

## PROPER ATTITUDES TOWARD OTHER BELIEVERS; EPH. 4:1-2 (Ed O'Leary)

### INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ WE BEGIN THE NEXT OVERARCHING THEME OF EPHESIANS, ~ 4:1 — 6:9.

BUT, ~ BEFORE WE DO THAT, ~ IT IS IMPORTANT, ~ IN ORDER TO KEEP THE BIG picture of Ephesians in mind, ~ to once again briefly set the overall context of the letter.

▶▶ As said, ~ Ephesians can be divided into three consecutive overarching themes.

▷▷ The first central theme is brought out in [chapters 1-3](#). ~ In short, ~ Paul explains our great salvation and its accompanying blessings that God has freely given us.

▷▷ The second overarching theme is brought out in ~ [4:1 — 6:9](#), ~ which we are beginning this morning.

↳↳ Here Paul gives a detailed description of how we, ~ who have been given this great salvation and its accompanying blessings, ~ are to live as a result.

▷▷ The third central theme of Ephesians is brought out in [6:10-20](#), ~ and deals with the spiritual warfare of the Christian.

OKAY, ~ NOW LET'S BEGIN OUR EXAMINATION OF 4:1 — 6:9.

▶▶ Today, ~ we will focus our attention on [4:1-2](#).

VERSE 1. ~ "I THEREFORE, ~ A PRISONER FOR THE LORD, ~ URGE YOU TO WALK in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called."

THE WORD "THEREFORE" IS A VERY IMPORTANT WORD IN THE NT EPISTLES, ~ because it is a marker of result and frequently serves as a signal.

▶▶ Quite often, ~ the NT authors used it to signal a switch from teaching truth to applying truth.

▷▷ Or TPID, ~ the word "[therefore](#)" ~ signals a change from teaching truth ~ ¶¶

↳↳ to how Jesus' blood-bought people are to display the truth ~ in their thoughts, ~ words, ~ and behavior ~ as a result of that truth.

▶▶ And that's how Paul uses the word "[therefore](#)" here in [Eph. 4:1](#). ¶¶ 1/9

▷▷ The word "therefore" points back to chapters 1-3. ~ So, ~ basically, ~ in verse 1, ~ Paul is saying, ~ "As a result of all that God has done for and given you, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ this great salvation and its accompanying blessings that I spelled out in the first three chapters of this letter, ~ ¶¶

→→ I, ~ a prisoner of the Lord, ~ urge you to apply or display this truth by walking in a manner worthy of what He has done for and given you."

NOTICE, ~ PAUL ONCE MORE REFERS TO HIMSELF AS "A PRISONER OF THE LORD."

▶▶ Again we see Paul refusing to look at things on earthly level.

▷▷ As we noted in 3:1, ~ Paul knew and understood that Jesus is in control of history ~ and all of life ~ not Caesar. ~ It only looked like Nero was in charge.

▷▷ This, ~ we said, ~ is a tremendous lesson for us, ~ who sometimes become worried and anxious about what the political powers-that-be are doing in the world today.

↳↳ Contrary to appearances, ~ Jesus is in control ~ not anything or anyone else. ~

→→ And so we, ~ believers, ~ need to begin to think more on a spiritual level ~ rather than on a physical, ~ only what we see level.

IN 4:1, ~ PAUL SAYS, ~ "AS A RESULT OF ALL THAT GOD HAS DONE FOR AND GIVEN you, ~ this great salvation and its accompanying blessings that I spelled out in the first three chapters of this letter, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ I, ~ a prisoner of the Lord, ~ urge you to walk in a manner worthy of what He has done for and given you."

▶▶ Simply put, ~ "walk in a manner worthy" refers to living a life that brings honor and glory to God.

▶▶ So, ~ to build on verse 1, ~ Paul is saying, ~ "As a result of all that God has done for and given you, ~ this great salvation and its accompanying blessings that I spelled out in the first three chapters of this letter, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ I, ~ a prisoner of the Lord, ~ urge you to apply or display this truth by living in a way that brings honor and glory to Him."

▶▶ Briefly put, my brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ as a result of what God has done for and given us, ~ we are to honor and glorify Him in our thoughts, ~ words, ~ and behavior. ¶¶ 2/9

EPH. 4:1 ACTUALLY SERVES AS AN INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF THE WHOLE section, ~ 4:1 — 6:9 .

▶▶ Because from 4:2 — 6:9, ~ Paul spells out in detail the type of life that brings honor and glory to God, ~ the type of life that should result from the truth of chapters 1-3.

▶▶ And we should understand what Paul is getting at when he says "I . . . urge you" in 4:1.

