

The Aim of the Church under Orders

Ephesians 4:1

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Introduction: We have now finished our series on John 17, Christ's High Priestly Prayer. Our study there took us to consider the topic of unity. That resulted in reference to Ephesians 4:3-6 as we read about the 7 "unities" in these verses. Before examining these 7 "unities" I want us to consider the context. The Book of Ephesians can be summarized into 2 (or 3) parts: The wealth of the believer (chapters 1-3) & the walk of the believer (chapters 4-6). Another way to outline the book is: The position (chapters 1-3), the practice (chapters 4:1 - 6:9), & the protection (6:10-20) of believers (Ryrie). The epistle can also be described as: the study of doctrine (chapters 1-3) > our riches in Christ & duty (chapters 4-6 > our responsibilities for Christ). We see the Church described as a Body, a Building, & a Bride. Beginning here in chapter 4, let's consider the Church under orders – the orders of our Lord & Savior. Paul beseeches us in Ephesians 4:1 to "...walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." The word "vocation" means 'calling'. What is the calling of the believer? To what has the believer been called? Consider 3 aspects of our calling as believers, particularly as they relate to the aim of the church under orders. The believer is called: to desire God's holiness, to declare God's greatness, & to demonstrate God's likeness.

I. We are called to desire God's **holiness** (cf. Ephesians 1:4)
[Note "walk" – involves purpose, progress, & persistence]

A. The exhortations:

1. I Peter 1:13-16, "*But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.*"
2. II Corinthians 7:1, "*...let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh & spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*"

B. The explanations:

1. "*Conversation*" - behavior, life-style, manner of living.
 - a. Separation from the world - Romans 12:1-2.
 - b. Separation unto the Word - Mark 3:14 (cf. Acts 4:13).
2. "*Perfecting*" - maturing, being made complete.
 - a. The standard of perfection - Ephesians 4:13 (cf. I John 2:1).
 - b. The seeking of perfection - Hebrews 6:1 (cf. James 1:3-4).

Question: Did you "walk worthy" this last week? Did you **reflect** God's holiness?

II. We are called to declare God's **greatness** (cf. Ephesians 1:5-6, 12, 14)

A. By our lips:

1. Praise to God should be natural >
 - a. The old nature: natural to gripe & complain - James 3:8.
 - b. The new nature: natural to praise & worship - Ps. 9:1-2 & 33:1.
2. Praise of God should be continual >
 - a. Psalm 34:1, "*I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*"
 - b. Psalm 71:14, "*But I will hope continually, & will yet praise Thee more & more.*"

Result: Praise glorifies God (Ps. 50:23) & evangelizes man (Ps. 40:3).

B. By our life:

1. Glorifying God through our consecration >
 - a. Our faithfulness - I Peter 4:10-11.
 - b. Our fervency - II Corinthians 5:14-15.
2. Glorifying God by our conduct >
 - a. Our activities - I Corinthians 10:31.
 - b. Our attitude - Philippians 1:20-21.

Question: Did you “*walk worthy*” this last week? Did you **revere** God’s greatness?

III. We are called to demonstrate God's likeness (cf. Ephesians 1:5 & 12-14)

A. Our predestination unto Christlikeness:

1. Romans 8:28-29 - destined (ordained or appointed) by God >
 - a. The promise of God (:28).
 - b. The purpose of God (:29).
2. Ephesians 4:12-13 – determined (ordered or arranged) by God >
 - a. The ministry to the saints.
 - b. The ministry of the saints.

Summary: See Ephesians 2:10.

B. Our participation in Christlikeness:

1. By the Spirit of the Lord - II Corinthians 3:17-18 >
 - a. Our liberty in Christ (:17).
 - b. Our likeness to Christ (:18).
2. By the Word of the Lord - I John 2:3-6 >
 - a. Our obedience to His Word (:3-5).
 - b. Our observance of His Walk (:6) (& cf. I Peter 2:21-23).

Question: Did you “*walk worthy*” this last week? Did you **radiate** God’s likeness?

Conclusion: Paul began this chapter by identifying himself as “*the prisoner of the Lord.*” He was prisoner in 2 perspectives. First, he was imprisoned in jail for his bold & fearless preaching of the Gospel. He was a physical prisoner for the cause of Christ. And, second, he was a prisoner voluntarily to the call of Christ, a spiritual imprisonment. We may never be called upon to be a prisoner for the cause of Christ, as Paul was. But we should all be prisoners of the Lord spiritually. We have been purchased by His blood, justified, & sanctified. As His spiritual prisoner, we are under His orders. The King of kings & Lord of lords is our Commander. We are commanded in Ephesians 4:1 to “...*walk worthy of the vocation (calling) wherewith ye (we) are called.*” Are you following His orders? Are you desiring God's holiness? Are you declaring God's greatness? And are you demonstrating God's likeness? Are you seeking God's will in order that you may do it? May God help us to recognize our place in the church under orders & not go AWOL!

Are you a “prisoner” of Jesus Christ? If so, then you too can be a part of His church, under His command. Having started here tonight with the aim of the church under orders, we will continue our study here in Ephesians 4, as we look at the appearance, the anchor, the abilities, the achievement, & the application of the Church under orders.