



Ephesians 4:1-3 THE GOAL: Unity in the Body of Christ

4 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.¹

Last week, PO outlined a big picture:

- Background on the town of Ephesus
 - Port city, 200K+, hub going either N, S, E or W.
 - Idol worship & the significance of Artemis/Diana and Imperial worship
- Perspective about Paul:
 - His timeline with the Ephesians & how that fit in with his missionary journeys
 - He was writing this letter from Rome while imprisoned with a Centurian, which whom he'd spent quite a bit of time
 - His colleagues-Tychicus, Epaphras
- And we began surmising what issues he might have heard from Epaphras that prompted this letter by looking at the TOPICS Paul addresses in Ephesians:
 - UNITY
 - LOVE
 - REDEMPTION
 - DIVINE INTENTION for the human race
 - GRACE
 - PREDESTINATION
 - RECONCILIATION
 - UNION WITH CHRIST
- We learned that Ephesians:
 - begins with love, Eph 1:4-6
 - Ends with love, Eph 6:23-24
 - And 10-15 years later, when John shares the Revelation he receives, is chastised for leaving their first love, Rev 2:1-7
- **What did the Ephesian Church overlook or not protect in those years in between?**

I see Paul as the leader of a multi-site church of various stages of maturity in their communities. In a sense, this group of believers is wrestling with sanctification.

[sanctification means holy & set apart TO God and separated FROM evil.]

They've been INSTANTLY sanctified through salvation and are figuring out their PROGRESSIVE sanctification as a community and individuals within that community.

¹ [The New King James Version](#) (Eph 4:1–3). (1982). Thomas Nelson.



INTRO:

We begin this session by looking for the current frame of reference—where are we starting?

@ salvation so much changed—we learn over time what that is. It all comes at once or is granted/extended to us at once, but it isn't understood all at once, nor walked out at once. i.e. a child is born into a FAMILY, part of a specific family, at a specific placement—first born, middle, baby. Some benefits are extended to them but they may be unable due to age, etc., to function with them. Some responsibilities apply to everyone in the family, some responsibilities may lie only with the first born...We're also within a specific CULTURE, anchored within a specific TIME FRAME.

[please check out the Salvation Principle Series on Chew On This.]

1. Where to start: Beginning the investigation

We typically look for what to DO, but in order to find that out, you need to know:

- WHO you are,
- WHOSE you are and how you fit with the whole,
- WHERE you are,
- And the context, WHEN you are,
- Then WHERE you are going,
- And to WHOM are you going,
- Once there, WHAT DO YOU DO?

Paul is writing to people he loves, to frame something FOR the good of the community they were a part of and would result in their good as well. Growing in godliness with all the power of the Holy Spirit enabling them.

Read the scriptures:

Ephesians

Greeting

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Redemption in Christ

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having



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predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

⁷In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, ⁹having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. ¹¹In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹²that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

¹³In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

2. Understanding of the culture of the time versus our frame today.

Misreading Scripture with Individualistic Eyes: Patronage, Honor, and Shame in the Biblical World,
E. Randolph Richards and Richard James

- ***Our own culture is largely invisible to us, it isn't to others outside of our culture.***
 - We all assume it is simply the way the world is. While we don't like some of this, we can't imagine another way of thinking about it. Even if we can sometimes see some fruit (both good and bad) in our cultures, we rarely imagine there is another tree entirely.
 - Naturally then, when we see other cultures acting differently, we assume our culture is the norm, the baseline, the standard. This makes their way different and quite strange. We Western individualists might be surprised to learn that our modern Western culture is the less common view.
 - This is nothing to panic over. Western culture is not a plague on the world. We are just a different tree. I can go through life quite successfully as an apple tree without needing to know anything about orange trees, unless I interact with one. I don't have to know anything about how my culture compares with ancient biblical cultures unless I want to read the Bible better. Our Scriptures arose in a collectivist world, a world of orange trees, so it would help us to learn a bit about collectivist cultures. Collectivism is so deep in the culture of the biblical writers that they rarely say so directly. It goes without being said, so we can miss it. To exacerbate the scenario, we often fill in what went without being said in their world (collectivism) with what goes without being said in ours (individualism).



