

# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON LXII : UNITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE CONGREGATION OF BELIEVERS (4: 1-16)

*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (KJV)*

*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to one hope when you were called — one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (NIV)*

*Call upon you, then, do I – the prisoner of the Lord – to walk worthily of the calling with which ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of the peace; one body and one Spirit, according as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who [is] over all, and through all, and in you all, and to each one of you was given the grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, wherefore, he saith, ‘Having gone up on high he led captive captivity, and gave gifts to men,’ – and that, he went up, what is it except that he also went down first to the lower parts of the earth? he who went down is the same also who went up far above all the heavens, that He may fill all things – and He gave some [as] apostles, and some [as] prophets, and some [as] proclaimers of good news, and some [as] shepherds and teachers, unto the perfecting of the saints, for a work of ministration, for a building up of the body of the Christ, till we may all come to the unity of the faith and of the recognition of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to a measure of stature of the fulness of the Christ, that we may no more be babes, tossed and borne about by every wind of the teaching, in the sleight of men, in craftiness, unto the artifice of leading astray, and, being true in love, we may increase to Him [in] all things, who is the head – the Christ; from whom the whole body, being fitly joined together and united, through the supply of every joint, according to the working in the measure of each single part, the increase of the body doth make for the building up of itself in love. (Young’s Literal Translation)*

## PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

**v. 1 reminds us again that Paul is a prisoner and employs one of his favorite phrases for introducing ethical instruction:**

<sup>1</sup> I call upon you (or, I beseech you, I exhort you, I beg you), I, the prisoner of Christ (“I” is emphatic),

to live worthy of the calling with which you were called,

**vv. 2,3 set out in a general way how readers are to respond if the unity of the church is to be preserved:**

<sup>2</sup> with all humility (or, lowliness) and gentleness (or, meekness),

*with patience (or, long-suffering),*

*putting up with (or, 'bearing with, forbearing, showing tolerance') one another in love,*

<sup>3</sup> *making every effort (or, 'working zealously, giving diligence, endeavoring, being eager') to preserve (or, maintain, keep that which already exists) the unity of the Spirit*

*by means of the bond which is peace.*

***vv. 4-6 pick up the theme of unity, providing a series of declarations in each of which unity is stressed through the use of the word 'one' and God's total government through the use of 'all' (v. 4 contains no verb and simply begins 'one body and one Spirit...'; the words 'there is' are often added for the sake of a smoother translation):***

<sup>4</sup> *One body and*

*one Spirit*

*just as you were also called in one hope of your calling (or, to the one hope of your calling),*

<sup>5</sup> *one Lord,*

*one faith,*

*one baptism,*

<sup>6</sup> *one God and Father of all*

*who is over all (or, above all)*

*and through all*

*and in all.*

***vv. 7-16 speaks to diversity within the unity; some of what makes us differ is our gifts as distributed by the sovereign hand of Jesus Christ Himself. In vv. 7-10 Paul begins with a proof-text showing Christ has the right to dispense gifts as He wills:***

<sup>7</sup> *However grace has been given to each one of us ('but, however' is a subtle change and not a 'strong adversative', what one commentator called a 'transitional contrast')*

*in accordance with the measure of the gift of Christ (or, in the proportion allotted by Christ's giving);*

<sup>8</sup> *therefore it says:*

*Ascending on high he led captives captive (or, when he ascended on high he led captivity captive, he led a host of prisoners captive);*

*he gave gifts to men.*

<sup>9</sup> *And what significance has 'He ascended'*

*unless he also descended [first] into the lower regions,*

*that is, the earth? (or, into the lower regions of the earth)*

<sup>10</sup> *He who descended is himself also the one who ascended above all the heavens,*

*so that he might fill all things. (or, to fill everything, to fill the cosmos, to fill the universe)*

***Having earned the right to dispense gifts as He pleases, Paul shows what Christ gave (v. 11) and why (vv. 12-16):***

<sup>11</sup> *And he himself gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be shepherds and teachers,*

***Although there are questions on the syntax of v. 12, it most likely describes three aspects of the purpose of these gifts:***

<sup>12</sup> *for the equipping of the saints (or, for perfecting the saints, for bringing the saints to completion)*

*for the work of the ministry,*

*for the building up of the body of Christ,*

***(Those disagreeing with the above syntax believes the verse should be written as follows:***

<sup>12</sup> *for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry,*

*for the building up of the body of Christ)*

***A temporal clause ('until') further clarifies in terms of the goal, using again three prepositional phrases:***

<sup>13</sup> *until we all attain (or, arrive at)*

*into the unity of faith and knowledge of the son of God,*

*into a mature male* (literal; but the sense is ‘to a mature person’ in contrast with ‘immature children’ in the next verse),

*into the measure* (or, to the standard) of the stature (or, the age, the maturity) of fullness of Christ,

**This purpose is now described first negatively (v. 14) and then positively (v. 15). Negatively, there is a need to move away from the present immaturity:**

<sup>14</sup> in order that (hina) we may no longer (or, cease) be very young children (or, infants, babes),

tossed back and forth by the waves,

and blown here and there by every wind of teaching,

in the craftiness of men (or, in human cunning), in craftiness (or, by trickery) towards the scheming of error (or, in deceitful scheming, plotting),

**Positively we are to grow up into our Head, Jesus Christ:**

<sup>15</sup> rather speaking truth in love (or, by ‘truthing’; the sense may not be limited to verbal use only)

let us grow in every respect unto him,

who is the head, Christ,

**Paul concludes by summarizing the already mentioned purposes of the growth and building up of the body, while underlining the fact that these processes have their source in Christ and require the activity of each part of the body:**

<sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body,

fitted and held together (or, joined and brought together)

through every ligament of supply (or, gives supply),

makes bodily growth

according to the activity in proportion of each individual part,

achieves bodily growth

into its own building up in love (or, for the purpose of building itself up in love).

## vv. 2, 3 INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

**BRIDGE BETWEEN ‘QUALITIES OF CHARACTER WHICH WORK FOR UNITY’ TO ‘A PLEA FOR ITS PRESERVATION’** — “The apostle has urged his readers to display humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, and love since they are necessary to achieve the aim of the exhortation: *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Without these graces which are essential to their life together, they would have no hope of maintaining the unity of the Spirit, a unity in the body of Christ about which Paul is deeply concerned.*” [O’Brien, 279] “As a prisoner in the Lord, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to maintain a lifestyle worthy of their call to salvation and to the body of believers. Their lives should demonstrate humility, gentleness, and patience, which are accomplished by forbearing one another in love and making every effort to preserve the unity that comes from the Holy Spirit. Paul had explained in chapters 2 and 3 the work of the three persons of the Trinity in accomplishing this unity. His next topic will deal with the elements of unity that are centered on the Trinity.” [Hoehner, 513]

**LIFE WITHIN THE CHURCH BODY** — “In vv. 2, 3 [Paul] outlines in general terms, using two prepositional phrases and two participial clauses, the nature of worthy living in relation to life within the Christian community rather than within society as a whole.... The qualities which [Paul] has selected in v. 2 lead appropriately into a discussion of unity. [‘One another’] indicates that it is the relationship of members to one another that is above all important in what is to follow.” [Best, 361f]

**CREDIT** — It has been observed that *‘plagiarism is copying another’s work, research is copying many people’s work.’* Giving credit where credit is due, today’s lesson is heavily dependent upon the following authors: Abbott, 105–107; Alford, 113; Best, 361–366; Bruce, 334f; Calvin, 267–268; Hodge, 140–143; Hoehner, 505–513; Lincoln, 235–238; Moule, 103–104; Muddiman, 179–181; O’Brien, 276–280; Salmond, 320–321; Snodgrass, 196–198, 209, 210; Thielman, 253–255.

**v. 2 — with all lowliness** — μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης [meta pasēs tapeinophrosunēs]

**‘ALL’ LOWLINESS** — the adjective ‘all’ modifies both humility and gentleness. While Hoehner suggests it is best to render this ‘all humility and gentleness’, others suggest it has the sense of ‘all possible lowliness’ or ‘every kind of lowliness’ and not what might be called ‘*summa humilitas*’ (‘a summation of lowliness, humility’ or ‘full, total lowliness’).

