

October 6, 2019

WALKING TOGETHER

Ephesians 4:1-10

INTRODUCTION

Relationships are tricky because they involve people who are very different from one another. In marriage, a couple is committed to each other yet, in their lives together, tensions arise because they *see* and *understand* some things very differently. In these squabbles a common love and commitment to fight preserves them when disaster would otherwise be inevitable. The same is true with respect to the community of the church. In the church, we are not only related to Christ but to one another and because we are all very different furthers complicates matters. Now add to that the fact the our oneness is opposed by an enemy whose very purpose is to broker, foster and sustain tensions of division and you get a situation that could become messy quickly. Paul, having stated the doctrinal reality of our unity with Christ and with one another (Ephesians 2-3) now begins to show in chapters 4-6 how this unity is to be fleshed out, practically, in community.

WALKING WORTHY (Ephesians 4:1-3)

When we speak of the idea of *calling* too often we think of specific tasks or roles one occupies in the life of the church. In reality when Christ saves us He also commissions us (calls us) to reflect His glory and honor in the world in all that we do. Paul begins this chapter by identifying himself as *a prisoner of the Lord* (Ephesians 4:1). The Ephesians understood this to mean that Paul was bound in a Roman jail without the ability to do as he pleased. This may be his physical predicament, but his reality is that he is bound to Jesus and must walk in the ways that Christ commands, not free to do as he would please. From this perspective of being bound to Christ he urges the Ephesians to see themselves in the same way and to *walk in a manner worthy of the calling* (Ephesians 4:1-3). They may free (not in prison) but they, too (and we ourselves) are prisoners bound to the will of the Lord! To walk worthy of the Lord does not merely mean walking in a holy manner before the world. It means that, but Paul's chief point is this: learn to relate to others the way Christ has related to you. Note the virtues Paul lists: *humility* (denying self for the spiritual good of another), *gentleness* (being controlled in emotions), *patience* (trusting God's timing and purposes), and *bearing with one another* (the strength to put up with others). The virtues he lists are not accidental but reflect the way of Christ toward us. Thus, to walk worthy of the Lord is not only to walk like Christ with His people but to do so with eagerness to maintain the unity the Spirit of God has created among the saints (Ephesians 4:3).

LIVING UNIFIED (Ephesians 4:4-6)

Paul, knowing the pluralistic context of Ephesus, highlights central beliefs that form and guard the unity of believers. We are *one body* (Ephesians 4:4). In Christ our culture (race) becomes second to our oneness in Christ. There is *one Spirit* (Ephesians 4:4). Though there are many teachers there is one voice (the Spirit) and He teaches one truth, guiding the church in its unity and life together. There is *one hope* (Ephesians 4:5) – eternal life with the Lord, made certain by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. This is our singular hope. There is *one Lord* (Ephesians 4:5) - Christ alone. There is *one faith* – belief in Christ's work and death as a sufficient sacrifice for sin, apart from works, is the divine way of salvation (Ephesians 4:5). There is *one baptism* (Ephesians 4:5) This refers to visible sign of unity with Christ through immersion – the outward expression of the inward reality of union with Christ. There is *one God who over all and through all and in all* (Ephesians 4:5) who, only through faith in the Person and Work of Christ, is truly known. Paul lists these core beliefs to protect the unity of the church from cultural take-

overs. Jews and Gentiles are very different people and come from very different backgrounds. These differences, however, are not erased when one believes in Christ and, therefore, they must be suppressed and give way to the core truths that maintain our unity. In our cultural climate it is easy to drift in a direction in which unity is driven by social convention. We may have many differences but we are truly better when the “*one’s*” of our unity become our singular identity.

ENJOYING VICTORY (Ephesians 4:7-10)

This passage can be a bit complicated given the words of verse 9 that *He descended to the lower parts of the earth* (Ephesians 4:9) being taken to mean that Christ preached in hell. While this interpretation has been challenged in recent years the essence of Paul’s words are this: Christ has conquered and now reigns and rules over all (Ephesians 4:10). He descended, referring to the time of His incarnation when He took on the flesh of humanity, preceded His ascension or return to the place of His glory (John 17:5). Paul says that these two acts of Christ represent His victory (and now ours) over the penalty and power of sin. The writer of the book of Hebrews says that Christ *sat down* (Hebrews 1:4) signifying the finality of His work. That Christ ascended and descended represents the two great bookends of salvation: God has come on earth to war in Christ’s descension and God has won the war in Christ’s ascension.