

# Chapter Four

## *commentary*

---

---

Paul, as often in his epistles, first sets forth the doctrinal truths as a foundation and then exhorts his readers to apply these truths to every aspect of their lives and relationships.

The main doctrinal truths which Paul has emphasized in the opening three chapters are these:

- That God has ordained that all things should be brought to their proper conclusion through the person and work of Yeshua our Messiah.
- That this reconciliation of all things in Yeshua would include Israel as well as those who would be blessed from all of the nations, as promised to Abraham.
- That the manner or method by which God would bring His eternal plan to completion was hidden in previous generations but now has been revealed to His Apostles. What was revealed is that the way the promise to Abraham would be established was through the *ekklesia* Yeshua promised to build in which Jew and Gentile believers are united as one, through the same divine work of the Ruach, in the body of the Messiah Yeshua.

Now, in the second section of this epistle, Paul exhorts his readers and us to live out the new life which has been given to us by God's grace, giving us practical life applications of the doctrinal truths he has given us in order that the manner in which we live would show the world that we are united together with and in our Messiah.

These practical life applications include:

- Making it our purpose to promote unity within our local communities of faith so that all will move toward full maturity in Him.
- Rejecting old patterns of life and seeking to imitate the ways of Yeshua, thus walking in the Spirit.
- Learning to be subject to one another, both in our family structure as well as in the community of faith.
- Recognizing the spiritual battle that we are in and appropriating the "spiritual armor" by which victory is secured for us through Yeshua.

**1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,**

The opening “Therefore” (οὖν, *oun*) connects to the previous context, but the question is to what Paul specifically intends us to make the connection. It could be that Paul is making specific reference to what he has just stated in 3:21, namely, that all glory would be given to the Father “in the *ekklesia* and in Messiah Yeshua to all generations for ever and ever.” He then would use the “therefore” in the very next sentence to emphasize that this goal of giving all glory to God “in the *ekklesia*” would only be realized when believers live out their faith in practical ways.

But while this is a possible connection to the opening “Therefore” of our verse, it seems more likely that Paul has the entire first part of the epistle in mind. He has set forth foundational truths upon which all believers in the body of Messiah may be well grounded in their faith and therefore strive for true unity within the community of faith in which they fellowship and in which they together bear witness to a watching world of their unity, not only with one another but also with Messiah Yeshua Himself.

Thus, by opening with “Therefore,” Paul intends that we call to mind and constantly affirm the foundational truths of the opening chapters applying them to our everyday lives and relationship, so that the purpose of God to reconcile all things in Messiah Yeshua will be seen as being accomplished in the *ekklesia* He is building.

One of the things that marks this second half of the epistle as centering particularly upon the necessary application of the doctrinal truths set forth in chapters 1–3 is the fact that in these first chapters, Paul used only one imperative (command form), i.e., in 2:11. “Therefore remember...” In contrast to this, in chapters 4–6 we will find 39 imperatives.<sup>1</sup> This clearly points to the fact that Paul has moved from his opening teaching to exhortation that his readers apply what has been taught.

*I, the prisoner of the Lord*— In 3:1 Paul refers to himself as “the prisoner of Messiah Yeshua” (ὁ δέσμιος τοῦ Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ]) while in our current text the Greek differs slightly, having “the prisoner in the Lord” (ὁ δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ). In essence, the two phrases carry the same meaning. Yet we might note a slightly different nuance in Paul’s use of “in the Lord” in our verse, since he may have used this terminology to em-

1 Cf. 4:27-5:3; 5:5-8, 11, 14-15, 17-18, 25, 33-6:2; 6:4-5, 9-11, 13-14, 17. Two more imperatives are found in quotes from the Tanach: 4:25-26.

phasize not only that his imprisonment was the result of being commissioned by Yeshua as His Apostle to the Gentiles but that also, even as a prisoner, he continues to fulfill his duties as an Apostle by writing this epistle. Thus, in once again referring to himself as “the prisoner in the Lord,” he is affirming that what he is exhorting his readers to obey comes not from his own authority but from the supreme authority of Yeshua Himself Who commissioned Paul to be His Apostle.

