Seeing the World through Jesus-Colored Glasses, Part 2

What are the practical implications of the unity Paul urges us to have in Ephesians 4:1-16? What is a worthy manner of walking? Paul doesn't just leave us hanging here but gives us further instructions on how we are to proceed. Walking in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called involves five things: 1) being humble, 2) being gentle, 3) being patient, 4) showing forbearance to one another in love, and 5) being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:2, 3).

Being humble, or having humility, means lowering myself and lifting others up. It's the same thought that Paul had when he told the Philippians to "regard one another as more important than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3). This all sounds good, but there's a problem. When we look at this humility thing through the worldly glasses of "reality" (and I use that term advisedly) our automatic (preprogrammed) response is, "I'm not going to humble myself! If I put me down, who will lift me up?" It's only when we put on our Jesus-colored glasses that we see true reality. James says when we humble ourselves, God will lift us up (James 4:10).

Gentleness is that quality of being forgiving, kind, and benevolent. It's the same word that Jesus uses in the Beatitudes when He says, "Blessed are the meek (gentle) for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). William Barclay says of this word that behind gentleness "there is the strength of steel, for the man who is [gentle] is under perfect control…he is perfectly God-controlled, for only God can give him that perfect mastery. It should be our prayer that God will make us [gentle], masters of ourselves; for only then can we be servants of others."

Patience is that two-edged sword that is a desired trait, but its acquisition is despised. In other words, while we all want to be patient, few are willing to endure that which is necessary to acquire patience. Much of the concept of patience has to do with "putting up with" a particular situation. It's the idea of enduring unpleasant circumstances, whether they be deserved or not. Most people will pick and choose the circumstances in which they will be patient. We decide whether a particular situation deserves patience or not and we act accordingly. Scripture, however, is not as selective. It never says, "Choose that about which you will be patient." While the Bible does give some examples where patience is needed (Matthew 5:10-12), it also says we should be patient with every negative situation (James 1:2-4). The point is this: If you will have patience in every situation, you will be stronger, you will be more mature, and you will be well on your way to what God wants you to be. Jesus is our Example of patience (1 Peter 2:19-24). If we are to walk in a manner worthy of our calling, we must "put up with" whatever negative situation we encounter, for the simple reason that Jesus did and we're trying to look at the world from His perspective.

Showing forbearance to one another in love is a trait which is essentially the same as having patience. In fact, they may not be separate at all, but part of the same statement. The reason we forbear one another and have patience with each other is not for our gain, but because of our love for one another. This love leads us toward the next characteristic of the worthy walk.

Preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace requires a real effort. It requires diligence, meaning it doesn't just happen. Christians are united in one family (1 Timothy 3:15) and one body (Colossians 1:18). If we are truly united in the body of Christ, we will forbear one another in love with patience because we don't want this body to be damaged. If it's true that Satan's kingdom divided

against itself could not stand (Matthew 12:25, 26), it's also true of the kingdom of God. The worthy walk involves keeping this unity alive in the church. Failing to be united, failing to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace within the body, is to walk in an unworthy manner.

Make this a priority in your life and know that you can succeed because God loves you and so, by the way, do I.

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