

Ephesians 4:1-7 "The oneness Jesus planned"

"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

²"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

⁴"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; ⁵one Lord, one faith, **one baptism; ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it."**

Suppose you were on an airliner and it became clear that the plane would crash and burn.

You had only one prospect of surviving.

No other option was available.

If you heard that one escape plan presented, how closely would you listen?

Would you play close attention to the details of that one prospect?

All of us live on the surface of a large spinning globe, which is hurtling through space at thousands of miles per hour.

No one has ever gotten off this big ball alive.

Even if you escaped this planet, your survival chance would not improve.

You could travel light years away to the most faraway place in the Cosmos.

Your odds would not change.

People of all races, intelligence, money, and languages deal with the same zero chance.

Regardless of your connections or name, your possibility remains zip-zilch.

Few folks like to think about our limited conditions, but the facts are indisputable.

Do you know of any 200 year old people?

Yet many pretend they will be permanently here.

They act as if they will be around forever.

They are unconcerned about others.

- **Greed and selfishness control them.**
- **They are cranky, angry, and usually upset.**
- **They take advantage and exploit others sexually and economically.**

They seem unaware what judgmental, ungodly, unloving actions do to us humans.

Some time back, *Mary in Quebec* wrote this real-life story to Ann Landers:

“A woman was taking the car ferry from Victoria to Vancouver (British Columbia). She sat on the deck. Beside her in an empty chair were her newspaper and her chocolate bar.

“A man sat next to the little pile. He picked up the chocolate bar, ate it, picked up the newspaper, read some of it, threw the candy bar wrapper away, tucked the newspaper under his arm and then walked off.

The woman was too shocked to say anything. Having nothing to eat or munch on, she decided to go to the ferry cafeteria.

There, at a table, sat the man, flipping the pages of the newspaper with one hand, holding a submarine sandwich in the other.

Still angry, the woman strode over to him, grabbed the sandwich out of his hand, took a bite and then put the sandwich back in his hand. She marched off, saying nothing and not looking back.

She then decided to go to her car. On the passenger seat *of her car* were her newspaper and her chocolate bar. She had never taken them out of the car..:”

Mistakes like that make us die some, don't they?

So do anger, loneliness, and alienation from others.

Separation from God affects us even more adversely.

Every error we commit is like a wave we create—expanding, enlarging, sometimes surging, and at times sinking others.

One of the most frustrating things for me is to see my mistakes being repeated and echoed in our loved ones.

I read about a person who told a lie about another.

He apologized hoping to make amends.

The offended party took a pillow and shook the feathers out in the wind.

After the quills flew in every direction, that person said to the one who told the lie: “See why you can never retrieve or correct the effects of the untruth you told about me.”

It is humanly impossible to cover or repay the cost of our sin.

Our mistakes condemn us.

Only one hope exists to cover all our errors.

The Son of the Cosmos Creator came to the planet to give us that one hope.

- Jesus spoke only truth.

- He completely loved and obeyed God.
- Jesus lived a totally unselfish life.
- He suffered as a servant.
- He did things God's way entirely.
- Jesus was a perfect role model.

When he lived on the earth, Jesus mastered that part that wanted to hate, disobey, and take vengeance.

Out of resentful jealousy, folks killed him.

But three days later, Jesus came back from the dead, left that Jerusalem cemetery alive, and returned to heaven from where he came.

**So what does this mean for us?
Do you long for something better than the hopeless cycle and finish you presently foresee?**

When Jesus returns, those who share in his resurrection will leave this planet with new bodies and minds.

Christ fully paid for this new eternal life.

Have you thought about how much eternity really costs?

In the mid-1950s, I worked for one this country's wealthiest men.

One day he told me about his first wife.

They were deeply in love and happy.

She developed cancer. He took her everywhere possible, even to the Orient hoping to find a cure. The \$250,000 he spent circa 1936 trying to find a cure is about 4 1/2 million in 2018 dollars.

No earthly possession was beyond his ability to pay, but that extremely rich man could not buy even a day for his dying wife.

The people who own Apple cannot buy one nanosecond of eternity.

Neither can any man or woman compensate for all his/her past mistakes.

Buying a happy eternity or even lasting joy right now is beyond all human estimation.

Yet it is attainable--for free.

Jesus completely paid for it.

Let me share a few secrets about a guilt-free, anger-free, hate-free eternal life hardly anyone mentions publicly.

First, despite what most Americans seem to assume, heaven is not a given.

Not everyone will get into heaven.

Consider this truth: even lousy, noisy, drunken bars have bouncers.

Jesus, who always told the truth, said:
“Few find the gate to heaven.”¹
Preachers and teachers who do not fully inform you of this are deceiving you.

Three secrets are in our text today each beginning with the letter “B.”

The first “B” word is balance.