▷▷ This is very likely a formula for polite command in a letter. ~ So Paul is not just making suggestions.

↳↳ If I understand this correctly, ~ the way Paul wrote this ~ is actually stressing his apostolic authority in giving ethical instruction.

→→ So, ~ we could say that Paul is politely commanding us in 4:1 — 6:9.

↳↳ And therefore, ~ it is incumbent upon those of us who claim Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord to follow Paul's instructions.

**IN VERSE 2, ~ PAUL CALLS BELIEVERS TO BE HUMBLE, ~ GENTLE, ~ PATIENT, ~ and tolerant toward our fellow believers.**

THESE, ~ PAUL SHOWS US, ~ ARE FOUR ATTITUDES TOWARD OUR BROTHERS AND sisters in Christ that should result from our great salvation and its accompanying blessings.

▶▶ Four attitudes within the church that bring honor and glory to God ~ and display the truth of chapters 1-3. ~ Let's break these down.

**IN VERSE 2a, ~ PAUL CALLS BELIEVERS TO BE COMPLETELY HUMBLE.**

PAUL'S POINT HERE WHEN HE TELLS US THAT WE ARE TO BE COMPLETELY HUMBLE ~ is that we're to have a humble attitude in dealing with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

▶▶ In Phil. 2:3-4, ~ Paul defines this humility that we are to have toward one another.

▷▷ Paul writes, ~ "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, ~ but in humility ~

↳↳ [and then he describes this humility] ~ count others more significant ~ [or, ~ as more important] ~ than yourselves. ~ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, ~ but also to the interests of others."

▷▷ "Do nothing from selfish ambition" means that we are to do nothing because of selfish purposes, ~ self-interest, ~ the desire to get ahead, ~ or self-centered gain. ⇓ 3/9

▷▷ "Do nothing from conceit" means that we're not to be motivated by a desire for praise ~ or by an exaggerated opinion of ourselves, ~ or of our achievements, ~ abilities, ~ etc.

▷▷ Instead, ~ our starting point in dealing with our brothers and sisters in Christ is "humility."

▷▷ We're not to do anything "from selfish ambition or conceit."

▷▷ We are not to have the attitude that we are more important than our brothers and sisters in Christ.

↳↳ Rather, ~ we're to consider our fellow believers as more important than ourselves.

▷▷ And we're to be concerned not only about our own interests, ~ but also about those of our fellow members of God's family.

↳↳ The self-centeredness that considers only one's own rights, ~ plans, ~ and interests ~ must be replaced by a broader outlook that includes the interests of other believers.

▶▶ Jesus, ~ no surprise here, ~ provides us with the model we are to follow.

▷▷ Paul spells it out in Phil. 2:5-8. ~ ~ NASB ~ "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus ~ [i.e., ~ have the same attitude toward one another that Jesus had toward us], ~ ¶¶

↳↳ [then Paul explains Jesus' attitude:] who, ~ although He existed in the form of God, ~ did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped ~ ¶¶

→→ [i.e., ~ Jesus did not consider the fact that He is God ~ something to be used to his own advantage], ~ ¶¶

↳↳ but emptied Himself ~ [i.e., ~ gave up His divine privileges], ~ taking the form of a bond-servant, ~ and being made in the likeness of men. ~ ~ ¶¶

↳↳ Being found in appearance as a man, ~ He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, ~ even death on a cross."

▷▷ Jesus had an attitude of humility, ~ of sacrificing Himself for others, ~ and of obedience. ~ ~ He did not consider His deity as a possession to be exploited for selfish interests.

▷▷ Jesus did not take on flesh to please Himself, ~ but, ~ as Peter says in 1 Pet. 2:24, ~ to bear "our sins in his body on the tree." ¶¶ 4/9

▷▷ He gave up his divine privileges and wrapped His deity in flesh; ~ he took the humble position of a slave ~ and was born as a human being.

▷▷ And when Jesus appeared in human form, ~ he humbled himself in obedience to God the Father, ~ ¶¶

↳ and, ~ though not a sinner, ~ He died a sinner's death on a cross, ~ the most cruel and disgraceful of deaths, ~ so that you and I might have eternal life.

▷▷ This, ~ my brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ is the model of humility we are to follow in our relationships with our fellow believers.

### NEXT, ~ IN VERSE 2b, ~ PAUL CALLS BELIEVERS TO BE COMPLETELY GENTLE.

PAUL IS REFERRING TO A GENTLENESS OF ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR, ~ IN CONTRAST with harshness in one's dealings with others.

▶▶ It is the opposite of arrogance and self-assertiveness. ~ It stands opposed to resentment or revenge at injustices.