- ***Their frame of reference was WE not ME-community/collectivist over individuality***
 - ***You don't decide who you are, WE help you understand who you are.***
 - ***We do this today- the language of Poverty/Wealth-Dr. Ruby Payne***

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

- Likewise, as an individualist, I think the Bible was written to *me*. I “forget” that the opening of the letter tells us it was written to a group of people: “Paul, Silas and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and Peace to *you* [plural]” (1 Thess 1:1).
- I grew up reading the letter as if Paul (an individual) were speaking to me (an individual). Thus, at the end of the letter, when Paul writes, “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thess 5:16–18), I imagine Paul telling me to do those things. I sit in my bedroom (alone) and think about how to apply those commands to my life. Yet the *you* in the passage is plural; the commands are plural: *you all rejoice*. Since the church would have been assembled and listening as a group to Paul’s letter as it was read aloud to them, they most likely discussed together how Paul’s command for them (as a group) to rejoice, pray, and give thanks should shape their community life. Why does this matter? We think that recognizing the collective nature of the biblical world helps us to be better readers of the Bible, and crucially, better able to apply it to our lives and to help *each other* apply the Scriptures to *our* lives.

THE COLLECTIVE SELF: WHO TELLS ME WHO I AM?

- When I introduce myself to someone, I usually say my name and occupation. In the collective culture of the Middle East, I can sometimes talk to someone for over an hour before they ask me my first name. The first question they ask is, “Where are you from?” They ask about my job, my family, my age, my children, and my religion. That tells them a lot more about me than my first name. I am the sum of my group. To know me means to know who my group is, or more accurately said, to know my group is to know me.
- Collectivism and individualism primarily describe the way people identify and think about the self. People in individualist societies, such as me and most likely you, think of ourselves as an individual person: I am me, and the rest are they. Members of an individualist culture such as me think of my identity as comprising my individual attributes, personality traits, and what I have achieved in my life. As an individualist, these things define the way I see myself as a person and how I see others. I focus on fulfilling my own potential. I was taught in college I should want to be self-actualized. I should seek to be independent and autonomous, and only be expected to look after myself and my immediate family.⁸ I can hear my dad saying, “Be your own man. Don’t follow the herd.” My old anthropology professor worked as an American in a collectivist culture. They



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nicknamed him “Man Who Needs No One.” His mom would have been proud, but they didn’t intend it as a compliment. I make independent decisions for myself and bear the responsibility alone. We in individualist societies see ourselves this way. This is very deep down and often goes without being said. As an individualist, nothing struck me as odd when A. A. Milne, the author of *Winnie the Pooh*, had Piglet say, “The things that make me different are the things that make me ME.”

- Collectivist people find Piglet’s statement confusing in more than just grammar. Collectivist people define who they are in relation to others. I might say, “I’m an honest guy.” A collectivist friend would reply, “Says who?” As an individualist (from Texas), such a reply sounds to me like a challenge, maybe even fighting words. My collectivist friend was just wondering who decided that I was an honest guy. If the community that thought I was an honest guy was a community whose opinion my friend valued, then I would be accepted by him and his community as honest. And it wouldn’t just be token acceptance. The community would be willing to entrust valuables to me because I was *proven* honest. In my individualist culture, I might need to demonstrate my honesty individually or get a personal reference (by an *individual* he knows).
- Individualist societies tend to think of community as being the sum of the individuals. We bring our individual identities, characteristics, values, and talents, and the sum of this becomes our community. Individuals gather to make a community. In collectivist societies, however, the individual is the sum of the community. The community identity, characteristics, values, and talents form the identity of those who all belong to that community. Collectives are defined by the things they share with others, things such as shared blood, shared interests, shared history, shared land, and shared loyalty. They define their core identity as being part of a group, in distinction to other groups.
- This is what we mean by collectivism. Collectivist people understand their identity from the group they are part of. It is about identity, which is why people in collective societies live their lives oriented toward their group. They seek to make personal decisions in the interest of their group. They value interdependence, social harmony, and the group welfare. They make collective decisions as a group. To an individualist, that may sound dreadful or disempowering, but there are upsides. Responsibility is shared corporately. It is never just my fault. In fact, I admit that many times as an individualist I have asked others to help me make a decision. I wanted their wisdom, but I also wanted to socialize blame. Yet, this was my (individual) strategy. Collective people do it because they think they *are* the group. They don’t see themselves as an individual in a group. Given that people in collective societies see themselves this way, they also see others this way too.

