

Ephesians 4:1-6 - 18th after Pentecost [14.9.2008] *Being the Church of Christ!*

¹ Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. ² Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. ³ Always keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit, and bind yourselves together with peace.

⁴ We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. ⁵ There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ and there is only one God and Father, who is over us all and in us all and living through us all. [NLT]

People who have been given new homes sometimes have to learn how to look after what they have been given. Sometimes - as is the case with the homes for the orphans at Shongweni - there is an entire change of 'status'. From having no real home they are - almost literally overnight - placed in an entirely new house. I am sure that they really appreciate what they have been given, but how do they make the best of their new surroundings?

Being given a new home - does that not apply to us also, who have been brought into the church? We have a new status - from being people who were far away from God, we have been brought into a 'new home' as people of God. I am sure that we too appreciate what we have been given. Yet, for us too it is a case of struggling to know how we really ought to live here. How do we the most of

Being the Church of Christ!?

We may be tempted to think that we have this new life - now everything will be just fine. We may believe that all the old problems we faced no longer apply. Yet, being in this new home, calls for a different - a new - mind set.

Our life can't simply be a continuation of how we lived before - or of how other people live their lives. The world view of our time is not to determine what we think or how we. Instead this call by Paul applies to us also, when he says here: **I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.**

We are to live worthy of our calling - according to this calling. Who we are as members of the church does not depend on what we want. We have been called by God to be members of his household - to be a part of the family of God. (chapter

2:19) As members of this family, what we do and say reflects back on the family - reflects back on the God who called us.

Not only are we members of the family of God, but we have also been built into a 'living' building. We have been built on the foundation of the message of the apostles and prophets, to be a **holy temple for the Lord** (chapter 2:21). A temple - or church - is something which is visible to other people; something they can look at, something they can point to.

What is it, that people see when they look at us - at you as an individual member of the church, but more often at us as *the Church of Christ*? Who we are and what we do, has to do with him who called us. But if those who look at us see that how we live - that the way in which we speak with one another, how we treat one another - is not really different to how people outside the church are, we do not live according to who we have been made.

We were called by God - we did not choose of our own to be members of the church. That is much how it is with our being a member in any family: we don't get to choose which family we are a part of. But once we are there, we are to live as those who belong to that family.

God called us - it is not our choice for him, that makes us members of the church, but his choice for us. We are told earlier in this letter that this call is a gift from God: it is not a reward for anything we did. Instead God has made us totally new again (chapter 2:8-9) when he called us out of the life we may have chosen for ourselves. Who we are, and how we live must now be shown to us by God.

Paul shows us here, that living worthy of this calling to be God's people means that we are to **be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other.**

The way we act, and the way in which we deal with one another, is to reflect who we now are. Unfortunately the picture many people have of the church is not exactly one where humility and gentleness are well represented. So often we act arrogantly - in the way we deal with Christians of other confessions, but also with those who are not members of the church.

Being **humble** - this does not mean not having our own point of view. Neither does it mean that we are to be the doormat for all to trample on. What it does mean, though, is that we - as the Church of Christ - should be influenced by Him in what we say and do, and especially in how we say things.

There is a danger of us acting as if we knew all the answers, as if we had a God-

given right to tell others how they must act and what they must do. Sometimes we need to acknowledge that we just don't have all the answers - that we look to Christ for the answers to the questions which our times have brought up.

It is said that Winston Churchill said of one of his opponents, 'He is a very humble man. And he has much to be humble about.' It seems that Mr Churchill believed that he had nothing to be humble about. That is an attitude sometimes reflected in the church. We forget that we have much to be humble about, because who we are is not due to what we have done. All we have, really is God's gift to us. A gift he wants to extend to all people - no matter who they are, or what they have done.

That is why this second part of Paul's admonition is important to us also: to be **gentle**. This applies to the way in which we deal with those who have done something wrong, just as much as it does in the case of those who have suffered hurt. Gentleness is an attribute of our calling to God's household. There is enough of harsh words and actions in our world.

What we are to be and to do, is to be gentle. Jesus taught us about that, when he used the example of not judging one another, but first getting rid of the 'plank' in our own eye. Once we have gone through such a painful process of having the sin taken out of our life, we will be much more gentle with others who have fallen in a sin.

Humility and gentleness will result in being **patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love**. This love is not something we have of ourselves - it is a gift of God, because He loved us first. It is his love which makes allowance with our faults - which over and over again sets out to bring me back into the family. This love of God is to determine how we live - after all it is the 'greatest commandment' to love not only God above all else, but also the people around us, as we love ourselves.

It is a love which says, I realise that I need to help my fellow Christian, that I am called to be a support to him / her, just as he/ she is a support to me at another time. We are part of a family, and we need each other, so that we - together - are built up as this temple of God in our world.

Living in a new home - as God's family. It really is a miracle - of God's love and grace - that we have this opportunity. So let us make the best of who we now are, so that we may honour God by how we live.