**USED 7X IN NT** — It appears seven times in the NT (Acts 20:19; Eph 4:2; Phil 2:3; Col 2:18, 23; 3:12; 1 Pet 5:5).

*'serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews'* (Acts 20:19; note this verse has the exact same wording as Eph 3:2)

*'Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.'* (Phil 2:3)

*'Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind'* (Col 2:18)

*'These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.'* (Col 2:23)

*'Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering'* (Col 3:12)

*'Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."' (1Pet 5:5; note the final 'humble' is not our exact word but is a form of our word)*

**DEROGATORY IN THE SECULAR WORLD** — This first virtue in the list would probably have surprised Gentile readers when as Christians they first encountered it. While it is of rare occurrence in non-Biblical Greek, when found in the Greco-Roman world it normally carried a derogatory sense of contemptible servility, weakness, timidity, cowardliness or even breaking the spirit of others. *Found in several of the commentaries was a quote from the Greek Stoic philosopher Epictetus (AD 55–135) who listed this the first among the qualities not to be commended. It was thought to be the attitude of a slave.* Like ancient Greek culture, our society often views humility, meekness, and gentleness in negative terms.

**THIS DEROGATORY USAGE FOUND IN NT** — this base meaning of the root is found in the NT:

*'Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.'* (Rom 12:16)

*'But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus'* (2Cor 7:6)

*'I fear that when I come again my God may humble me [may humiliate me, NASV; abase me, Geneva] before you, and I may have to mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced.'* (2 Cor 12:21)

*'who will transform our lowly body [body of our humiliation, YLT, RV, ASV; our vile body, KJV; the body of our humble state, NASV] to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.'* (Phil 3:21)

*'Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away.'* (James 1:9, 10)

**OT USAGE** — '*Lowliness*' took on positive connotations in Jewish thought where it is associated with the piety of the poor, and *there are numerous OT references to God's activity in bringing down the proud and arrogant and exalting the humble*. In the Old Testament the adjective '*lowly, humble*' and its cognates occur more than 250 times. The prophets express it in warnings of judgment, the historical books spell it out with reference to events, the psalmists mention the theme in their prayers, and in the proverbs of the wisdom literature '*humility*' is the fruit of experience and the rule of life, occasionally being paralleled with 'the fear of the LORD'.

**CONTRASTING WORDS** — our word is literally '*lowliness of mind*,' to be contrasted therefore with being high-minded or haughty. In Phil 2:3 it is contrasted with '*self-seeking, selfish ambition*' and '*vainglorious boasting, empty conceit*.' In 1 Pet 5:5 it is contrasted with the proud.

**OUR ENGLISH WORD 'HUMILITY'** — While researching this lesson I made an interesting discovery as to where our English word '*humility*' is derived. It comes from the Latin '*humilis*' which could be translated '*humble*' but also could be translated '*grounded, from the earth*' since its derivation is from '*humus*' (= earth).

**USED OF CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIPS IN OUR VERSE** — Though '*lowliness of mind*' is often used to describe a proper relationship to God, in our verse the context is the relationship of Christians to one another. **"Nothing is more destructive of group unity than that some should assert either themselves or their particular point of view."** [Best, 362]

**JESUS IS THE PRIME EXAMPLE** — Jesus is its prime example (Mk 10.45), though it would be wrong to imagine that Paul is actually thinking here of Jesus' earthly example; when his humility is stressed in the Pauline corpus, it relates to his descent from heaven (2 Cor 8.9; Phil 2.5, 8).

*'Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.'* (Matt 11:29 NKJV; uses a form of the same word)

**HUMILITY IS NOT SELF-DEPRECIATION** — **"Humility is not self-depreciation, nor the suppression of the feeling,**

*'I'm important'; it is regarding oneself as unimportant because in the end one is so in relation to the group; it leads to recognising the genuine Christian existence of others and their importance.*" [Best, 363] *"If a man is really greater than others in any quality or attainment, moral, intellectual, or spiritual, does the obligation of humility bind him to think falsely that he is less than they? It is no doubt true that the more a man advances in knowledge or in spiritual insight, the higher his ideal becomes, and so the more sensibly he feels how far he comes short of it. This is one aspect of humility, but it is not [lowliness of mind']. And St. Paul is speaking of humility as a Christian social virtue. St. Paul declares himself to be [not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles, 2 Cor 11:5], and in the same breath says that he humbled himself; he even exhorts his readers to imitate him, and yet he attributes this very virtue to himself, Acts xx. 19. And what of our Lord Himself, who was meek and lowly in heart? One who knows himself greater in relation to others, but who is contented to be treated as if he were less, such a one is certainly entitled to be called humble-minded; he exhibits [this 'lowliness of mind']."* [Abbott, 105] The verses cited by T. K. Abbott:

*'serving the Lord with all humility (note: this is the exact same wording as found in Eph 4:1), with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews' (Acts 20:19)*

Yet while 'humble', Paul could also say:

*'For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles.'* (2 Cor 11:5)

*'Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.'* (1 Cor 11:1)

**A PROPER EVALUATION OF ONESELF** — *'Lowliness of mind' springs from a true estimate of ourselves, a deep sense of our own moral smallness and demerit. This is an inward attitude which is totally opposite of our natural Adamic nature. It only comes from the Holy Spirit opening our hearts and minds to the true condition of our sinful hearts. It is founded on the consciousness of guilt and weakness. While not using our word itself, Paul's statement accurately sums up the intent:*

*'For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.'* (Rom 12:3)

Elsewhere Paul makes a similar statement:

*'For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?'* (1 Cor 4:7)

*"In Phil 2:3 Paul describes it further as the ability to count others as better than oneself and gives it a specifically Christian coloring when he illustrates this from the pattern of Christ's existence (cf. Phil 2:6-11). It should be clear that this virtue that is indispensable for Christian community (cf. also 1 Pet 5:5) assumes a proper sense of self-worth, not weakness of character, and that a proper evaluation of oneself is based on a realization of one's own dependence on the grace of God and on the worth of one's brothers and sisters in his eyes."* [Lincoln, 236] *"Humility too frequently is misunderstood as passivity and antithetical to success, but this is a distortion. Humility is not about drive, energy, or ability, but about valuing. It is an awareness that all we are and have is from God. The humble person refuses to value self above others or to assign more privilege or importance to self than to others. Humility is essential for good relations and avoiding sin, so much so that Ignatius said, by it 'the prince of this world is brought to nothing.' Egotism, on the other hand, is an idolatry of the self, the failure to realize that God is the pattern for life, not us."* [Snodgrass, 209f]

**SIGNIFICANT IT IS LISTED FIRST** — It is significant that this virtue is listed first, possibly because Paul is emphasizing unity — pride provokes disunity whereas humility engenders unity. *"Observe the moral lesson here. The first and most characteristic effect of the heights and depths of Divine privilege and spiritual experience just unfolded is to be the sincerest and most unselfish humility."* [Moule, 103] *"Let us remember, therefore, that, in cultivating brotherly kindness, we must begin with humility. Whence come rudeness, pride, and disdainful language towards brethren? Whence come quarrels, insults, and reproaches? Come they not from this, that every one carries his love of himself, and his regard to his own interests, to excess? By laying aside haughtiness and a desire of pleasing ourselves, we shall become meek and gentle, and acquire that moderation of temper which will overlook and forgive many things in the conduct of our brethren."* [Calvin, 267]

**EVIDENCE OF THE NEW BIRTH** — *"To be raised from the depths of degradation and misery and made the sons of God, and thus exalted to an inconceivable elevation and dignity, does and must produce humility and meekness. Where these effects are not found, we may conclude the exaltation has not taken place."* [Hodge, 140]



**MacARTHUR ON HUMILITY** — Tapeinophrosune (humility) is a compound word that literally means to think or judge with lowliness, and hence to have lowliness of mind....

