

# A Passion for the Church, Part 3

- **Introduction:** A couple of weeks ago I started a short series on the subject of The Church. I began by looking at Acts 2 where Peter preached the well-known “Pentecost sermon.” Last week I looked at some of the theology that Paul laid out on the subject in Ephesians chapter 2. Today I would like to continue the examination of the subject by looking at Ephesians chapter 4. We will spend the next couple of weeks going through the first 16 verses. Today we will only attempt the first 6 verses.

**Ephesians 4: 1-7**—<sup>1</sup>As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup>Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. <sup>3</sup>Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—<sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. <sup>7</sup>But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

- In the first three chapters Paul has been unfolding for his readers the eternal purpose of God being worked out in history.
- He now moves to the standards of this new society
- He moves from doctrine to duty
- There are two distinctives of this new society
  - It is ‘one’ people, made up of Jew and Gentile
  - It is a ‘holy’ people, distinct from the secular world.
- **Stott:** “Because God’s people are called to be one people, they must manifest their unity, and because they are called to be a holy people, they must manifest their purity. Unity and purity are two fundamental features of a life worthy of the church’s diving calling.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>**As a prisoner for the Lord, then,**

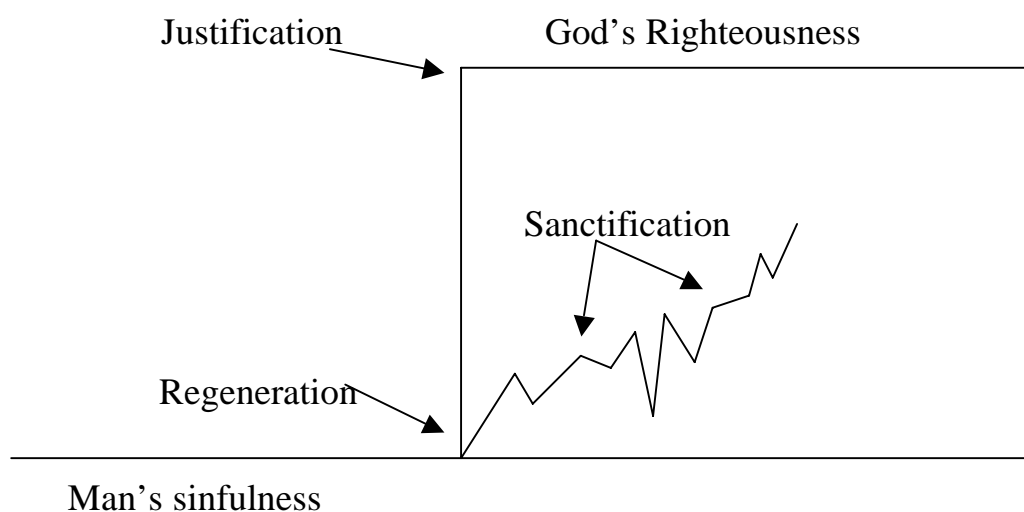
- Paul was in a Roman prison at the time of this writing.
- He didn’t see himself as a helpless victim of circumstances, but quite literally as a ‘prisoner for the Lord.’
  - **Question:** Do you see yourself as a victim of circumstances in life?

**I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.**

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<sup>1</sup> John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 147.

- We are not worthy of the calling we have received, but we must now live a life that is worthy. We have been made worthy (by Christ) so we must live what we are.
- ***Ironsides***: “Wherever grace rules in the soul, ‘I command’ is changed to ‘I urge.’”
- ***Ills***. Lord the Ring, Return of the King—Gandalf: “The board is set; the pieces are moving.” Elrond: “Put the Ranger aside. Become who you were born to be!”
- ***Piper***: “One of the greatest sources of joy and endurance for the Christian is knowing that in the imperfection of our progress we have already been perfected—and that this is owing to the suffering and death of Christ...The joyful encouragement here is that the evidence of our perfection before God is not our experienced perfection, but our experienced progress. The good news is that being on the way is proof that we have arrived...In other words, we should become what we are.”<sup>2</sup>
- This is the goal of salvation—Sanctification/Christian character.



- ***Romans 6:19-22***—“<sup>19</sup>I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to sanctification. <sup>20</sup>When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. <sup>21</sup>What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! <sup>22</sup>But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to sanctification, and the result is eternal life.”

<sup>2</sup> John Piper, *The Passion of Jesus Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 49.

