



Sermon Notes

Term – Summer 2019

Series – Ephesians

Gathering & Date – the 10, 30 June

Title – God’s heart for Unity

Preacher – Paul Langham

Reading – Ephesians 4:1-16

Paul the prisoner

Paul describes himself as a prisoner (and elsewhere as slave or servant) – this entails

- a loss of freedom (someone else directs us)
- an end to ownership – property, time, money

Yet Jesus and Paul also tell us that Christians are the freest and richest of people – how can this be?

Unity

This passage talks about 2 types of unity

- that which is given by the Spirit – it already exists (3)
- that which we’ve not yet attained but are heading towards (13)

Unity is a supernatural reality, not a human one.

How are we exercising the bond of peace at the moment?

- In the way we are speaking to and about others?
- In the way we think about our church?
- In the way we act towards others?

vv. 4 – 5: As believers, we do not get to choose

- our brothers and sisters in Christ (there is one body)
- the means by which grace is mediated to us (there is one Spirit)
- the future for which we long (there is one hope)
- whether to submit or to whom (there is one Lord)
- what we believe (there is one faith)
- the sign of belonging (there is one baptism)

So what is this unity towards which we are called?

It has two dimensions or expressions

- the faith (doctrine)
- the knowledge of the Son of God (relationship)
- faith (pistis) = that about which we are utterly persuaded and therefore to which we are wholly committed and in which we exercise complete trust by the act of our will (a child jumping from the top stair into the arms of her father is demonstrating this kind of faith)
- knowledge (epignosis) is knowledge gained through first-hand relationship, experiential knowing

i.e. Christian unity & maturity rest on twin pillars – doctrine and experience, mind and heart, head knowledge and heart knowing, knowing and being known.

And the result of this process?

‘we become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ’ (13)

Paul is saying here that Christian maturity means being full of Jesus. Christlikeness is the defining mark of the church.

So is Paul promoting unity at all and any cost?

No ... witness his own denunciation of false apostles and the harsh words of Jesus to the religious leaders of his day

Pray for wisdom for church leaders when the winds of false teaching come from sections of the church ...

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

1. What does it mean to be a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of others? To what extent could that be said of us?
2. Have you understood the calling to which Paul points us? How are you co-operating with God in asking his Spirit to help you reproduce the life and ministry of Jesus?
3. How do the following characteristics manifest themselves in your life, and the life of your church?
 - humility
 - gentleness
 - patience
 - long-suffering
4. What is the bible’s understanding of church unity?
5. How are we exercising the bond of peace at the moment?
 - In the way we are speaking to and about others?
 - In the way we think about our church?
 - In the way we act towards others?
6. How does the fact that the God we worship is the almighty king of heaven and earth influence our approach to worship?
7. What do verses 4-6 say to you? In what sense is our faith given? Can we choose what we believe? If so, why? If not, why not?
8. Spend some time this week praising the God who is over all and through all and in all.
9. Talk about the balance between faith (doctrine, belief, mind) and knowledge (experiencing, heart)
10. How do you understand the measure of grace you have received? How does it work out in your life and witness?
11. Spend some time this week worshipping Jesus who died, rose again, and ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe
12. How do you respond to the teaching on the 5-fold ministry as outlined by Paul in this passage and in 1 Corinthians 12? How should this be expressed in the life of today’s church?
13. What does it mean to speak the truth in love?