

Today's passage is preceded by the Apostle's prayer that we would be strengthened to grasp the dimensions of God's love for us and thus be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:19) He followed that daring prayer with a benediction that reminds us that God can do anything. We often cite it at the close of our worship service. <sup>20</sup> *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,* <sup>21</sup> *to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.* Ephesians 3:20-21 (NIV) Paul is declaring that the strength that he prayed for us to experience is already at work within us. We can't imagine being filled to the measure of all the fullness of God, and yet God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or think.

Now he continues, <sup>1</sup> *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,* Because God can do more than we ask or think, and because His power is at work within us, strengthening us to grasp how much we are loved, Paul urges us to walk worthy of our calling. First let's look at this self-description, "a prisoner of the Lord". He is in prison in Rome, probably chained to a soldier. He is a prisoner because he is a servant of the Lord. He chose to obey the heavenly vision. (Acts 26:19) The Lord warned him that he would face persecution for His sake. (Acts 9:16) In one sense, his life in or out of jail is as a prisoner of the Lord. He is not free to do as he pleases or go where he would choose to go. He has taken up his cross and is following wherever Jesus leads him. (Luke 9:23) You could say that because he is a prisoner of the Lord every day since that conversion on the road to Damascus, he is now physically a prisoner of the Lord.

This daily prisoner of the Lord challenges us by his own obedience to also be prisoners of the Lord and walk in a manner worthy of our calling. What is that calling? He has already described it in the previous chapters. We are called to be recipients of the unsearchable riches in Christ. (Ephesians 3:8) We have become heirs of the promises of God with God's people. (3:6) Hemmed in by the love of God, we have the deposit of the Holy Spirit guaranteeing our inheritance. (1:13-14) From other Pauline epistles we know that the end of all this is being formed into Christ's own likeness. (Romans 8:29) This letter declares that we will be Christ's own bride holy, pure, and spotless. (Ephesians 5:27) That is our incredible calling!

It is no wonder then that Paul urges us to walk worthy of our calling. **The greater the calling, the greater the obligation to walk in a manner worthy of that calling.** That is because the greater the calling the greater the trust placed in that one to fulfill it as so many lives are affected by that calling. We have the highest calling of all. It is the same

**Commented [notes1]: Ephesians 3:19 (ESV)**  
<sup>19</sup>and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

**Commented [notes2]: Acts 26:19 (ESV)**  
<sup>19</sup>"Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

**Commented [notes3]: Acts 9:16 (ESV)**  
<sup>16</sup>For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

**Commented [notes4]: Luke 9:23 (ESV)**  
<sup>23</sup>And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

**Commented [notes5]: Ephesians 3:8 (ESV)**  
<sup>8</sup>To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

**Commented [notes6]: Ephesians 3:6 (ESV)**  
<sup>6</sup>This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

**Commented [notes7]: Ephesians 1:13-14 (ESV)**  
<sup>13</sup>In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,  
<sup>14</sup>who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

**Commented [notes8]: Romans 8:29 (ESV)**  
<sup>29</sup>For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

**Commented [notes9]: Ephesians 5:27 (ESV)**  
<sup>27</sup>so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

as that of the Apostle who was writing the letter. Though we have individual roles within this great calling, we all should walk in a manner worthy of this great calling to belong to Jesus. It's very important for pastors and teachers of the Word to set an example (James 3:1), but it is also important for every believer to set an example. The fallout from living in an unworthy manner affects the eternal souls of men. We draw people to or repel them from Christ.

**Commented [notes10]: James 3:1 (ESV)**  
<sup>1</sup> Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

What does a manner worthy of our calling look like? If our calling is truly this incredible, what does God expect as a response in our lives? Paul goes on to describe *how* we are to live in a worthy manner. <sup>2</sup> *with all humility and gentleness, with patience...* All humility! Culture often inaccurately interprets application. Set aside what you think it should mean and just hear the text. All humility! In his letter to the Philippians he wrote that we should consider others better than ourselves. (Philippians 2:3) We need to hear one another, but even more, we need to listen to the Lord. Humility recognizes the need to get God's direction in everything. Humility shuns leaning to our own understanding and inclinations. (Proverbs 3:5) It seeks God in all things because it acknowledges our weaknesses. Philippians chapter two describes the humility of Christ as always being obedient to the Father. (Philippians 2:8) True humility was demonstrated in the life of Jesus.

