

• *The major turning point of the letter – Paul’s appeal to live according to God’s power within*

Ephesians 4:1 is the major turning-point in the letter. Paul has taught the Ephesians about the greatness of God’s power. He has prayed that they might experience it. Now his next concern is to appeal to them to live according to this power that is within them. Paul calls them – and us – to live a godly life. In Ephesians 4:17–24 he gives a general appeal, and then in 4:25 onwards he gets to details. But before he gets to his general appeal he has a section ^{¶1} in which he appeals for Christian unity. One can see why he does this. It is because unity between Jewish and gentile Christians has been one of his main themes. It is natural and logical for him to immediately call us to live out the unity that is created by God among His people.

¶1 4:1-16

Live out God’s calling

‘I therefore the prisoner in the Lord appeal to you to live a life worthy of the calling with which you have been called...’ ^{¶1}. ‘Calling’ is the word Paul uses to speak of God’s powerful summons that brings us to know Christ as Saviour. The word speaks of something powerful and effective. To be ‘called’ is to be powerfully brought to Jesus Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Our salvation is not just a matter of trying to reform our lives or making a decision to be different. God saves us by a powerful pulling of drawing us into His kingdom. No one can be saved without such a drawing ^{¶2}. The ‘call’ of God is His word coming to us, plus the powerful drawing of the Holy Spirit. It is Jesus’ opening our hearts (as Lydia’s was opened by Jesus in Acts 16:14).

¶1 4:1

• *A powerful drawing of the Holy Spirit*

¶2 as John 6:44 says

• *Live according to what has happened to you*

Paul says, ‘If this has happened to you, then live accordingly!’. Live in a way that corresponds to what God has done in your lives. God has powerfully brought you into His kingdom. He is ruling over you in His grace. So show it! Demonstrate what has happened to you, to yourselves and to others.

Paul himself is in prison as he writes this letter. He is ‘the prisoner in the Lord’. He has utterly surrendered his life to serving God no matter what it costs him. Now he asks the Ephesians to live in the same way.

Unity

• *Keep what God has given*

The main thing on Paul’s mind as he gives this appeal for godliness is the need for Christian unity. He continues: *‘...with all humility and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love’* ^{¶1}, *making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’* ^{¶2}. He asks for humble attitudes and determined effort to keep the unity that the Holy Spirit has given to the church. They do not have to **create** unity; God has done that. But they have to **keep** what God has given them.

¶1 4:2

¶2 4:3

Paul says, ‘If this has happened to you, then live accordingly!’. Live in a way that corresponds to what God has done in your lives. God has powerfully brought you into His kingdom. He is ruling over you in His grace. So show it! Demonstrate what has happened to you, to yourselves and to others.

• *Seven facts*

Verses 4 to 6 go on to explain what God has done to create the unity which they must keep. *‘There is one body and one Spirit, corresponding to the fact that you were called with one hope of your calling’* ^{¶1}. *There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism’* ^{¶2}, *one God and Father of us all, the One who is over all and through all and in all’* ^{¶3}.

¶1 4:4

¶2 4:5

¶3 4:6

Seven facts are brought before us, all of which are things that create and absolutely guarantee the unity of the church.

(i) One body

(i) It is a fact that God has only brought into being 'one **body**'. There are not two churches for Jews or gentiles, or for rich or poor, or for black or white – or whatever. There is one body!

(ii) One Spirit

(ii) There is one **Spirit** that brought the one body into being.

(iii) One Hope

(iii) This one body comes into being as people come to salvation. People come to salvation as they are called by God. There is only one calling and it gives the people of God a common destiny. There is one **hope**. There will be no compartments for Jews and gentiles in heaven – or for any other earthly distinctions of that kind.

(iv) One Lord

(iv) There is one **Lord** Jesus Christ in whom all true Christians have faith.

(v) One Faith

(v) There is 'one **faith**', faith in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. 'The faith' is not a detailed system of doctrine; there is not much unity about the lesser details of Christian teaching! The 'one' faith that creates the unity between all Christians is the fact that all true Christians have faith in the same Saviour. The 'one faith' is saving faith, justifying faith. It is believing in your heart that Jesus is Lord. This is possessed by all true Christians. It creates their unity. Those without it have no salvation.

(vi) One Baptism

(vi) There is one **baptism**. What kind of baptism is it that creates and guarantees unity? Not water baptism! Water- baptism has been the source of great disunity among Christians. They have differing opinions about the subjects of water-baptism (children?) and about the mode of water- baptism (immersion?). Some are muddled about the effect that water-baptism has (does it in any sense impart grace?). One cannot say that water-baptism creates and guarantees Christian unity! No, the 'baptism' that creates and guarantees Christianity is the work of the Holy Spirit 'baptising' us into the body of Christ, 'putting' us into the true church of God, the total number of the saved. That kind of baptism is the only one that creates and guarantees Christian unity as an objective fact.

(vii) One God and Father

(vii) There is one God who is the Father of all Christians. He rules **over** all Christians. He is found in every part of the Christian church, so He is **through** all. He is **in** all Christians.

These are the things that create Christian unity. Paul simply asks us to keep it, guard it, let nothing damage it.

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