But humility is the most foundational Christian virtue. We cannot even begin to please God without humility, just as our Lord Himself could not have pleased His Father had He not willingly "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and ... humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:7-8).

Yet humility is terribly elusive, because if focused on too much it will turn into pride, its very opposite. Humility is a virtue to be highly sought but never claimed, because once claimed it is forfeited. Only Jesus Christ, as the perfectly obedient Son, could

justifiably claim humility for Himself. “Take My yoke upon you,” He said, “for I am gentle and humble in heart” (Mat. 11:29). He came to earth as God’s Son, yet was born in a stable, raised in a peasant family, never owned property except the garments on His back, and was buried in a borrowed tomb. At any time He could have exercised His divine rights, prerogatives, and glory, but in obedience and humility He refused to do so because it would have been to go outside His Father’s will. If the Lord of glory walked in humility while He was on earth, how much more are His imperfect followers to do so? “The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked” (1 John 2:6).

Although humility is at the heart of Christian character, no virtue is more foreign to the world’s ways. The world exalts pride, not humility. Throughout history, fallen human nature, ruled by Satan, the prince of this world, has shunned humility and advocated pride. For the most part humility has been looked on as weakness and impotence, something ignoble to be despised. People unashamedly claim to be proud of their jobs, their children, their accomplishments, and on and on. Society loves to recognize and praise those who have accomplished something outstanding. Ostentation, boasting, parading, and exalting are the world’s stock in trade.

Unfortunately the church often reflects that worldly perspective and pattern, building many programs and organizations around the superficial enticements of awards, trophies, and public recognition. We seem to have found a way to encourage boasting that is “acceptable,” because such boasting is done in the name of the gospel. But in doing so we contradict the very gospel we claim to promote, because the hallmark of the gospel is humility, not pride and self-exaltation. God’s work cannot be served by the world’s ways. God’s call is to humility and His work is only accomplished through humility.

The first sin was pride, and every sin after that has been in some way an extension of pride. Pride led the angel Lucifer to exalt himself above his Creator and Lord. Because the bright “star of the morning” continually said, “I will, I will, I will” in opposition to God’s will, he was cast out of heaven (Isa. 14:12-23). Because he said, “I am a god,” the Lord cast him “from the mountain of God” (Ezek. 28:11-19). The original sin of Adam and Eve was pride, trusting in their own understanding above God’s (Gen. 3:6-7). The writer of Proverbs warns, “When pride comes, then comes dishonor” (11:2), “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling” (16:18), and again “Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, is sin” (21:4).

Isaiah warned, “The proud look of man will be abased, and the loftiness of man will be humbled, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day” (Isa. 2:11; cf. 3:16-26). “Behold, I am against you, O arrogant one:” God declared against Babylon, “For your day has come, the time when I shall punish you. And the arrogant one will stumble and fall with no one to raise him up” (Jer. 50:31-32). The Last chapter of the Old Testament begins, “For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff” (Mal. 4:1). The Beatitudes begin with “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3), and James assures us that “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6; cf. Ps. 138:6).

Pride is the supreme temptation from Satan, because pride is at the heart of his own evil nature. Consequently, Satan makes sure that the Christian is never entirely free from the temptation of pride. ***We will always be in a battle with pride until the Lord takes us to be with Himself. Our only protection against pride, and our only source of humility, is a proper view of God.*** Pride is the sin of competing with God, and humility is the virtue of submitting to His supreme glory.

Pride comes in many forms. We may be tempted to be proud of our abilities, our possessions, our education, our social status, our appearance, our power, and even our biblical knowledge or religious accomplishments. But throughout Scripture the Lord calls His people to humility. “Before honor comes humility” (Prov. 15:33); “The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honor and life” (22:4); “Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips” (27:2).

***Humility is an ingredient of all spiritual blessing. Just as every sin has its roots in pride, every virtue has its roots in humility. Humility allows us to see ourselves as we are, because it shows us before God as He is.*** Just as pride is behind every conflict we have with other people and every problem of fellowship we have with the Lord, so humility is behind every harmonious human relationship, every spiritual success, and every moment of joyous fellowship with the Lord.

During the days of slavery in the West Indies, a group of Moravian Christians found it impossible to witness to the slaves because they were almost totally separated from the ruling class—many of whom felt it beneath them even to speak to a slave. Two young missionaries, however, were determined to reach those oppressed peoples at any cost. In order to fulfill God’s calling they joined the slaves. They worked and lived beside the slaves, becoming totally identified with them—sharing their overwork, their beatings, and their abuse. It is not strange that the two missionaries soon won the hearts of those slaves, many of whom accepted for themselves the God who could move men to such loving selflessness.

***A person cannot even become a Christian without humility, without recognizing himself as a sinner and worthy only of God’s just condemnation.*** “Truly I say to you,” Jesus said, “unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself...” (Matt. 18:3-4). At the height of his own fame and recognition as a prophet, John the Baptist said of Jesus, “I am not fit to remove His sandals” (Matt. 3:11) and “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Martha was busy doing many things supposedly for Jesus sake, but on three different occasions we see Mary simply sitting humbly at Jesus’ feet. In all four gospels the writers hide themselves and focus attention on Jesus. How easy it would have been for them to subtly include accounts favorable to themselves. Matthew identifies himself as a despised tax-collector, which none of the other gospel writers does. On the other hand, he does not mention the feast that he gave for his fellow tax-collectors to meet Jesus. Because of Matthew’s humility, it was left to Luke to write about that.

Mark probably wrote under the tutelage of Peter, and possibly because of that apostle’s influence he does not report two of the most amazing things that happened to Peter during Jesus’ ministry — his walking on water and his confession of Jesus as the

Christ, the Son of the living God. John never mentions his own name, referring to himself simply as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

In a compilation of old quotes is an excellent paragraph written by Thomas Guthrie:

The grandest edifices, the tallest towers, the loftiest spires rest on deep foundations. The very safety of eminent gifts and preeminent graces lies in their association with deep humility. They are dangerous without it. Great men do need to be good men. Look at the mighty ship. A leviathan into the sea, with her towering masts and carrying a cloud of canvas. How she steadies herself on the waves and walks erect on the rolling waters like a thing with inherent, self-regulating life.... Why is she not flung on her beam's end, sent down floundering into the deep? Because unseen beneath the surface a vast well-ballasted hull gives her balance and takes hold of the water, keeps her steady under a pressive sail and on the bosom of a swelling sea. Even though to preserve the saint upright, to preserve the saint erect and safe from falling, God gives him balance and ballast bestowing on the man to whom He has given lofty endowments, the tendant grace of a proportionate humility.

**Humility begins with proper self-awareness, “the virtue,” said Bernard of Clairvaux, “by which a man becomes conscious of his own unworthiness.” It begins with an honest, unadorned, unretouched view of oneself. The first thing the honest person sees in himself is sin, and therefore one of the surest marks of true humility is daily confession of sin.** “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9). “We are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves,” Paul says; “but when they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding” (2 Cor. 10:12). It is not only unspiritual but unintelligent to judge ourselves by comparison with others. We all tend to exaggerate our own good qualities and minimize the good qualities of others. Humility takes off our rose-colored glasses and allows us to see ourselves as we really are. We are not “adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves,” says Paul, “but our adequacy is from God” (2 Cor. 3:5).

**Second, humility involves Christ-awareness.** He is the only standard by which righteousness can be judged and by which pleasing God can be judged. Our goal should be no less than “to walk in the same manner as He walked” (1 John 2:6), and Jesus Christ walked in perfection. Only of Jesus has God ever said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Matt. 3:17).

**Third, humility involves God-awareness.** As we study His life in the gospels we come to see Jesus more and more in His human perfection—His perfect humility, His perfect submission to the Father, His perfect love, compassion, and wisdom. But beyond His human perfection we also come to see His divine perfection—His limitless power; His knowing the thoughts and heart of every person; and His authority to heal diseases, cast out demons, and even forgive sins. We come to see Jesus Christ as Isaiah saw the Lord, “sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted” and we want to cry out with the seraphim, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory,” and with the prophet himself, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isa. 6:1, 3, 5).