COLLECTIVE DECISIONS: WE WILL HELP YOU DECIDE

- “I’d like to buy a set of curtains, please.” One of my British friends was moving into a new apartment in Beirut. Before she went to the curtain shop, she spent some time carefully measuring her window and thinking about what color fabric suited the room, and then went to the shop. Her new landlord, his wife, and the staff in the curtain shop looked shocked when she gave them the dimensions. “Those dimensions aren’t right,” said the



shopkeeper. “They are too short. You need full-length curtains.” My friend politely said that actually she preferred window-length curtains because she had placed a dining table beside the window. The shopkeeper replied, “No.” Surprised, my friend looked to her new landlord for support to deal with this uncooperative shopkeeper. Instead, the landlord replied, “He’s right. You want full-length curtains.” When she objected, saying she had made the decision already based on the table, both he and his wife replied, “We know best. You don’t know. You’re not from here.” The shopkeeper joined in, saying, “Everyone does it this way.” After fifteen minutes of trying to object, with them responding more and more strongly, our friend finally had to accept. **She got full-length curtains and had to pay the price for them too. She was upset because she felt that no one had listened to her. She didn’t get what she wanted. Actually, it was deeper than that. She believed she had the *individual right* to choose her own curtains for her own house. They had not respected her right. She had expected to be able to make the decision based on what *she* preferred. The community, however, was frustrated. She hadn’t listened to wisdom. They expected her to make the decision based on what the *community* preferred. After all, she wouldn’t want every guest who entered her house to think her curtains were too short, would she? It was their responsibility to make the decision for her, as her new landlords, neighbors, and friends. Everybody was oblivious to what was really going on. It wasn’t really about curtains. That was the surface symptom, but all the real activity was occurring deep down in the social structures of their cultures.**

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- ***This is a group of Jews & Gentiles who each had their cultural context within the larger societal context, which was separated from one another, who were beginning their process of becoming integrated [united]***

4. PARSING:

Beginning with the context of THIS letter FIRST.

The first 14 verses.

Ephesians

Greeting

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Redemption in Christ—[our position & the resource/equipping we’ve been given to function with in that position]

³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

- who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.



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- ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,
- (WHY DID HE CHOOSE US?)
 - V4 that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,
 - (⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself,
- (WHY WOULD HE DO THAT?) v5-6 according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace,
- (WHAT ULTIMATE RESULT DID THIS CHOOSING HAVE FOR US?) v6 b by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

SO WE'RE **IN HIM**, WHAT IMPACT DOES THAT HAVE? What difference occurs because we're in Him?

- ⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood,
- the forgiveness of sins,
- (HOW DID THAT GET ACCOMPLISHED?) according to the riches of His grace
- (WHAT is highlighted about GRACE?)⁸ which He made to abound toward us [not a smidge]
- (RESULTING IN WHAT?) in all wisdom and prudence,
- ⁹ having made known to us the mystery of His will, (WHAT'S THE MYSTERY?)
 - according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, ¹⁰ that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.
- ¹¹ In Him also we have obtained an inheritance,
 - (WHAT IS THE INHERITANCE FOR? WHAT DOES IT ACCOMPLISH? Resource to equip for what? Note the cultural responsibility that would have been understood that inheritance is used to ensure the family's safety & success, not to plump up one person.)
 - being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

¹³ In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Let's recap what we read so far:

- He's placed us in a particular position,
- He chose us before the foundation of the world,
- He freed us from the burden of sin (redeemed us)
- He freed us from the immobility of our state of bondage from sin
- We are now HOLY and BLAMELESS in His love as a result of the freedom He has granted us because we are hidden in CHRIST
- He adopted us as sons [not merely left as an associate but brought into His family [more intimate of a relationship]



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- All of which causes us to go from a separated, rejected, isolated state because of our sin, to a state of ACCEPTED in Him, embraced and drawn close

SINCE WE ARE CONTAINED/wrapped/clothed IN HIM and because of Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, & ascension, we've also been granted every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, why would we need that?

- He has now made His grace abound toward us, [supernatural ability] which gives us access to ALL we need of His Wisdom and Prudence [we need to ask, James]
- All of which we'll need because the mystery He has revealed is that once we [Jews & Gentiles] were DIVIDED, and He wants us to be UNITED, interestingly both in heaven and on earth...what does that mean?

We have POSITION,

His grace gives us space to function,

we now have a mission, which is facilitating unity, [we've been given the ministry of reconciliation-2 Cor 5:18

we've been wrapped in Him,

we've been blessed with every spiritual blessing,

now comes the INHERITANCE.

