

Engage Unity Ephesians 4:1-3

Boxes are often the best part of a gift. My kids think so, and for a long time, I did too. My son loves to save boxes to make a fort. We have a pile of boxes in the garage and closet that he is saving for some grand project he has in mind. I would be lying if I said it didn't bug me sometimes. I want him to be excited about what I got him and play how I want him to. I want to throw the shoe box away because the point was the shoes, not clutter my space by holding on to boxes. I get it in my head that he disrespects me because he sees something I don't.

I put my "box" of my expectations over him. If I do not set my expectations aside and fail to see what he is doing, I will miss his joy in all aspects of the gift he was given. He is going to play with the toy, he is going to wear the shoes, he is going to let me read my books. He will do these things in the awesome fort he wants me to build with him. Is unity in this situation me requiring him to do as I wish and requiring him to fit in my box? No, it is uniformity and will achieve peace for a while only. At what potential cost, however? If he is like me, eventually, the relationship will be separated. Ultimately, no longer will I be invited to build a fort. When we conflict with someone, we think it is the responsibility of the other person to change their ways so that we can get along with them. We point at their faults and what they said or did and say that if there is going to be peace, they have to change. Paul challenges all of this in Ephesians 4:1-3.

Ephesians 4:1-3 "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." NASB

This letter is very much letting Christians know God's eternal purpose. Guess what? We get the opportunity to play a part in that purpose. Those who have accepted the gift that only Christ can give have a role. In this passage, we are called to walk worthy of the gift we have been given and do so with traits that identify us as Christians and those whose goal is unity. It is a modern mistake to see the call for humility as a mandate for ambivalence or uncertainty. Being humble does not mean being wishy-washy towards truth. It does not mean truth does not matter. Many confuse humility with uncertainty.

Remember that you, too, are a prisoner of the Lord. Paul wasn't referring to the fact that he was in prison writing this letter. He is referring to the fact that he is, by choice, confined to Christ. The context of this passage is that the church in Ephesus sometimes struggled with remembering the "to Christ" part. That God would be glorified through us (the church) and through Jesus for all generations forever and ever. God being glorified is our calling. We glorify God by the way we react to all people and all situations. Verses 2 & 3, "all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," isn't a suggestion. Paul says it is how we walk worthy of our calling in Christ.