

Ephesians: What's God Saying to You? What are You Going to Do About It?

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I. Introduction

Did you know that Christians are supposed to be the most kind, the most loving, the most patient people in the world. To be a Christian means that you're supposed to be able to handle the most difficult people and the most trying, irritating, and impossible situations. Why should Christians be able to live like this, to do the impossible? Because God's Spirit dwells in them; they're no longer mere humans. God, who's constantly driven by love, lives in them.

II. Ephesians: What is God Saying to You and What are You Going to Do About It?

At the beginning of Ephesians 4 God points back to chapters 1-3. Why? Because He's about to give you some very difficult (nay, impossible) commands: you should always treat people with love and kindness, never allow division in the church, help the church grow and not just in numbers, no longer live like you used to when Jesus found you but instead live according to your new identity, never let your anger cause you to sin, help others with your money, never use profanity or harsh words but instead say things that help others grow into better people, always imitate God in word and deed, always sacrifice your life for others like Christ did, have nothing to do with pornography or sleeping around, never lust after someone else's life or possessions, never use vulgar or crude language, always walk in God's light and never participate in the sins of the day but rather expose them, make each day count for God, never get drunk but instead always be filled with the Lord's Spirit, always be thankful to God for everything in your life, if you're a wife, always submit to your husband, if you're a husband, always put your wife first, if you're a child, always obey your parents, if you're a parent, never discourage or embitter your kids but instead show them how to think and live like Jesus, if you're an employee, truly care about your work and boss and always work hard and do your best, if you're a boss, don't threaten your employees instead always treat them fair and right, always stand in the power of the Lord's strength by wearing His truth so that Satan's lies never penetrate, and always be vigilant to pray for others and yourself.

Chapter 4

4:1-2, how can God expect all this from us? Because of what He's told us in chapters 1-3, i.e., in light of the fact that we used to be so wicked, so blinded by Satan, so dead inside, and so separated from God's light and salvation, but then God took us, cleansed us of all our sins, adopted us into His family, permanently united us to His Son and gave us a part in His rulership, gave us 24/7 access to Him and His power, placed His Spirit inside us, made us the house where He now dwells, and in light of the fact that He desires for us to always be filled with His presence, God asks us to live life accordingly, i.e., to walk worthy of this calling. And this is the calling that God is talking about: we are no longer who we used to be; we are now His children and a permanent part of Him and He a permanent part of us. The God of love now resides in us.

What does it mean to walk worthy of this calling? God wants us to treat everyone around us with humility, gentleness, and longsuffering (i.e., to respond with love even when provoked). He wants us to put up with one another *in love*. How can we put up with someone who's irritating or mistreating us and instead of being impatient or retaliating treat them kindly? There's only one way: if we love them enough. This is why he ends with "*in love*." Recall what God said at the end of chapter 3, God the Father wants us to fully know the "Love" of His Son Jesus Christ. What does it mean to fully know the love of Christ? What would our lives look like if we were fully controlled by Christ's love?

First, what is Christ's love, how does it behave? Scripture tells us that at the core of His being God is love (1 John 4:8) and that love is utterly selfless; it cares nothing about itself, instead, it seeks the benefit of others: 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a. It's what drove God the Father to save us, even at the cost of His Son (John 3:16). It's what drove Christ to ask His Father to forgive us even though we brutalized Him (Luke 23:34). If God is love at the core of His being and we are made in His image, then at the core of our being is love. Why does it tear us apart when someone close to us is in pain or suffering? Because of love. It was always God's desire for everyone in this world to be driven by love, in how they deal with God and everyone else (Matthew 22:36-40). This is why He especially calls us, His children who've been thoroughly united to Him, to always walk in love, to respond to the most irritating and difficult people and situations with love (Ephesians 1:4, 15; 3:17; 4:2, 15, 16; 5:2, 25).

Second, if the characteristics of Christ's love controlled us (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a), how would we respond to people and life? How would we respond to arrogance and self-righteousness (Mark 10:17-22)? To anger and hatred (John 8:1-11). To ridicule and ingratitude (Luke 23:34)? We'd respond like Jesus would with humility, gentleness, longsuffering, and forbearance. His mind would be our mind, His eyes our eyes, His ears our ears, His lips our lips. He would dictate our every thought, word, and action.

4:3-6, and when it comes to our fellow brothers and sisters in the church, being Christ-like would cause us to never let anything divide us. But notice: we don't need to create peace and unity among us; we already have it, i.e., the Holy Spirit has already united us to Jesus Christ (2:1-22). The unity is there, all we have to do is keep it. There's an absolute oneness between us and our Lord: He is in us and we are in Him. His body is now ours, His Spirit is now ours, His faith is our faith, His baptism is our baptism (Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 12:13), His God and Father is now our God and Father, and God's constant presence is now *in* us too.

How can we respond to difficult people and situations with love and patience? What did the Lord say about who you are, who now resides in you, His power and His love, and your ability to thoroughly walk as He walked.....and what are you going to do about it?

III. Conclusion

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.