter the second part of the letter begins. In the first three chapters Paul has dealt with the great and eternal truths of the Christian faith, and with the function of the Church in the plan of God."¹

"Paul now applies the doctrine that he expounded in the first three chapters. All knowledge has two components: pure and applied. The conduct of believers that Paul addresses in these last three chapters is based on the knowledge given in the first three chapters. During the past decades it was often and vigorously stated that Paul's imperatives are dependent upon his indicatives; all things ethical are derived from dogmatic doctrine. However, the content of Eph. 1-3 is doxological rather than dogmatic."²

"When the conjunction 'therefore' is used, at the beginning of a second, hortatory part of Pauline epistles, it bears great weight; it emphasizes the logical dependence of ethical advice upon the preceding doctrinal statements."³

We can never separate the imperative from the indicative. Paul intentionally and carefully lays down the cause in Ephesians 1-3 and then the consequences in Ephesians 4-6. The root is first stated and then the resultant fruit is described. If you do not see the statements of chapters 4-6 flowing from the preceding chapters you are in grave danger of a performance-based, flesh-driven life that leaves you discouraged or deceived. It is only as you focus on who Christ is, what He has done, and who you are in Him that any hope of living the Christ life is possible. He is the reason why there is unity in the home, the church and the world. The call is to maintain and guard what is already true.

"The way in which Paul introduces his exhortations shows that he honors his readers by expecting of them a specific conduct. His very imperatives imply a privilege the saints can enjoy, not a burden they ought to bear. When he honors them by expecting that they will follow the highest call, God's own will; then he preaches good news, the very gospel - even in the form of ethical imperatives! The Pauline admonitions document the freedom of the saints to do God's will. Imperatives can be a means of preaching the gospel."⁴

Paul has already prayed twice that his audience would be able to mentally and experientially lay hold of the enormity of God's redemptive activity in their behalf. God wants His church to be filled up with all the fullness of His person and work so that He would receive glory in His church. This overflowing of Him in and through the church is nothing less or more than love. This is what His love looks like when it is lived out.

Let us not make a grievous mistake by removing the call to be what we are from the first three chapters. I believe we make things more complicated than they sometimes have to be. We take 4:1 and the call to walk worthy and we immediately shift the focus from God in us to what we now must do. There is no worthy walk apart from His love flowing to us and through us to those around us. This is an already/not-yet truth. You might as an individual be clogging the flow of God's love toward others by elements of resentment and bitterness and animosity toward individuals or institutions, but God will win and break your dam of hostility and cleanse you powerfully. There is no unity apart from the love of God filling up and flowing through His church. Again, we must not move too quickly from the corporate context to the individual believer. The two are inseparably linked and incapable of separation, but the Holy Spirit is working from the larger whole to the individual pieces.

"The Greek verb 'to walk' suggests something different from a casual promenade: it means to follow a prescribed way in a fixed order, comparable to the march of Israel under God's guidance in the wilderness."⁵

Read through these verses and try to find the bottom line. What are some reoccurring themes? What words keep popping up? Verse two "forbearing one another"; v. 3 "keep the unity of the Spirit"; vv. 4-6 "one"; v. 13 "till we all come in the unity of the faith"; v. 16 "whole body fitly joined together". *What is the bottom line?* To have a unity that is seen in a perfected body that is seen when believers are walking worthy.

For just a minute think of the larger context. What has Paul been addressing? That both Jew and Gentile are now one (2:12-19; 3:6). What does this message before us suggest? That there were still people within the Church who were struggling with this whole thought. Do you think this was a difficult concept to accept? Absolutely! Why? Because for centuries Jews and Gentiles were isolated, racist, and bigots. Now let us turn our attention toward the individual parts of the passage.

"The chapter begins (v.2) and ends (v.32) with exhortations to love and forgive one another. So far Paul has taught that God brought Jew and Gentile into a new relationship to each other in the church and that he called the church to display his wisdom. Paul now shows how God made provision for those in the church to live and work together in unity and to grow together into maturity."⁶

The Storyline:

"Let us remind ourselves that the central thought of the letter is that Jesus has brought to a disunited world the way to unity. This way is through faith in him and it is the Church's task to proclaim this message to all the world."⁷

The Problem:

Within any family there are occasions when siblings quarrel. Sometimes the quarreling becomes so pointed and painful that there is a separation. Sometimes they move out of state and some times they stop talking to each other. This is painful and unfortunate, but when passion and emotion become unbearable or unmanageable this time away is necessary. The hope exists that in the separation there will be reconciliation and reunion. We see this with Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:36-41. Who was right and who was wrong is probably unknowable to us, but the great part is the oneness they did share and the reconciliation that took place between them later on.

