

Cultivating the Graces Necessary for Ministerial Success

Sam Horn, Ph.D.

VP of Ministerial Training, Northland Baptist Bible College
Senior Pastor, Brookside Baptist Church

Text: Ephesians 4:1-3

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, ² With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; ³ Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Introduction:

All genuine ministry happens in the context of relationships. The man of God is helping the people of God come to grips with the Word of God so they might fulfill the purpose of God for their lives.

This worthy calling will only happen as the minister maintains a right relationship with God, with God's Word, and with God's people.

While there is much that can and should be said about the first two of these relationships, our focus today will have to do with the third of those relationships – the one he must enjoy with the people he has been called to shepherd.

In order for a pastor to effectively minister the Word of God to the people of God, he must cultivate certain essential ministerial graces necessary to the kind of relationship God demands of those in His body.

There are several places in the New Testament where ministerial requirements are presented and explained. However, there is one place in particular where God presents the graces necessary for the preservation of the unity in relationships among His people in His Church. And for this to be so among the people, it must first be true of their minister.

In the six chapters that make up Ephesians, Paul reveals that God is accomplishing His cosmic purpose through a group of people that He has called, redeemed, and formed into a community of faith – His Church.

More specifically, what He is doing through the church is calling and redeeming a group of people and:

- a. Forming them into a Body for His Son to lead (1:22-23)
- b. Adopting them as members of His family (3:14-15)
- c. Building them into a Temple for Himself (2:21-22)

So that by the Church (His family, body, and temple) He can:

- Display His grace, kindness, power, and wisdom
- Dwell in them fully

In such a way that all of this results in the praise of His Glory!

Now, the book is divided into two big parts:

1. The Doctrine – 1-3 (what we must know about what God is doing)
2. The Duty – 4-6 (what we must do in light of that knowledge)

And, there are two primary responses to what God is doing:

- a. Walk Worthy of our Calling
- b. Stand Firmly in our Calling

And we can further note that a worthy walk occurs in three realms:

- a. In the Church (4:1-16)
- b. Before the World (4:17-5:21)
- c. In our relationships (5:22-6:9)

Which brings us then to the context of our passage– what exactly is involved in walking worthy in the church? **Paul's answer – Its primary concern is a strong commitment to preserve and protect the Unity of the Body (4:1-3)**

- This is to be of utmost importance to us and we are to work hard at this – we are to spare no effort – we are to be diligent to maintain this unity! (σπουδάζοντες spoudazontes)
- The placement of these verses at the front end of the passage tells us that this aspect of guarding unity is of utmost importance and is primary in Paul's thought. And, the reason we are to guard this unity is more than just because we want to preserve the harmony/health of the body – it has to do with God's ultimate purposes in reuniting all things under one head (1:10)
- So, how are we going to guard or keep this unity? Answer – by working hard to foster and maintain harmony/peace with one another in the body! What will it require? ***Paul goes on to tell us that keeping the peace involves 4 things that everyone of us must work hard to cultivate in our lives!***
 1. It will mean that we are going to have to love one another enough to put up with each other when we are irritated by someone else in the body! (4:2)
 2. And to do this, we are going to have to be committed to a certain way of responding to those who irritate us – Longsuffering! We are going to have to be people who don't respond wrongly out of resentment or in retaliation toward those in the Church who irritate us, frustrate us, or hurt us. (4:2)

3. And to be able to suffer long with irritating, hurtful people is going to demand a certain kind of temperament – one that keeps our natural responses under control! A meek temperament – a gentle and controlled response at all times toward all people under all circumstances! (4:2)
4. And since we are not naturally like this – the only way we are going to transform our natural aggressive temperament into one that is gentle is by thinking Biblically about ourselves in all humility. (4:2)

- Note: The first two have to do with our internal disposition/temperament and the last two have to do with our external responses/reactions.

I. We must adopt a Biblical _____ toward ourselves.

The term Paul used to describe this mindset – lowliness of mind – tells us that this is a mindset that must be accepted and adopted in respect to ones own esteem of himself. In other words, we must learn to think a certain way about ourselves – in a word, “humbly.”

A. *Humility/Lowliness of Mind* _____

B. *Humility/Lowliness of Mind* _____

C. *Humility/Lowliness of Mind* _____

D. *Humility/Lowliness of Mind* _____

So, it is clear from an abundance of NT texts that in order to preserve/guard the unity and harmony of the Body, we are going to have to adopt a different way of thinking about ourselves in all humility! But there is a second thing.

II. We must cultivate a Biblical _____ within ourselves.

If we are going to preserve unity by keeping the peace we are going to need to think a certain way about ourselves (humbly) and we are going to have to be a certain way in our temperament and personality (meekness)

A. *Gentleness* _____

B. *Gentleness* _____

C. *Gentleness* _____

D. *Gentleness* _____

These two internal qualities are essential if we are going to “keep the peace” and preserve the unity! So, where do we get this?

1. Holy Spirit – it is a fruit of the Spirit! (Gal 5.23)
2. Humble Hearing and Obedience to God’s Word! (James 1.21)
3. Hard and Determined Spiritual Labor! (Col 3.12)

And – we will know that we have cultivated these two internal qualities when we can consistently do the next thing:

III. A Commitment to Demonstrate a proper _____ toward those who irritate or injure us – Longsuffering and Forbearance.

A. _____

- How are we to handle people who irritate us, oppose us, speak against us, or even hurt us? We are to respond like God – we are to graciously and patiently suffer them for a long time – we are not to break out in angry words or deeds!
- BUT what about when they provoke a quarrel or have a complaint against us?
- That is where the next response comes in – we are to “put up” with these kinds of people!

B. _____

- The idea here is to endure – to kindly tolerate
- We are to do this when wronged, when others have an unreasonable complaint or a grievance or a quarrel with us (Col 3.13) – as long as truth is not at stake, with those who complain against us, irritate us, argue with us, or even at times attack us.
- Why would I ever want to do this? Because of one final grace that God has given you – in fact He has rooted and grounded you in it if He has capacitated you so that Christ is dwelling in you fully – because you simply love that person!

IV. A Commitment to Cultivate a proper _____ toward one another.

Conclusion:

So – what does this mean for me?

1. I must guard against the enemy of all of this Unity – Satan!
2. I must submit to the promoter of all of this Unity – The Holy Spirit
3. I must personally pursue the “keeping of the Peace” with others
4. I must occupy my proper place in the Body
5. I must maintain right relationships with the other family members.