

Over the last three weeks we have been thinking **about the church**: what it is and our part in it, using the poem “I have a dream”. In week one the dream was of a worshipping church; week two it was a bible-based church; week three was a praying church and this week:

**I dream of a** Spirit filled church:

Where all are open to the Spirit,  
Where people are constantly seeking to be filled with the Spirit,  
Where people expect to see God at work,  
Where people are unafraid to venture deeper in the spiritual life,  
Where no gift is undervalued or overvalued,  
Where every member has a part to play, for every member has a gift,  
Where people feel free to express their love for one another and the Lord.

Prayer and praise – Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> September 6.30-8 in the church hall

Over the years we have seen some growth in this area but I think we still have some work to do e.g. I’m not sure everyone expects to see God at work – I think if we really did, if we were praying and expecting God to be present and answer prayers we would be seeing more miracles. Having said that, I know that Holy Spirit is at work because spiritual growth is obvious in many people and it’s great to see.

How are you living your life today? **What has affected** the way you are living? Many of us are effected by our history.

Our past hurts, blessings, relationships, etc, have worked in our lives to affect how we live today. But that is only part of it. We make decisions regarding how we choose to respond to our history. **For instance, there** are some who grew up in a family with alcoholics. Some follow in those footsteps while others turn completely from alcohol. Part of that is a choice in how we respond. I know there are other factors, but some of it is in our own choosing.

Today, we are going to see in Ephesians 4:1-16, that Paul is encouraging the Ephesians, as well as us, to live in light of our history with Christ, in light of what He has done and the riches we experience in Him.

He is calling us to make some choices, based on what Christ has done, so that we can live a life worthy of our calling – that is our calling to be daughters and sons of God. In our reading Paul encourages the Ephesians to live a life worthy of the calling they have received and then he goes on in this passage to tell us what living this life depends on and what is required generally before he gets into more specifics in the rest of his letter.

He begins with what living a worthy life is going to depend on. And we see first that it depends on **Character**

Ephesians 4:2 *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

IN verse 2, Paul lists 4 things that need to be characteristic of our lives to truly live a life worthy of our calling.

First he tells us to

**Be Humble**

How do you become humble? Humility is often thought of in contrast to pride. Pride is when we think too highly of ourselves. Paul tells us in

Romans 12:3 *Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.*

Here I believe he contrasts pride (thinking of yourself more highly than you ought) with humility, which is not thinking too little of yourself, but thinking of yourself with sober judgment, which I believe we do when we have a right view of God and a right view of ourselves in relation to God. When we recognize who God is and what God has done for us and in us, we can't help but have a sober view of ourselves and to be completely humble. So, grow in your knowledge of God and you will grow in humility.

The second is **Be Gentle**

This word is also translated as meekness, but being gentle or meek does not mean weak or subservient. **1 Kings 19:11-13** *The Lord said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.'*

*Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. <sup>12</sup> After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. <sup>13</sup> When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.*

*Then a voice said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'*

Jesus was gentle, but He was anything but weak. In fact, He is all powerful! **Matthew 11:28-30** *'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.<sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'*

Gentleness or meekness carries with it the idea of power under control.

So be gentle. Do not use your power or authority for your own benefit.

If you are going to live a life worthy of your calling you will use your power and position to bring glory to the Lord and be like him in his gentleness.

Also, we see those who live a life worthy of the calling we have received need to **Be Patient**

We all find ourselves dealing with and ministering to people. There is no living a worthy life without interacting with others. And interacting with others in a way that will glorify the Lord requires patience. That is because people can be difficult. You can be difficult! I can be difficult! We need to be patient, or longsuffering, during those times when we and others are difficult to deal with – why? Because we love them like Christ loves them.

And that is the next thing Paul tells us - we need to

**Be Loving**

Recognize that you have been loved and blessed and had riches bestowed upon you by God that you did not deserve. As we do that, we are able to love others and bear with others in love by Christ's power in us.

These last 3 are fruits of the Spirit, and Galatians 5:25 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Paul goes on to say that living a life worthy requires Unity

**Ephesians 4:3-6** *3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

Unity is something that Paul talks about extensively in his writing. It is also something that is talked about often today. Some people want unity at any cost. But that is not Paul or Jesus. In fact, when Jesus prayed for unity, he prayed for unity around Him, not just unity for the sake of unity. He knew that if it was not centred on a right belief in who He is and what He did, unity would not and should not happen.