This passage tells us why this oneness is possible. It is always because of the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Questions:

1. What is the significance of the "therefore"?
2. Notice how Paul identifies himself as "the prisoner of the Lord." What two things have already been noted concerning this phrase?
3. What is Paul accenting in verse one?
4. What is the exhortation toward in verse 1?
5. What is verse two doing?
6. How is a worthy walk described?
7. The reader should understand what forms the basis for true Christ-likeness.
8. The reader should see why he should be Christ-like and then seek to manifest Christ in his own life.
9. So what? What does Paul wish the reader to do? What does Christ look like? What are verses 4-6 addressing?
10. In verse 5 it says "one baptism". Is there only one baptism? What is it referring to?
11. Look at verse 6. Notice the phrase "'above all, through all and in you all". What exactly is happening here?
12. Why does Paul place this paragraph in the flow of his letter?
13. What is Paul hoping for?
14. How might the call to unity in the 1st century church look differently than the same call in the 21st century?
15. Is the 21st century church "hopelessly" divided? What steps might we take as a local church to mend what is broken?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know there is only one Lord, one faith and one baptism.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose Him above all else and live in communion with His body.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in the singularity and solidarity of God and the communion of the saints.

Outline:

I. The call to be what we are: one body universal (vv.1-6).

Verse 4:1 begins with “therefore ([**oun**]2:19; 4:1, 17; 5:1, 7, 15; 6:14). It is only as his prayer in 3:14-19 is answered that the Church manifests the unity of God. Paul again notes his imprisonment (3:13). Because Jews and Gentiles are of the same body (**one new man**) we are to be at peace with one another. Jews and Gentiles should no longer be separated by ethnic or religious differences. This is a general, but fervent appeal (**parakaleo**). What is the “calling to which you have been called?” We have been called to be what we are in Christ, **one new man**. The walk that is to mark us is a walk characterized by unity within the body. There is no division within the Church universal and there is to be no division within geographically defined assemblies.

The unity described in the passage is already ours in Christ, “but which [we] must make every effort to guard.”⁸

The Church of God goes by many names. Some, like the prodigal, have erred. But let us not forget that both sons were in error, and though in error both were sons.

4:1-5:21 is what the unifying work of God looks like in all of life and 5:22-6:9 is what the unifying work of God looks like in specific relationships. What is the exhortation toward in verse 1? It is for the believer to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called.

“Worthy” is an adverb speaking to suitably or equitably. It carries the idea of, “in a manner worthy of, or compatible with.” “It is used in commercial transactions. It means to equal the balance, to measure up to the standard.” Paul exhorts the believer to live in a manner that will measure up to that of the Lord Jesus Christ. The calling is the standard.

Paul speaks of the “calling.” He is exhorting the Ephesians to live in a manner that is consistent with their present standing in Christ. We have been called to become Christians, but now Paul is calling Christians to be Christ-like. Paul’s exhortation is for the believer to walk in a manner, which is compatible with their salvation. God is working in and through His people His love. All of this is centered on the consequence of the cross which is to create this one new man, His body, the church.

A. What a unifying love looks like (vv. 2, 3).

There are five characteristics of a unifying love.

1. A unifying love is marked by humility

“Humility” = Lowly thinking, or having a humble/small opinion of oneself while recognizing the great power and ability of God. Humility is an attitude. It is a mindset. It is seen in one’s

perspective not posture. Several passages bring this out (Acts. 20:19; Phil. 2:3; Col. 2:18, 23; 3:12; 1 Pet. 5:5).

“Before Christianity humility was not counted as a virtue at all. The ancient world looked on humility as a thing to be despised. In the days before Jesus humility was looked on as a cowering, cringing, servile, ignoble quality; and yet Christianity sets it in the very forefront of the virtues.”⁹

Based on the Proverb, I am willing to say that all strife is a result of pride and all pride is sourced in an inward focus. Always remember that none of this is about you. It is always about God.