And we must likewise take this to heart. If we confess Yeshua to be our Lord, our Savior, and the King we wish to honor and obey, then we must likewise take these words of the Apostle as having the authority of our risen Lord and Savior. We too must seek to follow the commands and instructions He has given us through His Apostle.

*implore you to walk* – The Greek word here translated “implore” is παρακαλέω (*parakaleō*) which can carry the sense of “to urge strongly, appeal to, urge, exhort, encourage.” He begins, not with a direct command, but with a strong appeal that his readers would see the utter necessity of his appeal if they are to grow in their service to God and fulfill the very purpose for which He has saved them.

Paul admonishes us “to walk in a manner worthy” of our calling. The use of “walk” as a way of describing one’s “manner of life” is seen also in the Hebrew term *halachah* (derived from the Hebrew verb הלך *hālach*, “to walk, go”) which describes the manner in which God’s commandments are obeyed. As believers in Yeshua, we are to strive to “walk” in the same manner as Yeshua “walked” while upon the earth.

the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in  
the same manner as He walked. (1Jn 2:6)

As we traverse the course of our lives, it must be our goal to more and more have our thoughts, our decisions, our words, and our actions to be patterned after our Lord Yeshua Messiah. And this is precisely what Paul means in the next phrase of our verse.

*in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called*, – The pattern of life for which we are to strive is that which is “worthy of our calling.” Here we see that Paul uses “calling” to refer to the “effectual call of salvation to the elect,” for in this phrase he points to the time of their conversion when they heard and believed the gospel, the “good news” as it is in Yeshua the Messiah. In Rom 8:29–30 Paul makes it clear that this divine call to salvation always results in the one being called coming to repentance, accepting the offer of salvation by faith, being united into the body of Messiah, and thus being given the unspeakable

gift of eternal life.

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Rom 8:29–30)

Thus, “the manner worthy of the calling” is understood when one comes to know and embrace the fact that one’s salvation is entirely the result of God initiating the process, drawing the sinner to Himself, endowing him or her with the free gift of repentance and ability to believe, and gifting the believer with the presence of His own indwelling Holy Spirit. As Thielman notes:

God’s call comes to people entirely at God’s initiative (Rom. 4:17; 8:30) and as a free gift (Gal. 1:6, 15), unrelated to any prior merit in those whom he calls, no matter their socioeconomic status (1 Cor. 1:26), their ethnicity (Rom. 9:24–26), or their actions.<sup>1</sup>

What, then, ought to be the obvious response to God of the person who was “dead in trespasses and sins,” who now has been brought to life through the sacrifice of Yeshua’s own life, raised to new life, forgiven of sin, living in the abiding presence of the indwelling Spirit, and kept by the power of God unto eternal life? This is what defines the word “worthy” in the phrase “worthy of the calling” and it is obvious what should define the “manner worthy of our calling.” It is a life fully given over to honor and glorify the One Who has saved us through living in a way that glorifies Him, i.e., that pleases Him and expresses to others His righteous and loving character.

**2–3 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**

Paul now begins to enumerate those life characteristics which ought to shine forth from the believer’s life as he or she ponders the greatness of the gift given to them through the pure and abundant grace of God

---

1 Thielman, *Ephesians*, p. 252.

in Yeshua.

The first is “with all humility” (μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης) where the words “with all,” should be understood to govern the following word, “gentleness,” as well. In using this language, Paul is teaching us that we should strive to foster true humility in whatever situation we may find ourselves.

The Greek word translated “humility” (ταπεινοφροσύνη, *tapeinophrosunē*) is found four other times in the Pauline epistles.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; (Phil 2:3)

Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, (Col 2:18)

These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence. (Col 2:23)

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; (Col 3:12)

From these texts we can see several important things. First, the word’s use in Col 2:18, 23 shows that there can be false humility, or “self-abasement.” This is when a person seeks to appear inferior, without value, etc., but for the hope of drawing sympathy and/or appearing to others as having greater holiness. But from Phil 2:3 we see that “humility of mind” is the opposite of “selfishness and empty conceit” and is demonstrated by putting the needs of others before one’s own needs. Likewise, in Col 3:12 we see our word “humility” grouped with “compassion, kindness, gentleness and patience.” Thus, the one who confesses Yeshua to be Lord and Savior ought to be known as one who is able to serve others, to put their needs as a high priority and be fulfilled in serving others.