It is disastrous and embarrassing when our accounts are out of balance, isn't it?

Most of us try to balance our check books at least now and then.

You are probably thinking: “I don't see the word balance anywhere in the text or anything that refers to balance.”

True, the word balance does not appear, but the idea of equilibrium does.

Sadly, most Christians don't see it.

Paul was writing to folks just like us:

“I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” He referred to that guilt-free, anger-free, death-conquering life we mentioned earlier.

Suppose you are an athletic team member and before the season starts, your coach awards you a diamond studded MVP trophy-with real diamonds.

That's a real imbalance isn't it?

In essence that is what Jesus has done for us.

In geography we learned that the earth “spins on its axis.”

There's an imaginary line in the earth's center around which it spins.

The world turns on this axis in such a way that it stays balanced.

If it didn't maintain this equilibrium, things would get pretty crazy.

The Greek word translated **“worthy”** is the term from which we get the English word axis.

Imagine a balance type of scale.

“Worthy” refers to “bringing up the other beam of the scales or balancing”-- “Bringing into equilibrium.”

For life we owe a colossal debt—an enormous imbalance of cost—Jesus fully paid it.

We do our best to make ourselves worthy of that honor he already bestowed on us.

Our text literally means: “Walk in a way that balances the debt you owe for what Jesus did.”

¹ Matthew 7: 13, 14

Can you say that you have been living that way?

How can we possibly do that?

We fully accept Christ's offer of life that he suffered and died for us to enjoy for free.

Paul and his co-missionary Barnabas spoke to some Jewish people in a town called Antioch in what is now central Turkey.

Instead of repenting for their sins and being grateful that God had sent his Messiah, many of the people were jealous and acted abusively toward Paul and Barnabas.

“Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: ‘We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.’”²

To bring balance, we quit acting angrily and ungratefully as many people in the world do and we act as Jesus did.

Jesus is our role model; not some athlete, politician, preacher, entertainer, or teacher.

2. Our second “B”: Be humble.

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

Jesus told the disciples that unless they changed and humbled themselves as little children, they were not going to heaven.³

The same word for humble Paul used here is in the Greek text of Matthew 18, where Jesus demanded humility of the disciples and us.

In the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, the German Scholar Walter Grundmann defined Christ's humility this way: “It is to become a child again before God, i.e. to trust Him utterly, to expect everything from Him and nothing from self.”

A few years ago, I became very discouraged about church work and the results of my efforts.

Like a six year old, I was whining to God in prayer one morning.

² Acts 13:46 NIV

³ Matthew 18:1-4

He clearly indicated to me: “Bob, you do what My Word teaches you to do each day, and let me take care of the results.”

We humbly work and act according to His plan; God gives the increases according to His plan.

If we will die to the part of us that wants to disobey God, and we humbly unite ourselves with Jesus, he makes things happen.

We plant and we water: God makes things grow.

Part of us needs to be shed, but we are not always sure how to get that done.

We know we must rid ourselves of that old cranky, anxious, angry, disobedient, selfish person, but many church leaders clutter the way to do it with tradition and misinformation.

The Bible clearly tells us: Baptism is the third of the three “B”s.

Both Romans and Ephesians give us vital information.

“Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the

dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”⁴

Did you catch the paradox in these verses?

We have to put to death the part of us that wants to disobey God—that side of us that wants its own way all the time.

We all know well that the part of us that hates, worries, disregards others, and insists on its own way.

That's the part of us that needs to go.

We decide to die to that old person.

But why immersion?

The fact that we balk at what God's word tells us shows that our old proud person has not died.

“Having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

¹³ When you were dead in your sins . . . ”⁵

Jesus expects us to put our old habits aside:

Trust him;

Unite ourselves with him;

Follow him to a new way that leads to life forever.

⁴ Romans 6:3,4 NIV

⁵ Colossians 2:12, 13a NIV

John the Baptist asked Jesus, “Why should I baptize you?” “**It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness,**” said Jesus.⁶

Jesus put to death every part of himself that wanted to resist God.

Was Jesus immersed?

Note what Matt. 3:16 says: “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.”

The word “baptize” means immerse.

It took on the meaning of sprinkling only after certain church people began to say that it’s too much work and too humiliating to immerse people.

And because some church leaders also began later to baptize babies.

They began baptizing babies because about 200 years after Jesus’ day some man decided that babies were guilty of Adam’s sin.

I pray that you will consider these three “B”s:
Bring balance to your life by obeying and responding to Jesus’ word.

Be humble and submit yourself as a child of God.
Be baptized and die to that old person.

You will receive forgiveness in Christ, be joined to him and begin the exciting, rewarding journey toward eternal life with God.

Bob Blair
PO Box 176
Cleghorn, IA 51014
www.robertblairbooks.com

⁶ Matthew 3:15 NIV