“Through insolence (i.e. pride, arrogance) comes nothing but strife, But wisdom is with those who receive counsel” (Prov. 13:10).

2. A unifying love is marked by gentleness

“Gentleness” = A spirit or attitude of humility that is patient, sympathetic, and sensitive to the needs of others. Again, meekness, like lowliness, is an attitude. It is kind and sympathetic. It identifies with the individual that it seeks to correct. “It is the antithesis of a self-sufficient and particularly of a revengeful attitude. It is our response to mistreatment in light of whom God is.”¹⁰ Trench says, “It is the strength to withhold evil for evil and the utter confidence to believe that God will recompense justly.”

3. A unifying love is marked by patience.

“Patience” = Endurance, slowness in avenging wrongs. “To take a very imperfect analogy - it is often possible to see a puppy and a very large dog together. The puppy yaps at the big dog, worries him, bites him, and all the time the big dog, who could annihilate the puppy with one snap of his teeth, bears the puppy’s impertinence with a forbearing dignity.”¹¹

God’s dealings with us is based on His longsuffering spirit (Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:15). It is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It is something that can be “put on” (Col. 3:12).

4. A unifying love is marked by bearing with one another in love.

“Bearing” = To hold one's self up, bear, endure, having patience with people even in the midst of being provoked.

“The real meaning of agape is unconquerable benevolence. If we regard a person with agape, it means that nothing that he can do will make us seek anything but his highest good. Agape is that quality of mind and heart which compels a Christian never to feel any bitterness, never to feel any desire for revenge, but always to seek the highest good of every man no matter what he may be.”¹²

“According to this passage there is no love except in relation to specific neighbors. Love is not a disposition of the soul which can be perfect in itself, without being given and shaped in ever new concrete encounters. It is always specific, always costly, **always a miraculous event.**”¹³
What God asks of us He does through us. The question is whether or not we are open to it.

5. A unifying love is marked by an eagerness to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

“It is hardly possible to render exactly the urgency contained in the underlying Greek verb. Not only haste and passion, but a full effort of the whole man is meant, involving his will, sentiment, reason, physical strength, and total attitude. The imperative mood of the participle found in the Greek text excludes passivity, quietism, a wait-and-see attitude, or a diligence tempered by all deliberate speed. Yours is the initiative! Do it now! Mean it! You are to do it! I mean it! – such are the overtones in verse 3.”¹⁴

“Eager” = to give diligence, make every effort, be eager (cf. “study” - 2 Tim. 2:15). “Bond” = that which binds together as a ligament of the human body. The Spirit produces the peace that is the bond of the unity. The only possible way for peace to exist within a home and a church is for the individuals to act on their death in Christ. It is only as He lives through us that we will be functionally one.

None of this can be achieved by the flesh. All of this comes from God and overflows through His church. What I would encourage us to do is stop thinking about the other person and how this applies to them and how you hope they are listening and start thinking about you for just a moment. Our tendency is to think of how ungodly someone else is and yet this or these sins are starting to spring up in our own lives. Let us cast ourselves on God and cling to Him to work His love in us and through us to those around us both within the church and in the community.

I cannot help but recall the words of Paul to the Philippians in 2:1-5.

¹“Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ² make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:1-5).

The reason why these five qualities are marked is because this is what Jesus looks like. One of our great sins is always trying to justify our sins. Let us go to God confess our sins and work to move past our own pettiness.

Paul speaks to the maintaining of unity, not the attaining of unity. We work from unity not for unity.

B. Why the call for a unifying love is reasonable (vv. 4-6)

“Paul goes on to set down the basis on which Christian unity is founded.”¹⁵

“These three verses contain a confession or hymn.”¹⁶

“The unity of the church rests upon the oneness of God rather than upon some common enthusiasm in the community of the church.”¹⁷

“This list of the things all Christians have in common looks as though Paul, or perhaps a colleague, may have written it earlier on as a reminder, a list that new converts could memorize. If this is so, then he is here quoting something they might already know.”¹⁸

Notice how the text now reads.

- One body

I believe there is only one flock over which He is the only Shepherd. He has multiple geographical expressions of this one flock with innumerable under-shepherds who tend to His flock, but there is still only one body.