When Paul looked at himself in self-awareness, he saw the foremost of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). When Peter looked at himself in Christ awareness, he said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). When Job looked at himself in God awareness, he said, “Therefore I retract, I repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6).

Our business success, fame, education, wealth, personality, good works, or anything else we are or have in ourselves counts for nothing before God. The more we rely on and glory in such things, the greater barrier they become to our communion with God. Every person comes before the Lord with nothing to commend him and everything to condemn him. But when he comes with the spirit of the penitent tax-collector, saying, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner,” God will willingly and lovingly accept him. “For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:13-14). [MacArthur, 120ff]

**and gentleness — καὶ πραΰτητος, [kai praotētos]**

**JOINED WITH FIRST TERM IN OTHER PLACES —** this second word is used in two other places with our first word:

*‘Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.’* (Matt 11:29)

*‘Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering’* (Col 3:12)

**“The two terms [humility + gentleness] together, then, refer to an attitude that both recognizes one’s true position before God (a suppliant in need of his help) and is willing to be kind and gracious to others even when circumstances might excuse one from showing these qualities.”** [Thielman, 254]

**DEFINITION —** this word is translated as gentleness, meekness’ and defined as *‘before God, accepting His dealings in humility, and before men, as God’s instruments.’ It requires the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance. “Meekness is that unresisting, uncomplaining disposition of mind, which enables us to bear without irritation or resentment the faults and injuries of others. It is the disposition of which the lamb, dumb before the shearers, is the symbol, and which was one of the most wonderful of all the virtues of the Son of God. The most exalted of all beings was the gentlest.”*

[Hodge, 141] “The Greek word imports gentle and entire submission under trial, whatever the trial be, in the consciousness that no other attitude can be right for self. Meekness thus rests ‘on deeper foundations than its own, namely on those which lowliness has laid for it, and it can only continue while it continues to rest on these.’ In this respect ‘it is a grace in advance of lowliness.’” [Moule, 104]

**NOT A NATURAL DISPOSITION BUT A FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** — It is a grace of the Spirit, the disposition of loving submissiveness in the first place to God and His dealings with us, and, as the consequence of that, of quiet restraint and mildness when provoked by others. “*A fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5.23) it is active in promoting unity and does not just seek to avoid trouble by ignoring what is wrong or taking things lying down. Such a gentleness towards others comes in part from an awareness of one’s own sin.*” [Best, 363]

**HAD A GOOD SECULAR USAGE** — this word had a good sense in non-biblical Greek and was commended by secular authors such as Aristotle and Marcus Aurelius. In the discussion of virtues, Aristotle makes the distinction between intellectual virtues and moral virtues, and he categorizes this word as a moral virtue along with temperateness. In describing this word Aristotle states that it is the balance between ‘excessive anger against everyone and on all occasions’ and ‘never being angry with anything.’ Christianity took this deeper however, a thing to be sought and cherished. Pagan ethics, at best, just recognized it as right where necessary but not as good and happy per se. Some ancients regarded it simply as the opposite of savageness.

**OT USAGE** — In the LXX it occurs only nine times and in the canonical books it appears only three times where it combines ideas of humbleness and righteousness (Pss 45:4 [MT 45:5; LXX 44:5]; 90:10 [LXX 89:10]; 132:1 [LXX 131:1]; Sir 3:17; 4:8). Like ‘lowliness’ above, it was associated with the poor and oppressed in the OT who in their deep need humbly sought help from the Lord.

**USED IN NT TO APPROACH OPPONENTS / APOSTATES / UNSAVED** — In the NT this word appears eleven times and only in the epistles. It is often depicted as the virtue with which to approach opponents and those who have strayed from the faith and also the quality with which to treat those outside the church:

*‘What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?’ (1 Cor 4:21)*

*‘Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ — who in presence am lowly among you, but being absent am bold toward you.’ (2 Cor 10:1)*

*‘Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.’ (Gal 6:1)*

*‘with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth’ (2 Tim 2:25)*

*‘To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.’ (Titus 3:2)*

*‘But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear’ (1 Pet 3:15)*

Other places in the NT where this is used:

*‘But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.’ (Gal 5:22,23)*

*‘Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience’ (Col 3:12)*

*‘Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.’ (James 1:21)*

*‘Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.’ (James 3:13)*

As mentioned above, ‘gentleness’ is sometimes explained as ‘meekness toward God and toward men; the spirit which never rises in insubordination against God, nor in resentment against man.’ But that must be balanced with the above verses speaking of confronting those in error.

**CHARACTERISTIC OF CHRIST** — Paul recognizes it as a characteristic of Christ in 2 Cor 10:1 (quoted above) and exhorts the Corinthians on the basis of His example. Jesus Himself said He was ‘gentle and lowly in heart’ (Matt 11:29).

**NOT WEAKNESS** — While the Greco–Roman world regarded ‘gentleness’ with ‘weakness’, this is not the usage in the Scriptures. Paul asked the Corinthians if they wanted him to come to them with a rod or in the spirit of gentleness (1 Cor 4:21). He later speaks of the gentleness of Christ (2 Cor 10:1). Jesus was gentle and humble in heart (Matt 11:29) but not weak. This is illustrated by his display of anger toward Jews who had transformed the temple into a den of thieves (Matt 21:12-13). Likewise, Moses cannot be construed as weak, demonstrated by his wrath when he descended from the mountain and found Israel sinning against God by their creation of the golden calf (Exod 32). Yet he was more ‘gentle’ than anyone else on earth (Num 12:3). The word has to do with consideration for others and a willingness to waive one’s rights but never due to weakness.



**USAGE** — *“It involves the courtesy, considerateness, and willingness to waive one’s rights that come from seeking the common good without being concerned for personal reputation or gain. [Lincoln, 236] “Meekness relates to the manner in which we receive injuries. We are to bear them patiently, and not to retaliate, or seek revenge. The meaning here is, that we adorn the gospel when we show its power in enabling us to bear injuries without anger or a desire of revenge, or with a mild and forgiving spirit.” [Barnes’ NT Notes] It implies the conscious exercise of self-control, exhibiting a conscious choice of gentleness as opposed to the use of power for the purpose of retaliation. Barclay states it well when he writes, “The man who is [‘meek’] is the man who is always angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time.” This term is used of the taming and training of animals. For instance, controlled by the master’s will, a well trained dog is always angry at the master’s foes and never angry at the master’s friends. Only the person who is controlled by the Spirit of God can truly be gentle—angry at the right time and never angry at the wrong time. When such a person is wronged, he or she does not seek revenge, but when a wrong has been committed toward a brother or sister, or the body of believers, he or she has the power to address the situation. In Ephesus, where there was the probability of great differences between believing Jews and Gentiles, believers needed to have both humility and gentleness.*



**MacARTHUR ON GENTLENESS** — Humility always produces gentleness, or meekness. Meekness is one of the surest signs of true humility. You cannot possess meekness without humility, and you cannot possess meekness with pride. Because pride and humility are mutually exclusive, so are pride and meekness, or gentleness.

Many dictionaries define meekness in terms such as “timid,” or “a deficiency in courage or spirit”; but that is far from the biblical meaning. Praotes (here translated gentleness) refers to that which is mild-spirited and self-controlled, the opposite of vindictiveness and vengeance. Jesus used the adjective form in giving the third beatitude (“Blessed are the gentle,” Matt. 5:5) and to describe His own character (“For I am gentle,” Matt. 11:29). Gentleness is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23) and should characterize every child of God (Col. 3:12; cf. Phil. 4:5).

The meaning of praotes has nothing to do with weakness, timidity, indifference, or cowardice. It was used of wild animals that were tamed, especially of horses that were broken and trained. Such an animal still has his strength and spirit, but its will is under the control of its master. The tamed lion is still powerful, but his power is under the control of his trainer. The horse can run just as fast, but he runs only when and where his master tells him to run.