▷▷ And it involves an attitude of courtesy, ~ considerateness, ~ and a willingness to waive one's own rights.

THE WORD PAUL USES FOR "GENTLENESS" DOES NOT SUGGEST TIMIDITY OR LACK OF courage, ~ or taking on a "doormat" personality, ~ allowing oneself to be trampled on.

▶▶ It does mean restrained or controlled strength, ~ i.e., ~ self control. ~ E.g., ~ to be gentle and polite in circumstances where it takes an effort to be gentle and polite.

▶▶ Apparently in Greek, ~ the word was used for a soothing medicine, ~ a colt that had been broken, ~ and a soft wind. ~ In each case you have power, ~ but that power is under control.

▷▷ Briefly put, ~ "gentleness" is power or strength under control.

▶▶ In [Matt. 11:29](#), ~ Jesus said that He is "gentle and humble in heart." ~ But Jesus is not weak.

▷▷ Obviously, ~ the One who called the universe into existence and "upholds it by the word of his power" ~ and who, ~ in His earthly ministry, ~ drove the money changers from the temple, ~ is very far from weak.

▶▶ Jesus, ~ being God, ~ is all-powerful. ~ But His omnipotence is totally under control. ~ We see this displayed in His suffering and in His death on the cross. ¶¶ 5/9

▷▷ In 1 Pet. 2:23a, ~ Peter writes, ~ "When he was reviled, ~ he did not revile in return."

↳↳ Jesus was verbally abused throughout his trials and crucifixion. ~~ But No matter how many insults were thrown at Him, ~ He did not throw insults back at them. ~~ In fact, ~ He accepted their insults in silence.

▷▷ In 1 Pet. 2:23b, ~ Peter writes, ~ "when he suffered, ~ he did not threaten."

↳↳ Jesus was subjected to severe physical sufferings. ~~ He was struck in the face, ~ spit on, ~ beaten, ~ crowned with thorns, ~ forced to carry His cross, ~ and crucified.

→→ Yet, ~ through it all ~ He never threatened retaliation on His persecutors.

↳↳ It seems that it was common in Jesus' time ~ for the one being executed to cry out for vengeance ~ and to threaten his executioners. ~~ But Jesus ~ did not do this.

↳↳ He could have. ~~ And He certainly had the power to back up any threats He made. ~~ He could have destroyed them just by using His powerful voice.

↳↳ Instead, ~ He kept His absolute power under control ~ and forgave all of His persecutors and executioners.

ONCE AGAIN, ~ JESUS PROVIDES AN EXAMPLE, ~ INDEED A POWERFUL EXAMPLE, ~ FOR His people to follow.

▶▶ Just as Jesus exercised self-control, ~ we, ~ His blood-bought church, ~ are to exercise self-control in our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

▷▷ We are to display a gentleness in attitude and behavior toward our fellow believers. ~~ We are not to be resentful or seek retaliation at injustices. ~~ We're not be arrogant or self-assertive.

↳↳ And we are to be courteous, ~ considerate, ~ and willing to waive our own rights in our dealings with our fellow disciples of Jesus.

IN VERSE 2c, ~ PAUL CALLS BELIEVERS TO BE PATIENT WITH ONE ANOTHER.

▶▶ Paul calls believers to be patient with one another.

GENERALLY SPEAKING, ~ THE GREEK WORD PAUL USES ~ IS characteristically a word which expresses patience with people ~ and is not used in regard to things or events. ↴ 6/9

▶▶ The word focuses our attention on restraint: ~ that capacity for self-control despite circumstances that might arouse the passions or cause agitation.

▷▷ It is forbearance, ~ i.e., ~ to control oneself when provoked. ~ It involves the ability, ~ even under severe provocation, ~ not to lose one's temper.

▶▶ The usual Hebrew expression for patience is related to the verb "to be long" and involves the idea of being long to get riled ~ or ~ slow to become angry.

▷▷ The Greek word that Paul uses expresses the same idea of being slow to become angry.

▶▶ So, ~ here in Eph. 4:2c, ~ Paul calls believers to be slow to become angry with our brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ no matter what the provocation.

▶▶ Solomon, ~ in Prov. 14:29, ~ says ~ "Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, ~ but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly ~ [i.e., ~ shows great foolishness]."

▶▶ James, ~ with a proverb in James 1:19, ~ expands on what Paul says here. ~ "Know this, ~ my beloved brothers: ~ let every person be quick to hear, ~ slow to speak, ~ slow to anger."

▷▷ "slow to speak" means slow to begin speaking. ~ This is a call for restraint upon hasty and ill-conceived reactions to what is heard.