Such understanding of biblical humility has its basis in the Tanach where “to be humble” is the opposite of having an exalted view of oneself.

The fear of ADONAI is the instruction for wisdom,  
And before honor comes humility. (Prov 15:33)

Before destruction the heart of man is haughty,  
But humility goes before honor. (Prov 18:12)

The reward of humility and the fear of ADONAI  
Are riches, honor and life. (Prov 22:4)

Paul couples “humility” with “gentleness” (*πραΰτης, prautēs*), which expresses “the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, when Paul combines these two terms, he emphasizes both the need to consider the needs of others as of high importance and willingness to take the role of a servant but also to seek to meet those needs as true service to Yeshua and not as a means of impressing others.

*with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love* – The Greek word translated “patience” here is *μακροθυμία (makrothumia)*, which refers to a persevering in one’s convictions, even when circumstances make this difficult. In Paul’s listing of the “fruit of the Spirit,” our word “patience” is grouped together with “faithfulness” which reinforces the sense that “patience” involves “not giving up” but staying true to what one knows and confesses to be true.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Gal 5:22–23)

Another aspect of “walking worthy of our calling” is “showing tolerance for one another in love.” The Greek word translated as “showing tolerance” is *ἀνέχω (anexō)* and is a present participle meaning it is to be an ongoing reality in the life of the believer. It carries the sense of “to put up with something annoying.” But the fact that Paul adds “in love” means he is not envisioning any sort of “grudging tolerance.” His use of the same term in Col 3:12–13 gives us a fuller picture of what he means by “showing tolerance” or “putting up with one another in love.”

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each

1 BDAG, “πραΰτης,” p. 861.

other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. (Col 3:12–13)

Thus, if we are to grow together in our own communities of faith, and demonstrate to a watching world that we are the very *ekklesia* Yeshua is building and maintaining, then our ability to “show tolerance for one another in love” must be coupled with the spiritual ability to forgive each other and not to allow bitterness or anger to remain or persist. For to allow anger to persist is likewise to give way to the enemy (cf. 4:27).

*being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* – The words “being diligent” translate the Greek word σπουδάζω (*spoudazō*) which here is in the form of a present participle which means Paul teaches this is to be the ongoing, never ending duty of all who are truly members of the believing community of faith.

The duty is to “preserve the unity of the Spirit,” which, first of all, teaches us that the Spirit is the source of such unity, and thus when such unity is broken, it means that those who have refused to preserve the unity are acting contrary to the Spirit’s design and are therefore grieving the Spirit of God.

What is this unity which we are to be diligent to preserve? It is not to conform to man’s own ideas or agendas, for the unity here envisioned by Paul is that which the very work of the Spirit Himself is accomplishing. Such unity is something already existing in the body of the Messiah, as Paul taught us in 2:22, all who have been redeemed in Yeshua “are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” Thus, the unity of which Paul writes is that which conforms to God’s agenda, not that of men. To “be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit” requires that we strive incontestably for God’s agenda, as given to us in the inspired Scriptures.

**4–6 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.**

Now Paul enumerates the foundational pillars upon which the unity of the *ekklesia* must be built if it is to function as God intends. He does so by listing seven “ones,” the very number of unity.

The first is that there is “one body.” Here Paul reiterates what he has made clear in the previous chapter, namely, that there is not one *ekklesia* for Jewish believers and a different *ekklesia* for Gentiles believers. The very mystery which was made known to the Apostles of Yeshua was

that the manner in which “the Promise” would come to fruition was that by the work of the Spirit, all those blessed of the nations would join the remnant of Israel to form one unified body of the Messiah.

The fact that “one body” is connected with “one Spirit” by the conjunction “and” should be understood to emphasize that the “one body” is the result of the work of the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit, in applying the work of Yeshua to those who are called, not only from Israel but also from every nation. There obviously can only be one body of the Messiah, for He is the head (4:15; 5:23) and thus all who are “in Messiah” are in the one body of Messiah, the *eklessia* He is building.