**Meekness is power under control. Biblical meekness, or gentleness, is power under the control of God.** A meek person is normally quiet, soothing, and mild mannered, and he is never avenging, self-assertive, vindictive, or self-defensive. When the soldiers came to arrest Him in the Garden of Gethsemane and Peter drew his sword to defend His Lord, Jesus said, “Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt. 26:53). Even in His humanity Jesus had access to infinite divine power, which He could at any time have used in His own defense. Yet not once did He choose to do so. His refusal to enlist divine resources for anything but obeying His Father’s will is the supreme picture of meekness-power under control.

David displayed such meekness when he refused to kill King Saul in the cave near Engedi, although he had easy opportunity and considerable justification from the human point of view (1 Sam. 24:1-7). After David himself became king, he again showed the restraint of meekness when he refused to retaliate against the malicious taunts, curses, and stone throwing of Shimei (2 Sam. 16:5-14).

Moses is described as, “very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). Yet he fearlessly confronted Pharaoh in the Lord’s name (see Ex. 5-12), angrily confronted Israel with her rebelliousness and idolatry (32:19-29), and even boldly confronted the Lord to forgive the people’s sin (32:11-13, 30-32). Yet Moses’ confidence was not in himself but in the Lord’s character and promises. When God first called him, Moses replied, “Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since Thou hast spoken to Thy servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue” (4:10). As he served the Lord throughout his life, Moses had God’s rod to remind him that the great work to which the Lord had called him could be accomplished only in the Lord’s own power. That he himself was nothing and God was everything were the marks of Moses meekness. As Martyn Lloyd-Jones has observed, **“To be meek means you have finished with yourself altogether.”**

Yet the meek person is also capable of righteous anger and action when God’s Word or name is maligned, as Jesus was when His Father’s house was made into a robber’s den and He forcibly drove out the offenders (Matt. 21:13). As Paul affirms later in this letter, it is possible to be angry and not sin (Eph. 4:26). Like the Lord Himself, the meek person does not revile in return when he is reviled (1 Pet. 2:23). When the meek person becomes angry, he is aroused by that which maligns God or is harmful to others, not by what is done against himself. And his anger is controlled and carefully directed, not a careless and wild venting of emotion that spatters everyone who is near.

**One of the marks of true meekness is self-control. People who are angered at every nuisance or inconvenience to themselves know nothing of meekness or gentleness.** “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city” (Prov. 16:32). Two other marks of meekness, already mentioned, are anger at God’s name or work being maligned and lack of anger when we ourselves are harmed or criticized.

The meek person responds willingly to the Word of God, no matter what the requirements or consequences, humbly receiving “the

word implanted” (James 1:21). He is also a peacemaker, who readily forgives and helps to restore a sinning brother (Gal. 6:1). Finally, the person who is truly meek and gentle according to God’s standards has the right attitude toward the unsaved. He does not look down on them with a feeling of superiority but longs for their salvation, knowing that he himself was once lost-and would still be lost but for God’s grace. We are to be “ready to make a defense to everyone who asks [us] to give an account for the hope that is in [us], yet with gentleness (praotes) and reverence” (1 Pet. 3:15). Not only Christian women but all believers should be adorned “with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Pet. 3:4). [MacArthur, 124ff]

**with longsuffering — μετὰ μακροθυμίας [meta makrothumias]**

**THE SECOND PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE** — This second preposition phrase contains only one quality, ‘longsuffering.’ This is probably parallel with the previous prepositional phrase since they both begin with the same preposition (μετὰ, meta) and therefore both define how the believer is to walk ‘in accordance with his call.’

**LITERAL MEANING** — Note the configuration of this word, macro, ‘long’ + thumos, ‘temper.’ It is in contrast to a short temper and can have the sense of steadfastness or forbearance. Since relationships with others are in view, it is the latter sense that is relevant here as the following clause also makes clear. It consists in not taking swift vengeance but leaving to an offender a place for repentance.

**TWO USAGES** — ‘Makrothumias’ has two senses, the first being *steadfastness, especially in enduring illness, suffering and trouble* (e.g., Plutarch, ‘Never ask from God freedom from trouble, but *makrothumia*’). “For the believer, patience is that cautious endurance that does not abandon hope. It pertains to waiting patiently without immediate results, like the farmer who waits for his harvest and the OT prophets who waited for God’s action (Jas 5:7-11). It includes patient endurance while awaiting the inheritance of the promises even as Abraham had (Heb 6:12-15).” [Hoehner, 508f] The second usage is *slowness in avenging wrongs, forbearance*. The latter usage is more prevalent in the NT and the emphasis in our verse. “Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy, and is used of God, Ex 34:6; Rom 2:4; 1 Pet 3:20. Patience is the quality that does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial; it is the opposite of despondency and is associated with hope, 1 Thess. 1:3; it is not used of God.” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of NT Words, 377)

**SECULAR USAGE** — The noun form of this word is late and rare in the classical writings. It is used for a person’s endurance of grief or the indomitable patience of the inhabitants of a city under siege who plant turnips and hope to eat the ripened result before the city’s ultimate defeat. It is not very significant in secular Greek.

**OT USAGE** — This word is used in the LXX to describe the patience of rulers and saints, and the patience or forbearance of God with sinful humanity: ‘*The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness*’ (Ex 34:6). The Hebrew word which this translates means ‘to delay the outbreak of his wrath.’ As seen in 1 Macc 8:4, Rome epitomized this kind of patience: ‘makrothumia expresses there that Roman persistency which would never make peace under defeat.’

**NT USAGE** — In the NT this exact same word occurs fourteen times, ten times in Paul’s writings (one of them being Eph 4:2):

*‘or the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, dost thou despise? — not knowing that the goodness of God doth lead thee to reformation!’* (Rom 2:4)

*‘And if God, willing to shew the wrath and to make known His power, did endure, in much long suffering, vessels of wrath fitted for destruction’* (Rom 9:22)

*‘in pureness, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in love unfeigned’* (2 Cor 6:6)

*‘And the fruit of the Spirit is: Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith’* (Gal 5:22)

*‘in all might being made mighty according to the power of His glory, to all endurance and long-suffering with joy.’* (Col 1:11)

*‘Put on, therefore, as choice ones of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humble-mindedness, meekness, long-suffering’* (Col 3:12)

*‘but because of this I found kindness, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern of those about to believe on him to life age-during’* (1 Tim 1:16)

*‘And thou — thou hast followed after my teaching, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, endurance’* (2 Tim 3:10)

*‘preach the word; be earnest in season, out of season, convict, rebuke, exhort, in all long-suffering and teaching’* (2 Tim 4:2)

Note in Rom 2:4 and 9:22 it exhibits the staying of God’s wrath, which indicates his long-suffering.

**AN ASPECT OF LOVE** — A form of this word is used by Paul as an aspect of love:

*‘Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant’* (1 Cor 13:4)

**A NECESSARY QUALITY FOR CHURCH LIFE** — This is a necessary quality for maintaining right relationships within the body of Christ (using a form of our same word):

*‘And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all.’ (1 Thes 5:14)*

From ‘not taking swift vengeance,’ it is easily further generalized to forbearance under all circumstances of provocation, the ability to make allowance for others’ shortcomings, tolerance of others’ exasperating behavior, enduring wrong rather than flying into a rage or desiring vengeance. This is further emphasized by being sandwiched as it is here between references to humility and gentleness on one hand and bearing with others on the other hand.

