Ephesians – “God’s Plan For Every Believer”

Chapter 4:1-6

It’s vitally important for every believer to know God’s overarching, eternal plan

This is what Paul gave emphasis to as he wrote the Ephesians in the first part of this epistle

Even so, he has not yet written these Christians one direct imperative to live by in these first three chapters

Now he turns his reader’s attention to the practical outworking of their belief in Christ

Our doctrinal foundation serves as the basis for our everyday behaviour

In other words, what we know should inform how we act

There’s approximately 80 instructive principles in the remaining three chapters

Paul reminds these believers again how he is imprisoned since he was a faithful, uncompromising proclaimer of the gospel

Living out Christ’s mission can involve great personal cost but serving Him is a privilege and honour no matter what suffering may result from it

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If one word characterizes Paul’s ministry it certainly was “passion”

There wasn’t anything stagnant about his faith or commitment

“Beseech” = “passionately urge”

We have been called to salvation

God loved us enough to make this a reality

Think of an athlete’s calling

A team will call a new player because they believe adding him to the team will achieve the common goal of winning a championship

Recognizing this, the athlete has an inherent responsibility to be the best team member to help make this happen

He is to walk worthy of his calling

How much more significant is this in a Christian’s life

God Himself has called us to be a member within His eternal family

Am I committed to live a life that is worthy of this?

Is the way I’m living now show I truly value what God has given me through His Son, Jesus Christ?

The rest of this epistle outlines what a worthy walk looks like

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So, in describing this worthy walk, what does Paul reference first?

Does he go to the importance of following religious rituals, serving within the church in some sort of specific ministry, or gaining more intellectual knowledge of Scripture?

No, he immediately goes to essential character qualities a Christian should exhibit

Every one of these qualities is rooted in humility

Within the worthy walk, there’s no room for pride

Let’s evaluate our lives as we journey through these verses to see what’s true of you and me

“Lowliness” = “a humble, modest opinion of oneself; a deep sense of one’s littleness”

We must not misconstrue this

We aren’t talking about having a self-loathing attitude

This isn’t a view of oneself which says, “I’m good for nothing, I have no admirable abilities or attributes”

Not, it’s not a call to discount one’s talents, minimize them, and continually belittle oneself

Rather, it is to recognize one’s littleness in this vast universe before an Almighty God

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Psalm 8:3-4: “When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers – the moon and the stars you set in place – what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them?” (NLT)

Ecclesiastes 5:2: “Don’t make rash promises, and don’t be hasty in bringing matters before God. After all, God is in heaven, and you are here on earth. So let your words be few.” (NLT)

Isaiah 66:1-2: “This is what the LORD says: ‘Heaven in my throne, and the earth is My footstool. Could you build Me a temple as good as that? Could you build Me such a resting place? My hands have made both heaven and earth; they and everything in them are mine. I, the LORD, have spoken! I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at My Word.” (NLT)

Am I walking the worthy walk of humbleness?

“Gentleness” = “meekness; power under control”

This is a by-product born from humility

Again, let’s understand this isn’t saying one should have a “door-mat” mentality

Rather, it is to exemplify empathy out of a position of strength

This obviously includes not taking advantage of other people’s vulnerabilities

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Essentially, it is to be like Christ

Matthew 11:28-30: “Then Jesus said, ‘Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you. Let Me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light’.” (NLT)

These characteristics go counter-culture

Within Paul’s time, when he wrote this, there wasn’t a common word for humility and being gentle certainly was not upheld as a desirable trait in that culture

Because these characteristics aren’t championed today as well, they should serve as primary identifiers to those around us who are not believers in Christ

To successfully exemplify these characteristics requires what Paul points to next

“Longsuffering” = “to hold up under; endurance; constancy; steadfastness; perseverance”

Everyone encounters stress to varying degrees

Christians are not exception to this

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It’s not easy to be humble and gentle in all circumstances

This is especially true when we feel we aren’t getting our own way, our views are not being accepted or we are being treated unfairly, or when we experience failure, sorrow and misfortune

To practice longsuffering is to have a long fuse, not a short one

Watch out for a spirit of demandingness

Believers are not to be petulant, sinfully impulsive, emotionally explosive

There’s no question each and every one of us has failed in this

However, making excuses because this is our personality isn’t Scripturally valid

Christ’s resurrection power through the Holy Spirit is available to enable us to be patient, even when it seems impossible to live this way

Paul further reinforces this with his next exhortation

“Forbearing” = “sustain; endure; to put up with and not remove one’s support”

1 Peter 4:8: “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.”

This isn’t to say we become passive enablers by cancelling out all accountability

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Rather, this involves remaining unceasingly committed to loving relationships in a self-sacrificial way

Colossians 3:12-14: “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”

Am I walking the worthy walk in humility, gentleness, longsuffering and forbearance?

If I’m doing this, I will also be practicing what Paul writes in verse three

“Endeavoring” = “hasten; exert one’s self; give diligence”

Notice we don’t create the unity, we keep it

We’re to be intentional in maintaining this within our own church environment and with true believers everywhere

This should always be my default response

It’s got to initiate with me, not someone else

It’s my responsibility first

It’s going to take some ongoing diligence to do this

“Keep” = “attend to carefully; earnestly guard”

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However, there’s a very important point we need to emphasize here

Unity is not the same as uniformity

To be united isn’t thinking, believing and acting the same way about each and every single thing

We must be careful to distinguish between preferences and convictions

A preference is something I like but I can easily change if I have to do so

A conviction is something I won’t compromise even if I have to suffer to uphold it

When there is disunity among Christians, one can usually conclude people have been turning their preferences into convictions

Here’s some examples of what has brought about conflict within churches

Music; church décor; clothing; postures of worship

The Spirit of God will always unite us around the truth of God

What Christian doctrines require total unity of belief?

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The Trinity; Christ’s divinity; His virgin birth; the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture; the vicarious atonement of Christ upon the cross; the resurrection of Christ; salvation is exclusively through faith alone; marriage between one man and one woman; Christ’s second coming; the existence of hell and heaven

“Bond” = “ligaments”

As the church endeavors to practice unity, it will be bound together in an atmosphere of peace while being characterized by stability and strength

When this is an ongoing reality, a church is spiritually healthy, influential and a place where people can come to know Christ as their Saviour and grow in their faith

Paul explains what unifies believers in verses 4 to 6

These verses are trinitarian in nature

Verse 4 – God the Holy Spirit

Pentecost – inception of New Testament church

Sealing guarantees our future hope

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Verse 5 – God the Son

Jesus is Lord over all creation

It’s only through faith in Him one can receive eternal life

Once we trust Him, we become baptized to acknowledge we’re committed to following His ways

Verse 6 – God the Father

He is the cause and source of everything which exists

He is omnipresent throughout this entire universe

He gives life to all living things

In what ways may I be insisting my preferential points of view be practiced by everyone within the church?

Am I staying true to the Bible’s essential truths?

We’re all in this spiritual journey together

Remembering this will help our church grow stronger and become more effective in sharing the gospel within this community and in other localities

How has God spoken to us through these Scripture verses from Ephesians today?