↳↳ Unfortunately, ~ far too often I behave as if the proverb were reversed. ~ Far too often ~ I'm quick to speak ~ and slow to listen.

▷▷ "slow to anger" means slow to become angry.

▶▶ And then in James 1:20, ~ James tells us why we are to be slow to become angry. ~

▷▷ And the NIV paraphrase captures James' point quite well here. ~ "because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."

↳↳ Our anger does not result in the righteous life that God commands us to live.

OF COURSE, ~ THE GREATEST ILLUSTRATION OF PATIENCE IN operation is God Himself.

▶▶ Several passages speak of him, ~ in conjunction with other gracious attributes, ~ as "slow to anger."

▷▷ E.g., ~ in a context which stresses Israel's rebellion and provocation of God, ~ look at how He is contrasted with them in Neh. 9:17, ~ ¶¶ ¶¶ 7/9

↪↪“They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, ~ but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. ~ ~ But you are a God ready to forgive, ~ gracious and merciful, ~ slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, ~ and did not forsake them.”

PATIENCE THEN, ~ WHICH IS AN ATTRIBUTE OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, ~ IS ALSO to characterize each of His people. ~ ~ Ties in w/ last wk.: ~ ~ More & more . . . .

▶▶ We should have the same patience when dealing with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ ~ as God has demonstrated in His dealings with sinful humanity.

▷▷ Each of us personally ~ should look at our own lives ~ and see how God has been patient with us. ~ ~ And then treat each of our fellow blood-bought believers the same, ~ ↴↴

↪↪ even when they hurt us in some way ~ or offend us ~ or act obnoxiously toward us ~ or have a bad attitude toward us, ~ or whatever.

→→ We, ~ like our heavenly Father, ~ are to be “slow to become angry.”

LASTLY, ~ IN VERSE 2d, ~ PAUL CALLS BELIEVERS TO BEAR “WITH ONE ANOTHER in love.”

WORD FOR “BEARING” MEANS TO PUT UP WITH WHEN FACED WITH SOMETHING disagreeable, ~ annoying, ~ or difficult, ~ ~ ↴↴

▶▶ to bear with in regard to the errors or weaknesses of anyone.

PAUL IS CALLING US HERE TO TOLERATE OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST.

▶▶ It means putting up with the things in others that would naturally produce reactions such as anger or resentment.

▶▶ It means not being irritated by people who are weak in faith. ~ ~ As Paul says in **Rom. 15:1**, ~ “We who are strong have an obligation ~ [moral requirement, ~ duty Paul says] ~ to bear ~ [to be patient] ~ with the failings of the weak, ~ and not to please ourselves.”

▶▶ We are to make allowances for each other's faults, ~ errors, ~ differences, ~ annoyances, ~ and our sometimes grating personality quirks.

AND THEN IN VERSE 2d PAUL TELLS US THE WAY WE ARE TO TOLERATE ONE another.

▶▶ Love is to be the controlling factor in our dealings with our fellow believers. ↴↴ 8/9



▶▶ And the kind of love that Paul is talking about seeks the highest good in the one loved.

▷▷ When we love our fellow believers with this kind of love, ~ it means that nothing that they can do will make us seek anything but their highest good.

▷▷ Loving with this kind of love will compel us to never feel any bitterness, ~ to never feel any desire for revenge, ~ but to always seek the highest good of all our brothers and sisters in Christ.

▷▷ When you boil it all down, ~ it means that we are to love our fellow believers the way Jesus loved us.

↪↪ In our unsaved state, ~ we demeaned Him, ~ blasphemed and sinned against Him, ~ insulted Him, ~ the list could go on and on.

↪↪ But Jesus didn't feel bitterness toward us, ~ He didn't seek revenge. ~ Instead, ~ He died for us, ~ so that we might have eternal life. ~ He indeed sought our highest good.

↪↪ And He still does. ~ When we sin against Him now, ~ 1 Jn. 1:9 tells us, ~ "If we confess our sins, ~ he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

↪↪ And when we have this kind of love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ we will do the same toward them.

### CONCLUSION.

SO, ~ IN VERSE 2, ~ PAUL SAYS TO US, ~ DISCIPLES OF JESUS, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ "As a result of all that God has done for and given you, ~ this great salvation and its accompanying blessings that I spelled out in the first three chapters of this letter, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ I, ~ a prisoner of the Lord, ~ urge you to be humble, ~ self-controlled, ~ slow to anger, ~ and tolerant of your fellow believers, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ behavior that will display the truth of chapters 1-3, ~ behavior that will bring honor and glory to our heavenly Father."

LET'S PRAY . . . . 9/9