

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups. June 4th 2006

Live a new Life! – 'Unity of Spirit'

Ephesians 4: 1 - 16



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

Everywhere you look today there is division whether it's in politics, sport or the world at large. In this week's passage from Ephesians, St Paul shows how God has made provision for us, the church, to live and work together in unity; united in heart, mind and purpose, a team that acts as one and that grows together into maturity. This means that together we may attain the ultimate prize, to be a body of his people, joined and held together by every person, built up in love and playing their part. We are called to be a people who display a Christ like maturity to the world. St Paul following his deep heart felt prayer in chapter 3, takes us back to the fundamentals of living out a Christian life when he urge us to live a life worthy of our calling. He writes *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.* In chapter 3 we saw how we are seated with Christ Jesus in heavenly realms and how we enter into the spiritual realm with Jesus to make known the manifold wisdom of God. But here in chapter 4 Paul brings us back to earth when he urges us to live out daily a life worthy of our calling. When Watchman Nee wrote his book 'Sit Walk, Stand, the Bible translation he used put it like this *I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith you were called.* Paul uses this word 'walk' 8 times in Ephesians and it means literally 'to walk around' to 'deport oneself'. ²*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.* Unless we bring our heavenliness into our homes, places of work and leisure pursuits and practice it there, it will be without meaning.

The Church is not to be like the world in any shape or form; it's called to be an entirely different society. That's why Paul urges us to ³*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.* It is God who has brought unity between us and himself in the first place. In chapter 2 Paul makes this clear when he says *'For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.'* There is no longer any barrier between us and him and there is therefore to be no barrier between those who love him. How often sadly do divisions occur when there shouldn't be any? Factionalism, infighting, backbiting and gossip don't support the cause of our Lord Jesus; they only bring about disharmony, disunity and destruction of the purposes of God. That is why Paul reminds us that *'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.*

While in the family of God we should do everything in our power to strive towards unity of faith, there needs to be a healthy diversity of giftedness. Spiritual gifts are not limited to an elite few, but rather are given to each and every believer. Each of us has been given spiritual gifts in order to bring the body of Christ to maturity. We must focus outwardly with our gifts, ministering to others with their edification in mind. **Maturity** is the goal, **Unity** is the effect, and the **Diversity** of Spiritual gifts are the means. All gifts of ministry are functions within the body of Christ, not some form of hierarchy as some may think, but a means by which together we may grow in faith in unity of Spirit. Each one of us is called and is being called by God to carry out our God given ministry.

Witness: Questions to discuss



1. Discuss together in what areas Christians should have unity?
2. In what areas do you think Christians should have diversity?
3. What do you think are signs of immaturity within the body of believers?
4. Do you have a spiritual gift? And what is its purpose? Has God given you a ministry?
5. Share the different ministries that there are amongst you in the group.
6. How might you benefit by the spiritual gifts of others in your group?