**A FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** — As quoted above, this long-suffering is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22), thus is not something natural but a spiritual provision. ***“A walk worthy of their call demands humility, gentleness, and patience. In other words, these words do not describe an automatic response but one that demands conscious effort on the part of the believer who relies on the Spirit.”*** [Hoehner, 508]

**GOD IS OUR GREAT EXAMPLE** — The Lord is the supreme example of long-suffering towards we who are sinners. If the Lord is so long-suffering towards us, it is obligatory that we be so to each other. Cp. the parable of the wicked servant in Matt 18:23-35:

*“Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” (Matt 18:32-35)*

***“God is the greatest example of all. He stayed his wrath when he was wronged by human sin (Rom 2:4). Thus must the believer stay his or her impatience or vengeance when wronged by another believer, exhibiting patience one toward another, especially in the light of the union of believing Jews and Gentiles into one body. It is clear that patience is not only a virtue but a necessary ingredient for the life of Jewish and Gentile believers who comprise the body of Christ.”*** [Hoehner, 509]



**MacARTHUR ON PATIENCE** — A third attitude that characterizes the Christian’s worthy walk is patience, which is an outgrowth of humility and gentleness. Makrothumia (patience) literally means long-tempered, and is sometimes translated longsuffering. ***The patient person endures negative circumstances and never gives in to them.***

Abraham received the promise of God but had to wait many years to see its fulfillment. “Thus,” the writer of Hebrews tells us, “having patiently waited, he obtained the promise” (Heb. 6:15). God had promised that Abraham’s descendants would be a great nation (Gen. 12:2) and yet he was not given Isaac, the child of promise, until after Abraham was nearly a hundred years old. “Yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom. 4:20).

God told Noah to build a ship in the wilderness, far from any body of water and before there had ever been rain on earth. For 120 years Noah worked at that task, while preaching to his neighbors of God’s coming judgment.

In the chronicle of faithful Old Testament saints in the book of Hebrews, Moses’ patient endurance is mentioned twice. He chose rather “to endure treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin: considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him who is unseen” (Heb. 11:25-27).

James said, “As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord” (James 5:10). When God called Jeremiah, He told the prophet that no one would believe his message and that he would be hated, maligned, and persecuted (Jer. 1:5-19). Yet Jeremiah served the Lord faithfully and patiently until the end of his life. Similarly, when the Lord called Isaiah he was told that the nation would not listen to him nor turn from their sin (Isa. 6:9-12). Like Jeremiah, however, he preached and ministered with patient faithfulness.

Paul was willing to endure any hardship, affliction, ridicule, or persecution in order to patiently serve his Master. “What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart?” he asked the Christians at Caesarea after the prophet Agabus predicted the apostle’s arrest and imprisonment. “For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).

When H. M. Stanley went to Africa in 1871 to find and report on David Livingstone, he spent several months in the missionary’s company, carefully observing the man and his work. Livingstone never spoke to Stanley about spiritual matters, but Livingstone’s loving and patient compassion for the African people was beyond Stanley’s comprehension. He could not understand how the missionary could have such love for and patience with the backward, pagan people among whom he had so long ministered. Livingstone literally spent himself in untiring service for those whom he had no reason to love except for Christ’s sake. Stanley wrote in his journal, “When I saw that unwearied patience, that unflagging zeal, and those enlightened sons of Africa, I became a Christian at his side, though he never spoke to me one word.”

*Aristotle said that the greatest Greek virtue was refusal to tolerate any insult and readiness to strike back. But that is not God's way for His people. The patient saint accepts whatever other people do to him. He is "patient with all men" (1 Thess. 5:14), even those who try his patience to the limit. He is patient with those who slander him and who question his motives for serving the Lord.*

The patient saint accepts God's plan for everything, without questioning or grumbling. He does not complain when his calling seems less glamorous than someone else's or when the Lord sends him to a place that is dangerous or difficult. He remembers that God the Son left His heavenly home of love, holiness, and glory to come to earth and be hated, rejected, spat upon, and crucified—without once returning evil for evil or complaining to His Father. [MacArthur, 126f]

**bearing with one another in love** — ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων ἐν ἀγάπῃ [anechomenoi allēlon en agapē]

**AN EXPRESSION OF 'LONG-SUFFERING'** — *"This mutual forbearance is the expression in action of 'makrothumia'. It involves bearing with one another's weaknesses, not ceasing to love our neighbour or friend because of those faults in him which perhaps offend or displease us."* [Abbott, 106]

**'BEARING' DEFINED** — 'Bearing' means 'to endure, bear with, put up with something annoying or harmful.' *"While ['bearing'] could suggest an attitude of endurance, a resignation to suffering, or a willingness to tolerate what others are doing in order to avoid trouble, it indicates here the more dynamic attitude of love (it reappears in v. 16). Love is never passive but always active, looking to see where others may be helped. It is the primary virtue in relationships (1 Cor 13) and the basis of all behaviour (Rom 13.9, 10; Gal 5.14). No one ever finds it easy to see and allow for the point of view and the actions of others; within the community Christians do not escape this but have regularly to deal with what they regard as the faults of their fellow-Christians and for this love is essential."* [Best, 364]

**SECULAR USAGE** — This word is used frequently in the classical literature with essentially the same meaning, 'to take up, to bear up, to endure.'

**OT USAGE** — In the LXX it occurs sixteen times and in the canonical books it appears eleven times. It is used of God's endurance of the Israelites' vain offerings (Isa 1:13) or Job's endurance through great trials (Job 6:11, 26; cf. also Isa 46:4). It also has the idea of restraint, as when God withheld the rain (Amos 4:7; Hag 1:10) or restrained himself from destroying people (Isa 42:14; 63:15; 64:12).

**NT USAGE** — In the NT it is used fifteen times (always in the middle voice which typically gives a word a 'reflective' sense), ten times by Paul. In addition, it is used when Jesus asks how long he should bear with the disciples (Matt 17:17 = Mark 9:19 = Luke 9:41) or when Gallio bore with the Jews' accusation against Paul (Acts 18:14). Outside of this text, Paul speaks of enduring in persecution, asks the Corinthians to bear with him in his boasts, and bemoans their tendency to endure false teaching and teachers. Hence, this word has reference to bearing or enduring with respect to things or persons. *"In the present context and in Col 3:13 Paul asks them to bear with those in the assembly. Thus, to translate this word 'forbear' is appropriate. Robertson suggests that it is a direct middle meaning 'holding yourselves back from one another.' In other words, differences between believers are to be tolerated."* [Hoehner, 509]

**'ONE ANOTHER' – WITHIN THE CHURCH BODY** — Verse 2b with its implication of reciprocity, 'one another', makes it clear that Paul is thinking primarily of behaviour within the community and not of that directed at those outside of it. *"[Paul] knows that in the midst of tensions and conflicts the patience required will not be passive resignation but the positive attitude toward others that he will expand on later in 4:32. This type of ethical exhortation demonstrates that [Paul's] visionary conception of the Church and its role is accompanied by a realism about the problems of community life with its inevitable clashes of character, attitudes, and actions.... Bearing with others means fully accepting them in their uniqueness, including their weaknesses and faults, and allowing them worth and space. It is only the love that is the power of the new age, supplied by the Spirit of that age, that can enable one to bear with others without expectation of reward so that their concerns weigh more heavily than one's own desires for personal fulfillment and peace of mind."* [Lincoln, 236f] "The focus on 'one another' is significant. This word occurs forty times in Paul's letters. *Christians are part of each other and are to receive one another, think about one another, serve one another, love one another, build up one another, bear each other's burdens, submit to each other, and encourage each other. Christianity is a God-directed, Christ-defined, other-oriented religion. Only with such direction away from self do we find ourselves.*" [Snodgrass, 197] A. T. Robertson (Grammar, 508) also states that *putting up with other members of the congregation(s) is in view.*

**'BEARING WITH' IN LOVE** — It is possible to 'put up' with people that one nevertheless resents and dislikes, but the phrase 'in love' shows that this grudging tolerance is not what Paul has in mind. The duty of mutual forbearance is to be practiced in love. *"ἀγάπη [agape] is not a possessive love but a giving love. This kind of love seeks the highest good in the one loved, and more particularly for the believer, it has the idea of seeking the will of God in the one loved. It is an unconditional love that does not seek a response in kind.... [F]orbearance left unqualified could result in resentment or anger rather than love."* [Hoehner, 510] *"The NIV's 'bearing with one another in love' sounds archaic and loses the force of the text. A more appropriate translation is 'putting up with each other in love.' The Christian life is a life of putting up with other people, and this tolerance finds its ability and motivation in love. 'Love' and 'putting up with each other' are intertwined and mutually explanatory. Both are ways of valuing the other person. 'Love' (agape) ... is not a feeling or emotion, but an act of the will. It exists only in relation to specific people, and it is always costly. The focus on love is an extension of the emphasis on love in*

3:17-19. That is, the love experienced in Christ must be extended to others. The noun *agape* was rarely used outside Jewish sources and the Christian writings. A few secular occurrences are now known, but clearly Christians injected the word with new content to talk about love in relation to God — first love from God, then also love for God and for other people because of God. This love does not have its origin in human motivation; it is a choice made because of the love of God.” [Snodgrass, 197]



**MacARTHUR ON FORBEARING LOVE** — A fourth characteristic element of the worthy Christian walk is forbearance to one another in love. Peter tells us that such “love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8). It throws a blanket over the sins of others, not to justify or excuse them but to keep the sins from becoming any more known than necessary. “Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions” (Prov. 10:12). Forbearing love takes abuse from others while continuing to love them.