**Commented [notes11]: Philippians 2:3 (ESV)**  
<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

**Commented [notes12]: Proverbs 3:5 (ESV)**  
<sup>5</sup> Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

**Commented [notes13]: Philippians 2:8 (ESV)**  
<sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Gentleness is so undervalued today. The one that yells the loudest or speaks in the most harsh way seems to gain the upper hand. How far would these presidential candidates get if they valued gentleness? Yet, it is to be a hallmark of a genuine follower of Christ. Why must we be gentle? It's because Jesus is so gentle with us. Consider the power that Jesus possessed and then realize how gently he dealt with mankind during His ministry and on the cross. (Matthew 26:53) Gentleness is not a sign of weakness as some assume. It is a reflection of the nature of Almighty God! That does not mean that God or we ignore justice when it is necessary, but that mercy and gentleness prevail when at all possible.

**Commented [notes14]: Matthew 26:53 (ESV)**  
<sup>53</sup> Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?

*...with patience...* Humility and gentleness must be exercised with patience. (James 5:8) Just as the Lord is patient with us, so we should be patient with others. What we sow, we will also reap. (Galatians 5:7) I certainly want God to be gentle and patient with me! Don't you want the same? Then sow patience.

**Commented [notes15]: James 5:8 (ESV)**  
<sup>8</sup> You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

**Commented [notes16]: Galatians 6:7 (ESV)**  
<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

*...bearing with one another in love,* Because we are all works in progress and none of us have arrived, others must bear with us as God molds and shapes us, therefore we must bear with one another. Some people can be really irritating. Anyone can be really irritating. Some grow spiritually more slowly than others. Some have hurdles to overcome because of the sin of others. None of us walk on water. Throughout this life,

we will have to bear with one another in love. We are a family, and we need the patient encouragement of one another to endure together in this process of sanctification.

Many of us have seen the devastating effects in churches that have not humbly submitted to these instructions. Factions form and churches split and the name of Christ is dragged through the mud simply for the sake of prideful ego. (Proverbs 11:2) But when we bear with one another in loving humility and patience, the name of Jesus is exalted.

**Commented [notes17]: Proverbs 11:2 (ESV)**  
<sup>2</sup> When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.

We bear with one another because we want others to bear with us, to honor the name of Christ, and also because we are <sup>3</sup> *eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. As a body of believers, we don't need fractures. Fractures hurt the whole body. A building with a great crack can be unsafe for those around it, and we are God's building. (1Corinthians 3:9) We need to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. If it is by love for one another that the world comes to belief, what does a lack of unity and peace produce? (John 13:35) **Let us be eager to maintain unity for the testimony of Jesus in our city.**

**Commented [notes18]: 1 Corinthians 3:9 (ESV)**  
<sup>9</sup> For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

**Commented [notes19]: John 13:35 (ESV)**  
<sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

This city is like most in that the testimony of the church in this regard has for decades been very poor. One faction after another has split church after church, all the while ignoring Paul's urgent request in this passage. Every time there is threat to the unity of the church we should read over this passage and ask ourselves if we are willing to submit to this exhortation. The issues causing division are rarely worth the effects of division. The only time it is truly justified is when one faction is rejecting the following verses.

<sup>4</sup> *There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call-* If any faction of the body declares that everyone else is wrong, that they are the only ones that have it right, you can pretty much be certain that it is a cult. The humility that we are exhorted to exhibit says that we might be wrong about the non-essentials. If the other point of view uses Scripture, then we must consider the possibility that we might be wrong.

About the work and nature of Christ there is no compromise, but in all the peripheral issues, let us allow for differences of opinion and interpretation. We may choose to worship with those that have a similar understanding of Scripture, but we should never speak against others who hold to the essentials that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God who died as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. If they believe we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus, we are of one body and Spirit with them. We are called to the same hope, which is our sanctification, and to eternity together as the bride of Christ.

By all means we should have our own convictions from the word of God and be ready to share them, but never let us set aside the humility and gentleness with which we are to do so. (1 Timothy 6:11) Those in Christ with whom we find differences of opinion are a part of the same body and share in the same Spirit. We may wonder why they come to such strange conclusions, but remember, they probably wonder the same thing about us.

