

The Patio Pulpit For August 11, 2021 **“Keeping the Unity In the Body of Christ”**

Here is an interesting word, “squabble.” What does it mean? Here’s how Webster’s defines it: “a noisy altercation or quarrel usually over petty matters.” My first thought after reading the definition was “this sounds like it’s talking about children,” but then I realized it is just as fitting for many adults.

We have all heard the horror stories about the reasons some churches have experienced divisions and church splits. The color of the new carpet, padding on pews, which version of the Bible should their pew Bibles be, how much of church funds should go to building maintenance, something the new pastor said, etc., etc. I once sat in on a church meeting where several members got up and left the church never to return all because the ladies could not settle on the name the ladies group in that church should be named. Some wanted to keep the name they had had for years, while the others wanted to change the name to fit their 21st century mind-sets. That is the definition of “petty matters.”

Take your Bibles and turn to Ephesians chapter 4 and v.1 (repeat)

***Ephesians 4:1** Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,
² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,
³ being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

There have always been divisions and divisive people in the visible church. Eastway is no exception. Paul wrote the above to the church in Ephesus that was one of the most blessed churches in all of church history. But he still had to write this to them. And, being that this is the inspired word of God to the timeless and universal church, it is written to the congregation that gathers at Eastway Baptist Church. We are in a period where we must be on guard against potential divisive matters seething behind the scenes in our blessed congregation. But we can handle it. One way or another we can come to a consensus as to what should be done. Our goal is to maintain the unity of the Spirit at

Eastway. And when we keep in mind that goal, we will seek first the righteousness of God and His kingdom will for us. We must not become childish and petty by insisting on having our way, that includes yours truly.

Ephesians 4:1 *Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, and I as well, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,*

² *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,*

³ *being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

And just how can we walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, here's how.

² *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,*

That can be a tall order for any local church. Everyone in the visible church, or, for that matter, everyone in the true church, occupies these flesh and blood, mortal and corrupt bodies. We are all susceptible to the desires of the flesh. And until the day we stand in glory, either having died and gone immediately to be with the Lord, or are raptured into the heavens to be with the Lord and our loved ones forever, we will be susceptible to the corruption that is always present in these bodies "of this death" (Romans 7:24).

However, that is not the end of the story for those who are in Christ. We must not forget that we are born of the Spirit. We have the life-giving and power-giving Holy Spirit living within us. It's not a metaphor, it is literal and true.

because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Rom. 5:5 NAU)

¹³ *In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,*

3

¹⁴ *who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Eph. 1:13-14 NAU)*

⁹ *However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.*

¹⁰ *If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.*

¹¹ *But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Rom. 8:9-11 NAU)*

¹⁹ *and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might (Eph. 1:19 NAU)*

Beloved, we have the awesome power of the Spirit available to each of us. We can rise above our petty differences and we can rise above our more serious differences by seeking God's will for our congregation and our neighbors.

In Jesus' name. Amen.