Forbearing love could only be *agape* love, because only *agape* love gives continuously and unconditionally. *Eros* love is essentially self-love, because it cares for others only because of what it can get from them. It is the love that takes and never gives. *Philia* love is primarily reciprocal love, love that gives as long as it receives. But *agape* love is unqualified and unselfish love, love that willingly gives whether it receives in return or not. It is unconquerable benevolence, invincible goodness — love that goes out even to enemies and prays for its persecutors (Matt. 5:43-44). That is why the forbearance of which Paul speaks here could only be expressed in *agape* love. [MacArthur, 127]

### v. 3 — being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of the peace;

σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης·

spoudazontes tērein tēn henotēta tou pneumatos en tō sundesmō tēs eirēnēs;]

**CLIMATIC PHRASE, LEADING INTO vv. 4–6** — Paul now gives the reason or goal for those virtues mentioned in the previous verse. “Already the qualities of humility, gentleness, and patience (v. 2a) alerted Paul’s readers that his concern lay with their relationships with others. His next phrase has told them that his concern lies even more specifically with their relationships with one another as people in the church (v. 2b). Now he becomes still more specific: they are to maintain energetically the unity that the Spirit has given them despite their differences with one another. In addition, Paul’s emphasis on ‘oneness’ points ahead to his main concern in the next three verses, where the term ‘one’ will appear six times within the space of thirty-four words and itself serves as a transition to the next major section (vv. 7-16), where the unity of the church in the midst of a diversity of gifts is the main subject.” [Thielman, 254]

**NOT GENTILE – JEW BUT BELIEVER – BELIEVER** — It is important to note this unity expressed by Paul is not the unity of Jewish and Gentile Christians as discussed in 2:11–22. Here the outlook is wider and refers as much to Jewish–Jewish and Gentile–Gentile relations as to Jewish–Gentile relations.

**being diligent** — σπουδάζοντες [spoudazontes]

**DEFINITION** — the word in the form used here means ‘to be busy, eager, to make haste.’

**OT USAGE** — It appears eleven times in the LXX, eight times in the canonical books. Once in Job 31:5 it translates a Hebrew word meaning ‘to be in haste, make haste, hasten;’ the other times it translates another Hebrew word meaning ‘to be disturbed, dismayed, terrified.’ One commentator stated ‘It seems that the LXX translators have not taken over the Greek content of [spoudazō] or they struggle to find a Greek verb for the Hebrew.’

**SECULAR USAGE** — Josephus used the word to mean ‘to be zealously engaged’ with less emphasis on haste.

**NT USAGE** — In the NT it occurs eleven times denoting ‘haste’ (e.g., 2 Tim 4:9, 21; Titus 3:12) but more prominently indicating ‘to be zealous, eager, make every effort’ (Gal 2:10; Eph 4:3; 1 Thess 2:17; 2 Tim 2:15; Heb 4:11; 2 Pet 1:10, 15; 3:14). Actually, all the passages would be acceptable with the second nuance. Certainly in the present context the second nuance is more fitting:

‘They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.’ (Gal 2:10 NKJV)

‘But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.’ (1 Thes 2:17 NKJV)

‘Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.’ (2 Tim 2:15 NKJV)

‘Be diligent to come unto me quickly’ (2 Tim 4:9 NKJV)

‘Do your utmost to come before winter.’ (2 Tim 4:21 NKJV)

*'When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there.'* (Titus 3:12 NKJV)

*'Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.'* (Heb 4:11 NKJV)

*'Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble'* (2 Pet 1:10 NKJV)

*'And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.'* (2 Pet 1:15 ESV)

*'Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless'* (2 Pet 3:14 NKJV)

Paul's appeal is urgent and cannot be easily translated into English. The verb he uses has an element of haste, urgency, or even a sense of crisis to it. Barth rendered it as, *'Yours is the initiative! Do it now!'* We are asked to value unity, be attentive to it, and invest energy in it so that it is not threatened. ***"Those who pay attention to one another in love will work zealously to preserve unity.... Effort is necessary to maintain unity and believers must strive to this end with all zeal."*** [Best, 364] The AV translation *'endeavoring'* could imply an attempt that might fail. Newer translations are varied but are more forceful by variously translating it *'giving diligence'* (RV, ASV), *'being diligent'* (NASB), *'eager'* (RSV), *'spare no effort'* (NEB), *'take/make every effort'* (JB, NN, NJB, NRSV), *'do your best'* (TEV). All of these basically convey the same idea of an 'active and vigorous effort, earnestly striving.'

### **to keep the unity — τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα [tērein tēn henotēta]**

**'UNITY' A RARE WORD** — The term 'unity' is rare and in biblical literature it is used only here and verse 13 where it talks about the unity of faith to be obtained.

**'KEEP, PRESERVE WHAT ALREADY EXISTS'** — The word for 'keep' essentially means *'to keep, preserve what is already in existence, maintain with watchful care.'* It is not the establishment of a new entity, but rather to keep and not loses or destroy *'something already in our possession.'*

**CHRISTIANS DID NOT CREATE THIS UNITY** — ***We as believers did not create our unity, though we can destroy it as the later parts of the paraenesis show how this can happen. "Although this unity is already given and is not therefore the readers' own achievement, it must be preserved and protected. In fact, the force of the participle ['being diligent'] suggests that the maintenance of the unity is to be a matter of the utmost importance and urgency — "Spare no effort; make it a priority for your corporate life to maintain the unity of the Spirit." Such an exhortation also makes plain that the unity of the Spirit is a reality that is to be demonstrated visibly.*** [Lincoln, 237]

**A 'COMPLEX UNITY'** — "Paul seems to envision the unity of the church as something complex. At one level, the church already possesses unity because God's Spirit has already accomplished it when, in concert with Christ, he tore down the barriers that divided various social groups, giving them peace with each other and peace with God (2:18, 22). At another level, however, the church needs to maintain unity, and it must live in a way that is zealous to do so. At this level, unity is kept 'by the ['bonds'] of peace.'" [Thielman, 254f] ***"Since the church has been designed by God to be the masterpiece of his goodness and the pattern on which the reconciled universe of the future will be modeled, believers are expected to live in a manner consistent with this divine purpose."*** [O'Brien, 279f]

### **of the Spirit — τοῦ πνεύματος [tou pneumatos]**

**THE UNITY CREATED AND GIVEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT** — While there are those who understand this to be a reference to a 'corporate spiritual feeling of community' (e.g., Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin), most understand this to be speaking of the Holy Spirit. "Nothing in the epistle suggests that unity is brought about by humans, only by the Holy Spirit (2:22; cf. 1 Cor 12:13). Furthermore, the immediately following context talks about the unity based in the three persons of the Godhead."

