

Ephesians 4 The Responsibility of Election pt. 1

Introduction

Reminder of some key points:

1. The doctrine of election is central to Paul's exhortations to the church. I have explained election in this way:
 - a. *"Election is for the purpose of making us God's people for the world, it is not for our own sakes."*
 - b. Election is the means by which man fulfills his purpose, the reason for which he was created – man's purpose is to:
 - Reflect the image of God in this world. Some theologians use image as a verb – we are to image God. This includes ruling, subduing, filling and cultivating the earth.
 - To do this for the glory of God.
2. Working outline for Ephesians:
 - a. Election explained (1:1-2:10)
 - b. The unity of the body of Christ (2:11-4:16) – the job of imaging God is not just an individual responsibility – it is the calling of the church. If the church is to fulfill its mandate it must be unified.
 - c. The responsibility of election (4:17-6:24) – what it looks like for the church to project the image of God.

Ephesians 4:1-32

We will divide this section into two parts; **4:1-16** which will be the final admonition concerning unity in the church. And **4:17-32** which will be the first exhortation regarding the responsibility of election.

I. Unity in the Church (4:1-17)

A. In chapter 4 Paul will say two things about unity in the church; the church is to:

1. Be eager to maintain the unity (4:3) – there is in fact only one body of Christ, this is true whether we recognize it or not, therefore the people of God have the responsibility of preserving unity. In 4:1-6 Paul will explain how unity is preserved.

2. Be faithful until it attains the unity (4:13) – preserved unity is not to be considered the end, because greater unity must be pursued that it might be attained.
- B. Preserve the unity (4:1-6) – for the purposes of our study I am going to work backwards through this section.
1. There is only of one body of Christ (4:4-6) – in these three verses Paul uses the word “one” 7 times in order to emphasize that there is one body of Christ. This body is made up of those who are the elect from before the foundation of the world. Obviously in the immediate context he is emphasizing the unity that existed between believing Jews and the Christians; a unity created by the death and resurrection of Christ.
 2. Preserving the unity of the Spirit (4:3)
 - a. Preserved unity is not the same as actual experimental unity. True unity comes when people are united in purpose and thought. Paul’s point throughout has been that his recipients were not united in thought and purpose, but that it was his desire that they would be. Here he is encouraging them to hold on together despite the fact that there was a lot that separated them.
 - b. Paul makes it clear that preserving the unity of the Spirit was something that must be done with diligence.
 3. The means by which unity is preserved (4:1-2)
 - a. Walk in a manner worthy of your calling (4:1) – while Paul has not yet clearly defined what this means, it does serve as an important principle.
 - b. Have certain attitudes which promote unity (4:2)
 4. A word about tolerance – Paul says that we are to show tolerance for one another but not tolerance as defined by today’s world. Today tolerance means that you assume that everyone is right even when their ideas of truth are contradictory. That is not biblical tolerance – biblical tolerance involves two things:
 - a. Assuming that you could be wrong – we are all being sanctified and therefore are not perfect. Our minds must submit to the Scriptures in all instances in order to be led by the truth.
 - b. Being kind to someone you know to be wrong.

As we will see in a moment, true unity is always built on the foundation of the truth, not on a denial of the truth. Modern views of tolerance seek to eliminate the truth for the sake of unity; this is not biblical.

C. Attain the unity of the faith (4:7-16)

1. The means by which unity is attained (4:7-13a)
 - a. The victory of Christ over Satan assures unity (4:7-10) This passage is sometimes quoted in order to prove that Jesus went to hell when He died but that is not what is being taught.
 - b. With His victory Christ gave gifts to the church which would ensure unity (4:11-12) – the gifts that are listed are not comprehensive but rather are the gifts which must be exercised in order to produce unity. All of them have to do with the word of God. With the proclamation of the word of God, saints are equipped to exercise their gift and thus fulfill their calling in the body of Christ.
2. The outcome of unity (4:13b-16)
 - a. Maturity (4:13b-14)
 - b. Proper working of the body (4:15-16)

II. Responsibility of Election (4:17-32)

A. General exhortation (4:17-24)

1. Negative command (4:17-19)
 1. Notice that the term Gentile is used as a pejorative to distinguish the people of God from those who are not in Christ.
 2. Paul makes it clear the kind of life believers should not be living. Believers must not:
 - a. Walk in the futility of their mind, darkened in their understanding.
 - b. Ignorant because of the hardness of their heart.
 - c. Callous and given over to sensuality, greed and impurity.
2. Positive command (4:20-24)
 1. Lay aside the old self
 2. Put on the new self – notice the language used to describe the new self “the likeness of God.” This takes us back to the purpose for our election – God’s people to the world, imaging God in our lives.

B. Specific exhortations (4:25-32)

1. Put away falsehood and speak truth (4:25)
2. Be angry yet do not sin (4:26-27)
 - a. Do not let the sun go down on your anger. In other words, deal with it immediately.
 - b. Don't give the devil an opportunity – people are often fearful of the work of the devil in their lives and often give him far more credit than he deserves. That being said however, Paul makes it clear that holding on to anger is a sure fire way to give the devil a foothold in your life.
3. Don't steal, but work honestly so you will have something to share (4:28)
4. Let no corrupting talk come from your mouth (4:29)
 - a. Speak words that build up and are fit for the occasion.
 - b. Speak words that give grace to those that hear.
5. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30) – this is probably best understood as being connected to the previous admonition; when are speech is filled with corrupting talk it grieves the Holy Spirit.
6. Let bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice be put away from you. This is in the passive voice which indicates that it is not something we do but is something that is done to us. This means we trust in God and His Spirit to conform us to the image of Christ. It is not something that happens by magic, it is to be our desire that God does this.
7. Be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving since God did the same for you.