

# The Appearance of the Church under Orders

## *Ephesians 4:2-3*

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May 22 & 29, 2024 p.m.

Introduction: We have previously considered the **aim** of the church under orders. To determine the aim of the church, we need to discover the will of God for the individual believer. In Ephesians 4:1, Paul exhorts us to "...walk worthy of the vocation ('calling') wherewith ye (we) are called." We noted that the believer is called to desire God's **holiness**, to declare God's **greatness**, & to demonstrate God's **likeness** (to be like Christ). In our text for the next two weeks, Paul describes the **appearance** of the church under the orders of the Lord. He lists 5 attributes that are to be in evidence by believers who make up the church. Consider the need for (1) lowliness, (2) meekness, (3) longsuffering, (4) forbearance, & (5) zealouslyness.

### I. "Lowliness" -

#### A. Humility before God

##### 1. The definitions:

- a. From the verb, 'to make low'; humble - "having or showing a consciousness of one's defects or shortcomings; not proud; not self-assertive; modest." (Webster)
- b. An "...attitude of mind which demands a true estimate of oneself as he is in God's sight" (Kent).

##### 2. The declarations:

- a. James 4:10, "*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, & He shall lift you up.*"
- b. I Peter 5:5-6, "*Yea, all of you be subject one to another, & be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, & giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.*"

#### B. Humility before others

##### 1. Defined:

- a. To be humble "...suggests an unassuming character in which there is an absence of pride & assertiveness" (Webster).
- b. "A man's greatness is not determined by the number of servants he has, but by the number of servants he serves."

##### 2. Declared:

- a. Romans 12:16, "*Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceit.*"
- b. Philippians 2:3-4, "*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*"

#### C. Humility by following Christ - Philippians 2:5-11

1. When we follow the example of Christ, we will see the glory & holiness of God & realize our own weakness & sinfulness.
2. Illustrate: "Forget the Name" (Daily Bread)

### II. "Meekness"

#### A. Defined:

1. "Strength under control." (cf. a horse controlled with bit & bridle).
2. Our attitude "...which never rises in insubordination (rebellion) against God nor in resentment against man" (Eadie).

#### B. Demonstrated:

1. By Moses, Numbers 12:3; by Paul, I Cor. 4:21; by husband & wife, Eph. 5:21 & by Christ, Matthew 11:29.
2. Titus 3:2 > "The man who is meek does not assert his own importance or authority."
3. Ephesians 5:18 > "Every instinct & every passion, every motion of his mind & heart & tongue & desire, under perfect control" [the Spirit's control] (Barclay).

### III. "Longsuffering"

#### A. Its definition:

1. "The ability to endure discomfort without fighting back."
2. "Longsuffering is opposed to irritability, or to what we familiarly name shortness of temper (James 1:19), & is that patient self-possession which enables a man to bear with those who oppose him, or who in any way do him injustice" (Eadie).
3. "Stedfast endurance of suffering or misfortune (James 5:10) ...slowness in avenging wrong or retaliating when hurt by another" (Foulkes).

#### B. Its demonstration:

1. This word is used of God's patience > Romans 2:4 & II Peter 3:9
2. This word is used of God's prophets > James 5:10 & 11 (Job)
3. This word is used of God's people > I Corinthians 13:4 & Galatians 5:22  
"When a person is not interested in himself, it is much easier for him to be long on temper, to endure & put up with the weaknesses of his brethren" (Bell).

### IV. Forbearance - "*forbearing one another in love*"

#### A. The practical outworking of longsuffering:

1. "It involves bearing with one another's weaknesses, not ceasing to love one's neighbor or friends because of those faults in them which perhaps offend or displease us." (Abbott)
2. "Retaliation was not to be allowed; all occasionally needed forbearance, & all were uniformly to exercise it" (Eadie).

#### B. The potential opportunity of forbearance:

1. Slow to take offense > Matthew 17:24-27
2. Swift to show love > I Corinthians 13:4-7

### V. Zealousness - "*endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*"

#### A. Defining the terms:

1. "*Endeavouring*" - zealous effort; giving diligence; sparing no effort.
2. "*Keep*" - not creating a unity by man, but maintaining the unity of the Spirit.
3. "*Unity*" - the unity of believers, linked together in the body of Christ, united by the Spirit of God, based upon the truth of God (see :4-6).
4. "*Bond of peace*" - "If by love men can live in the peace that Christ has brought them, then unity will be kept indeed" (Foulkes) - see Colossians 3:14.

#### B. Determining the task: see Romans 12:10-15.

1. Humility (:10) - Do we put others before ourselves?
2. Helpfulness (:13a) - Do we give to those in need? (finances, time, transportation)
3. Hospitality (:13b) - Do we invite others in our home? (meals, lodging)
4. Heart-felt compassion (:15) - Do we rejoice & weep with others?  
"People don't care what you know until they know that you care!"

Conclusion: Paul goes on to describe in this chapter 2 threats to the unity of the church. The one is false doctrine (:13) & the other is worldliness (:17). Yet there is unity in Christ, in His body, the church. We are commanded to maintain that unity (not manufacture it) by the demonstration of these characteristics. Paul began with the attribute of humility, "*with all lowliness.*" As we follow the example of Christ, we will humble ourselves in the sight of God & before others. "*Meekness*" is strength under control, keeping us from rebellion against God & from resentment toward man. This is only possible as we are filled & controlled by the Spirit of God. We are to exhibit "*longsuffering,*" enabled to endure suffering or mistreatment without retaliation or revenge. And we should be known as those who are "*forbearing one another in love*", which is the practical outworking of longsuffering, & allows the potential opportunity to show love. What then is our task to maintain the unity of the Spirit? We should demonstrate humility, helpfulness, hospitality, & heart-felt compassion. How about you this evening?