[Hoehner, 511f] ***"The unity mentioned is not then the spiritual unity of those who think and act in the same way, or of those who elevate the spiritual above the material and believe forms and rites do not matter. It is the unity which the Spirit creates and preserves."*** [Best, 365] ***"The unity of the Spirit,' i.e. the unity which the Spirit has given us. The Spirit unites those who are separated by race and customs."*** [Abbott, 107]

### **in the bond — ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ [en tō sundesmō]**

**GENERAL WORD USAGE** — this word means a 'fastener' and is used for such things as something that holds clothes together, the binding that holds together a defense structure, a conjunction that attaches clauses to each other, a ligament that binds bone to muscle. As a metaphor, it was used for the bond that unites the city or, in Stoicism and Middle Platonism, to the bonds that hold the cosmic body of the universe together, to the bond that keeps a state together (namely, good citizens), or the bond between children and parents.

**OT USAGE** — In the LXX it appears ten times (only in the canonical books) and translates six different Hebrew words. There it is rendered, in the literal sense, the binding together of buildings (1 Kgs 6:10) and in the metaphorical sense, being bound to

wickedness (Isa 58:6, 9).

**NT USAGE** — In the NT it is used only four times, each of these in the metaphorical sense (Acts 8:23; Eph 4:3; Col 2:19; 3:14). The concept of binding is vividly portrayed in Col 2:19 where it refers to the ‘ligaments’ of a body. “Hence, Paul chained as a prisoner of the Lord (3:1; 4:1) speaks of the binding or chaining together of peace.” [Hoehner, 512]

**of peace** — τῆς εἰρήνης· [tēs eirēnēs;]

**THE BOND WHICH IS PEACE** — Most of the commentators I have studied agree this phrase to be what is called the ‘genitive of apposition’, meaning ‘the bond which *is* peace’. *“The unity, therefore, which is wrought among these Ephesians by the Spirit of God will be theirs in so far as they make peace the relation which they maintain one to another, or the bond in which they walk together.”* [Salmond, 321] *“[Paul] sees peace as the bond which ties together those who are united. Love (v. 2) may be the assumption for unity; peace is the cement of its working out in the church. Christ became the peace of the church in his death (2.14-18) and only because he is peace can there be peace between members and unity within the church. 2.14-18 revealed the two aspects of peace, between God and humanity and between one human being and another. It is the latter aspect which enters here but it is in tandem with the former and depends on it.”* [Best, 365] Paul probably has in mind the imagery of something that fastens things together, therefore peace is the ‘fastener’ that preserves the church’s unity. *It must be energetically worked out in practical ways, such as lovingly putting up with each other’s foibles, being polite and gentle under provocation, and being humble.* [Thielman, 254f] “The appropriate response to being called into the situation of peace and reconciliation created by the gospel is a life of peace and reconciliation. Living in this fashion binds believers together and thereby maintains the unity of the Spirit.” [Lincoln, 237]

**DIVISIONS CAN EASILY APPEAR** — “Does [Paul’s] stress on the unity of the church mean that he has some actual situation of disunity in mind? Certainly he knew of the earlier division between Jewish and Gentile believers (see 2.11-22) which may still have existed in some quarters, but is that all? It is difficult to tie down what he writes to any particular situation because of the letter’s general nature, yet [Paul] must have known of other previous divisions in the church and sensed the possibility of future divisions.... *Other writings in the NT (1, 2 Timothy, Titus, 1, 2, 3 John, Revelation) shows how easily division could appear. Those who became Christians moreover brought into the church the divisions of society arising from sex, race, wealth, education, slavery, and they were not immediately overcome. Quite apart from all this, people in groups inevitably get on one another’s nerves as anyone who has been a member of a group knows. There were thus many possible causes of strain, and the virtues listed in vv. 2, 3 would be necessary if the unity of the church was to be maintained. As a wise pastor [Paul] knew that unity was always at risk unless zealous care was taken to preserve it.*” [Best, 366]

**BELIEVERS NEED OTHER BELIEVERS** — *We cannot be mature Christians by ourselves, for we cannot give ourselves everything we need for a life of faith. Christ could supply our needs directly, but instead he has chosen to grace other people so that they contribute to us and we to them. Grace comes from God, but it is also conveyed along horizontal channels.” Or, as F. F. Bruce put it, ‘The higher reaches of the Christian life cannot be attained in isolation from one’s fellow believers.’ ... At the same time, the individuality and independence of each person must be guarded. Unity does not mean sameness; in fact, unity is achieved through diversity.... On the other hand, the emphasis on unity does not mean unity at any cost. Unity is not the goal; unity in Christ is, the unity that comes from a shared faith and a shared knowledge of Christ. Therefore, there are limits to unity. The church and its unity are always Christologically and theologically defined.* [Snodgrass, 221] “The formula of Rupert Meldenius popularized by Richard Baxter is still good guidance: ‘Unity in essentials, liberty in incidentals, and in all things charity [love].’” [Snodgrass, 211]



**MacARTHUR ON UNITY** — The ultimate outcome of humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearance is being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Spoutlaza (to be diligent) basically means to make haste, and from that come the meanings of zeal and diligence. One commentator describes it as a holy zeal that demands full dedication. Paul used the word in telling Timothy, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15; cf. Titus 3:12-13).

Preservation of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace should be the diligent and constant concern of every believer. Paul is not speaking of organizational unity, such as that promoted in many denominations and in the ecumenical movement. He is speaking of the inner and universal unity of the Spirit by which every true believer is bound to every other true believer. As Paul makes clear, this is the unity of the Spirit working in the lives of believers. It does not come from the outside but the inside, and is manifested through the inner qualities of humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearing love.

Spiritual unity is not, and cannot be, created by the church. It is already created by the Holy Spirit. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. . . There are many members, but one body” (1 Cor. 12:13, 20; cf. Rom. 8:9). It is this very unity of the Spirit for which Jesus so earnestly prayed in the Upper Room shortly before His betrayal and arrest: “Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are, . . . that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us.... And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity” (John 17:11, 21-23).

The church's responsibility, through the lives of individual believers, is to preserve the unity by faithfully walking in a manner worthy of God's calling (v. 1), manifesting Christ to the world by oneness in Him (cf. Rom. 15:1-6; 1 Con 1:10-13; 3:1-3; Phil. 1:27). The world is always seeking but never finding unity. All the laws, conferences, treaties, accords, and agreements fail to bring unity or peace. Someone has reported that throughout recorded history every treaty made has been broken. There is not, and cannot be, any peace for the wicked (Isa. 48:22). As long as self is at the center; as long as our feelings, prestige, and rights are our chief concern, there will never be unity.

The bond that preserves unity is peace, the spiritual belt that surrounds and binds God's holy people together. It is the bond that Paul described in Philippians as "being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose" (2:2). Behind this bond of peace is love, which Colossians 3:14 calls "the perfect bond of unity."

Humility gives birth to gentleness, gentleness gives birth to patience, patience gives birth to forbearing love, and all four of those characteristics preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. These virtues and the supernatural unity to which they testify are probably the most powerful testimony the church can have, because they are in such contrast to the attitudes and the disunity of the world. No program or method, no matter how carefully planned and executed, can open the door to the gospel in the way individual believers can do when they are genuinely humble, meek, patient, forbearing in love, and demonstrate peaceful unity in the Holy Spirit. [MacArthur, 128f]

### **Ephesians 4:2,3 —**

*in all humblenes of mynde and meknes and longe sufferynge forbearinge one another thorowe love and that ye be dyliget to kepe the vnitie of the sprete in the bonde of peace* (Tyndale's New Testament, 1524)

*With all humblenesse of minde, and meekenesse, with long suffering, supporting one an other through loue, Endeououring to keepe the vnitie of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (Geneva Bible, 1599)

*With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (King James Version, 1769)

*with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of the peace;* (Young's Literal Translation, 1898)

*with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (Revised Version, 1885)

*with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (American Standard Version, 1901)

*with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (Revised Standard Version, 1952)

*with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (New King James Version, 1982)

*with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (New American Standard Version, 1995)

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.* (New International Version, 2011)

*with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (English Standard Version, 2011)

μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ πραότητος, μετὰ μακροθυμίας ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων ἐν ἀγάπῃ σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης· (Stephanus Greek NT, 1550)

μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ πραύτητος, μετὰ μακροθυμίας, ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων ἐν ἀγάπῃ, σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης· (NA28 Greek New Testament)