- Now that we have been made a family member through adoption, we are granted access to an inheritance. What is the purpose of an inheritance?
 - Resource which equips for a purpose. Safety, security, currency to get whatever resource is needed for the family/community at a future time...[collectivist mindset versus an individualistic mindset]
 - being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, (what is THE purpose? Refer back to UNITING THOSE WHO ARE DIVIDED.)

What does being predestined mean?

Is God's desired results inevitable and nothing we do will impact that, so there is really no choice?

[debated from the beginning-a much larger discussion.]

Ephesians 1:12-13 tells us:

12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

In simplicity:

- we first trusted, vs12-we did that by common grace, we were not MADE to trust, but a way was made that we might trust



- we trusted again, vs13-after we heard the truth, which means after the truth was shared with us, we had a choice to believe that it was true or not, again, our choice, which we could see & understand in whatever rudimentary capacity enough to believe what was preached to us, and as a result of that belief
- we were sealed [God's action] with the Holy Spirit-which is the Father's gift to us, a down payment guaranteeing our inheritance.
- There is a purchased possession, v14-I understand this to mean the entirety of mankind who receives the gift of Jesus that has been made available to ALL.

5. Conclusions: Recapping Again:

He has given us a position, [the authority]

His grace enables us to function in this position, [the ability]

He's given us the mission, which is facilitating unity, [the focus]

He's given us the resource & equipping we need for this mission [the resource]

A result of our trusting Him, we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, to be able to walk in a manner worth of His calling.

Examples: what would Authority/Ability/Focus/Resource look like from:

- a family perspective? If you are the husband, or the wife, or the child in a family...an executor's duty after a death...
- a work perspective? Your position & it's function within the organization...
- a school perspective? The difference with role/function of the principal, a teacher, a student, a parent...

[what does the Holy Spirit do?] pull up Hayford's information for HO.

GOING BACK TO THE BEGINNING:

- We learned that Ephesians:
 - begins with love, Eph 1:4-6
 - Ends with love, Eph 6:23-24
 - And 10-15 years later, when John shares the Revelation he receives, is chastised for leaving their first love, Rev 2:1-7
- **What did the Ephesian Church overlook or not protect in the years in between?**

Basic Hermeneutics principles:

1. Start with this book-what is the author saying to the original audience?
2. Look up other books by the same author to see what is said regarding these topics to those original audiences.
3. Look up what other biblical authors say on those topics.
4. What principles are revealed?
5. How can we apply those principles today in our current time & culture.

More extensive exploration could be done. ☺

What does Paul ask God for on behalf of the Ephesians next?

V15-23 we don't have time to unpack today.

Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom-amen! Always a good idea to invite the Holy Spirit to help. [handouts for how He does that.]



Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom

¹⁵ Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, ¹⁸ the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

²² And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

- Spirit of Wisdom & revelation in knowing Him
- That the eyes of our understanding be enlightened, opened with full effect
- That we would understand the hope of His calling [not of the world, not of our own strength]
- What the riches are within the glory of His inheritance that He's granted to the saints
- What is His exceeding great power to us who believe, according to His mighty power which was working through Christ to raise Him from the dead and to seat Him at His right hand in the heavenly places far above any and all other "powers" not only for now but for all time to come.

UNDERSTANDING

PERCEIVING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOMENT,

THE FULLNESS OF HIS ABILITIES AND THAT THOSE WORK THROUGH US RIGHT NOW through the Holy Spirit.

Wrapping up--do I understand:

- WHO I am in Jesus,
- WHOSE I am and how I fit with the body of believers that I am a part of,
- WHERE we are,
- And WHEN we are in the context of Gods timeframe,
- Then WHERE are we going together,
- And to WHOM are we going,
- Once we meet them, WHAT DO we DO to foster unity/reconciliation with God & others?

Does my life & relationships reveal I understand these principles?



6. What principles to apply today?

These scriptures reveal WHO we are & that we are empowered to do what He's asking.

Do my choices & actions reveal that I believe that?

We now know WHAT we are to do—the ministry of reconciliation/unity, and we have been given all we need to do that—the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

Do I lean toward or lean away from the work of love-reconciliation and unity in the body through my actions?

Someone is WITH us, we are accompanied, filled with the Holy Spirit who will help us.

Do I actively seek His wisdom, do I ask for all the Holy Spirit has to offer?

We are in Community-with God and with our fellow Ephesians.

Who is my community?

Am I actively investing in others?

Am I passive in my relationship with others?

Am I absent?

If not, why not?

If so, how can I be more intentional to help others grow closer to Jesus?