- One Spirit
- One hope

“‘Hope’ signifies here, as in 1:18, the substance of hope rather than just the psychic disposition of ‘hopefulness.’”¹⁹

- One Lord

To put this statement in its historical context, it is an affirmation that Jesus Christ is King and not those who are self-proclaiming. He is the anointed one of God pictured and prophesied of from the Old Testament Scripture. This is in direct contrast to Roman rule.

- One faith

“Paul did not mean that there is one *creed*. Very seldom indeed does the word *faith* mean a *creed* in the New Testament. By faith the New Testament nearly always means the complete commitment of the Christian to Jesus Christ. Paul means that all Christians are bound together because they have made a common act of complete surrender to the love of Jesus Christ. They may describe their act of surrender in different terms; but, however they describe it, that surrender is the one thing common to all of them.”²⁰

- One baptism

I believe there is only one baptism and it is Holy Spirit baptism whereby we are placed by Jesus Christ into His body through the Holy Spirit. This one baptism is tangibly expressed through water baptism.

I do not believe the early church separated believing from being water baptized as evidenced in John's baptism. However, when our text speaks to one baptism, I believe this is Spirit baptism which does remove sin and water baptism is a visible picture of this removal.

- One God and Father of all [and it is this one Father of all], who is over all and through all and in all.

The absolute overarching rule of God above all things created is again noted.

If all this is true, then what right do you have to hate His body? What right do you have to call others, whom He has redeemed from sin and adopted as sons and daughters, something other than what is true? How can we reject those whom God has accepted? I am not trying to oversimplify this truth, but when will we wake up to the enormity of God's redemptive plan. Isn't it sad that we have so many brothers and sisters whom we refuse to acknowledge or accept? And yet God has accepted them and forgiven them and adopted them.

If God makes up the total expression of the Christian faith, then there should be unity. A life that reflects the cross is one that is marked by unity.

"Whatever position we take today, the one thing we can't do is to pretend that this isn't a central and vital issue. Unless we are working to maintain, defend and develop the unity we already enjoy, and to overcome, demolish and put behind us the disunity we still find ourselves in, we can scarcely claim to be following Paul's teaching."²¹

Shepherding the Sheep: (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. Have you made a decision to walk in a way that is compatible to or suitable with your salvation? Or is your life a poor reflection of the salvation you profess to possess? Before we jump into the deep end of the pool, let me again remind us that the issue here is unifying love. It is not are you reading your Bible, praying, giving, witnessing, and going to church. All of this should be done, but it is not the issue here.
2. Do humility, meekness, patience, forbearance of other's in love, and a desire to be unified mark your life? Or are you proud, arrogant, impatient, intolerable, and divisive?
3. There is not any area of life where the cross does not cast its shadow. Where is there division, and if it exists how are you working to reconcile?
4. Each of us is confronted by the truth of this text. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you? What is He inviting you to do? What fissures do you need to mend? Today can be a great day of release for many of us, if we will simply let go.

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- ¹ William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 134.
- ² Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 499, 500.
- ³ Markus Barth, The Anchor Bible, *Ephesians 4-6*, 426.
- ⁴ Markus Barth, The Anchor Bible, *Ephesians 4-6*, 455.
- ⁵ Markus Barth, The Anchor Bible, *Ephesians 4-6*, 427.
- ⁶ NIV Study Bible.
- ⁷ William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 134.
- ⁸ N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 43.
- ⁹ William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 135.
- ¹⁰ Compton, Class Notes, Summer 1985.
- ¹¹ William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 139.
- ¹² William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 140.
- ¹³ Markus Barth, The Anchor Bible, *Ephesians 4-6*, 428.
- ¹⁴ Markus Barth, The Anchor Bible, *Ephesians 4-6*, 428.
- ¹⁵ William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 141.
- ¹⁶ Markus Barth, The Anchor Bible, *Ephesians 4-6*, 429.
- ¹⁷ Markus Barth, The Anchor Bible, *Ephesians 4-6*, 428.
- ¹⁸ N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 43.
- ¹⁹ Markus Barth, The Anchor Bible, *Ephesians 4-6*, 429.
- ²⁰ William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 142.
- ²¹ N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 43.