In fact, even though the Lord wanted unity, listen to what he said in

**Matthew 10:34-37** *‘Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> For I have come to turn*

*“a man against his father,  
a daughter against her mother,  
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law –*

*<sup>36</sup> a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.”<sup>[c]</sup>*

*<sup>37</sup> ‘Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.<sup>38</sup> Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.*

It is through relationship with Jesus that we can find unity with others.

Even family will not be unified unless Christ is at the centre.

There is not unity without having Jesus as the Lord.

And Paul goes on to tell us what that unity in Christ brings

He says we are part of **One Body**.

When we receive Jesus as Saviour, we become part of the body of Christ.

We all have One Spirit. The same Holy Spirit of God that indwells one believer in Jesus Christ, indwells all believers in Jesus Christ.

We have One Hope. Our hope is in Christ giving us eternity. When we receive Christ and have his Spirit indwell us, our hope is in eternity with Him, but it is also for right now – for glimpses of glory and time in his presence every day.

**We have one Lord** – Jesus is Lord. When people say they believe in God, they just don’t believe in Jesus, it shows that we are not in unity with them. Jesus is Lord and to be a Christian in unity with other Christians means that He is your Lord.

We have one faith and as Jude says, that is the faith once for all delivered to the saints. In

Christianity, there are groups that have differences, but there can and should be unity over the faith

that is essential – Jesus is the Lord, He died for your sins, He rose from the dead, He lives forevermore, His truth is found in the Bible.

There are some essential elements of the faith that we unify around. There can be differences in some non-essentials, but unity is not possible apart from agreement with the essentials.

One baptism – This one baptism is the one baptism we all receive when we receive Christ, the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit comes and indwells all believers in Jesus Christ when they receive Him.

And then, we have

**One God and Father** – Just like in our biological family, there are at times disagreements, but you work, or should work together to get along because you are family, we need to work together and forgive and admonish so we can truly live and work together as brothers and sisters with the same heavenly father.

To live a life worthy of our calling requires unity, but it requires unity around Christ and the truth of who He is, what He has done, and the truth of His word as found in the Bible.

**But Paul goes on** and we see that it also requires Serving

Paul says Christ, in his grace, has given gifts to us and he then quotes what appears to be a song of victory which it is a picture of a “military conqueror leading his captives and sharing the spoils with his followers.”

It is because Christ has conquered Satan and death that we can now be free from the slavery of sin. He has given us His Spirit and gifts to serve so we can truly live a life worthy of the calling we have.

And Paul then lists some of the gifts related to specific people and offices for the benefit of the church and to help bring unity.

Apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher - are given “to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up”.

Gifts to prepare the People!

People in ministry positions in the church should be doing a wide range of work. However, they should also be equipping every member to share in that work – I have heard people in a vacancy saying that they expect their new minister to ‘bring people into the church’! God give people these gifts to prepare all of his people for works of service so that the body of Christ can be built up. This is what I try to do – to teach, to encourage, to help each of you to take steps to use your gifts and to serve, so that the work God has called us to can be accomplished, and so that we will live lives worthy of the calling we have received.

Without serving, without using your gifts, that won't happen.

And lastly, as we live a life worthy of our calling and serve and build up the unity the body of Christ, we become mature.

As we live a Life worthy of the calling we have been given, seeking unity within the body of Christ, using our gifts and serving to help build up the body of Christ, we will grow in maturity and we will live lives that are built on a solid foundation and not be tossed about or deceived by false teachers who seeking to fulfil their own selfish desires.

Are you living a life worthy of the calling you have received?

How is your character?

Would others characterize you as humble?

If not, then grow in your relationship with the Lord and you will be humble.

Are you gentle? Are you patient? Are you loving?

These are all fruits of the spirit that become more apparent as you walk in the spirit.

Are you in unity in the church, connecting and serving others, or do you think of church as a place to come and be served?

if all of this seems a bit much like effort and hard work I want you to see and hear this **PIC** *God is calling you to a passionate love relationship with himself because the answer to religious complacency isn't working harder at a list of Do's and Don'ts – it's falling in love with God.*

If we fall in love with God – using our gifts, working for unity or serving the church ceases to be a burden or chore – it becomes an act of adoration.

If you would like to get deeper with God we have a selection of groups you could attend where you will be able to develop your gifts and receive support and encouragement, and be able to support and encourage others.

None of this is possible without Holy Spirit being at work in and through us. One of the things Holy Spirit does is point us to Jesus and our last song reminds us of the beauty, wonder and power in the name of Jesus.