**Commented [notes20]: 1 Timothy 6:11 (ESV)**  
<sup>11</sup> But as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

There is only <sup>5</sup> *one Lord, one faith, one baptism*, Here is the core issue. Is Jesus Lord? Is salvation by faith in Him alone? Is there but one baptism, dying with Christ and being raised to new life in Him? (Romans 6:4) If we have the same Lord, the same essential faith, and have died with Christ and been raised with Him, then we are one body.

**Commented [notes21]: Romans 6:4 (ESV)**  
<sup>4</sup> We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

Ron and Eileen attended the night of worship recently in Prescott. He was moved by what he witnessed, just simple praise and worship with short to the point messages. Their key element was easy to state, "No other name than the name of Jesus"! No church names, pastors' names, or musicians' names were mentioned. The only name on the lips of those who led in worship that night was the name of Jesus. That was the secret. There is where we find our unity.

I love this church because it is made up of you special individuals. God has put us together as a family. We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one hope to which we are called. But there are a lot more people in the body of Christ in Sedona than attend our church. Let us never speak against another Bible believing church. If you can't say something nice, don't say anything. Pray for the other churches. In our prayer room we have the pictures of a number of other Bible believing churches; as they succeed we all succeed because we are one body.

There are some in the body that don't attend any church. I think it is their loss (Hebrews 10:25), but that does not change the fact that they are a part of the one body of believers. Love them. Encourage them. Invite them over. Fellowship with them. When I first came back to Sedona, I was out of fellowship, but someone invited me to a Bible study and gradually I gained the courage and desire to return to church. Many have been wounded by the *lack* of humility and gentleness and need to see our love before they will have the courage to return to regular fellowship. Accept them where they are at and love them, for they have the same Lord, faith, baptism and hope that we do.

**Commented [notes22]: Hebrews 10:25 (ESV)**  
<sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

And last but not least, we have <sup>6</sup> *one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all*. God is working in every believer's life regardless of the current peripheral beliefs they hold and whether or not they are in this church, another church, or no church at all. You can be assured that if they are a part of God's family through their

faith in Jesus, God is at work in their life. If we are being obedient to the Lord, we can join in that work, encouraging their spiritual growth and walking with them through the trials of this life.

I want to see this church grow because I think it established according to the Biblical pattern and faithful to the Word. However, I think it is even more important to see the kingdom of God grow, and so I find I'm often working with some who will never be a part of this church. Some of them are going to Israel with our church group. I do marriage counseling with some. And with some I simply spend time to encourage them. I don't do that because I think maybe someday they'll give in and join our church, but rather because they are the church. We have the same God working in us. We have the same Lord, the same faith, and the same baptism. We have the same hope to which we are called. We are going to spend eternity together around the throne of God. Maybe we should start loving one another now, like the Lord commanded us. (John 15:12)

Paul made this point a little earlier in the letter when he wrote: <sup>18</sup> *For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.* <sup>19</sup> *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,* <sup>20</sup> *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,* <sup>21</sup> *in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.* <sup>22</sup> *In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.* Ephesians 2:18-22 (ESV)

What joins us together is our faith in Jesus and knowing Him as Lord of our life. Let us be resolved to obey this urgent request to be humble and gentle with patience. Let us resist any divisiveness with love. Let us see the gifts and calling in one another and in the rest of the body of believers in our city. Let us tolerate the differences knowing that in minor issues we may be the ones that are wrong. Finally, you can be proud of your church body, but much more importantly let us exalt the name of Jesus. It is His name that should be on our lips. Amen?

#### Questions

- 1 What is the first "therefore" there for?
- 2 In what ways is he a prisoner of the Lord?
- 3 What are we urged to do? Why?
- 4 What is the first description?
- 5 Why should we be gentle?
- 6 In what way do we exercise humility and gentleness?
- 7 Why should we bear with one another?
- 8 What makes us one in Christ?
- 9 Who makes up the church in Sedona?

**Commented [notes23]:** John 15:12 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

- 10 Who benefits when a godly church prospers?
- 11 Review the resolution at the end of the message.