- **Colson:** “This character-oriented perspective is totally foreign to our achievement-oriented society...And it goes against everything in our consumer-oriented religious culture, where we pick and choose churches on the basis of fellowship or outreach programs or music or location or convenient parking. *Rarely do we hear believers say, ‘I decided to join this church because of its character as a holy community.’* Nor do most choose a church on the basis of its capacity to disciple and equip them for ministry. *Yet that should be our very first consideration...its most fundamental task is to build communities of holy character. And the first priority of those communities is to disciple men and women to maturity in Christ.*”<sup>3</sup>
- Living a life worthy of our calling is carried out in the following ways...
  - Be completely humble,
  - Be gentle,
  - Be patient,
  - Bear with one another in love,
  - Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit.

## <sup>2</sup>**Be completely humble**

- Lowliness was despised in the ancient world. The Greeks did not have a word for humility that was complimentary. The only way it was used was as “abject, servile, subservient.
- **John 13: 3-5**<sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup>so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup>After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.
- One of the most profound connection of thoughts.
  - Jesus knew ALL things were under him.
  - Jesus knew that he had come from God
  - Jesus knew that he was returning to the Father.
    - Jesus had the greatest sense of security that any man has ever had. He knew who he was, he knew where he came from, and he knew where he was going. He had nothing to prove...nothing!
    - SO...He began to wash their feet.
- The root of humility is in knowing who you are (self-knowledge), where you’ve come from, and where your going. A secure person can be a humble person.
- **Barclay:** “To face oneself is the most humiliating thing in the world. Most of us dramatize ourselves. Somewhere there is a story of a man who before he went

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<sup>3</sup> Chuck Colson, *The Body* (Word Publishing Group: Nashville, 1994), 42.

to sleep at night dreamed his waking dreams. He would see himself as the hero of some thrilling rescue from the sea or from the flames; he would see himself as an orator holding a vast audience spell-bound; he would see himself walking to the wicket in a Test Match at the Lord's and scoring a century; he would see himself in some international football match dazzling the crowd with his skill; always he was the centre of the picture. Most of us are essentially like that. And true humility comes when we face ourselves and see our weakness, our selfishness, our failure in work and personal relationships and in achievement. Christian humility comes from setting (our) life beside the life of Christ and the light of the demands of God."<sup>4</sup>

- The proud person is insecure.
- Pride is like bad breath: Everyone knows about it except the person with it.
- The insecure person is proud which shows itself in boasting or in self-pity.
- **Piper:** "Consider the relationship between boasting and self-pity. Both are manifestations of pride. Boasting is the response of pride to success. Self-pity is the response of pride to suffering. Boasting says, 'I deserve admiration because I have achieved so much.' Self-pity says, 'I deserve admiration because I have sacrificed so much.' Boasting is the voice of pride in the heart of the strong. Self-pity is the voice of pride in the heart of the weak. Boasting sounds self-sufficient. Self-pity sounds self-sacrificing. The reason self-pity does not look like pride is that it appears to be needy. But the need arises from a wounded ego and the desire of the self-pitying is not really for others to see them as helpless, but heroes. The need self-pity feels does not come from a sense of unworthiness, but from a sense of unrecognized worthiness. It is the response of unappreciated pride."<sup>5</sup>
- **Bruce:** "His *unself-conscious* act of service was an involuntary enhancing of his dignity—a further manifestation of the divine glory which resided in the Word made flesh."<sup>6</sup>
- **What is humility?**
  - It has to do with agreeing with God.
  - **Example:** "I'm a worm...I'm a prince" Either of those statements can be made with humility and either can be made in pride.
  - **Chrysostom:** "Meekness is the foundation of all virtue. If you are humble and are aware of your limits and remember how you were saved, you will

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<sup>4</sup> William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 135-136.

<sup>5</sup> John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Portland: Multnomah, 1986), 222.

<sup>6</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Gospels & Epistles of John*, 2 vols. (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2002), 2: 284.

take this recollection as the motive for every excellent moral behavior. You will not be excessively impressed with either chains or privileges.”<sup>7</sup>

- **G. K. Chesterton**—The British Catholic journalist-author who died in 1936—“What we suffer from today...is humility in the wrong place. Modesty has moved from the organ of ambition. Modesty has settled upon the organ of conviction; where it was never meant to be. A man was meant to be doubtful about himself, but undoubting about the truth; this has been exactly reversed. Nowadays the part of a man that a man does assert is exactly the part he ought not assert—himself. The part he doubts is exactly the part he ought not to doubt—the Divine Reason.”<sup>8</sup>
- **Barclay**: “So often, even in churches, trouble arises because someone does not get his place...The world is full of people who are standing on their dignity when they ought to be kneeling at the feet of their brethren. In every sphere of life desire for prominence and unwillingness to take a subordinate place wreck the scheme of things. A player is one day omitted from the team and refuses to play any more. An aspiring politician is passed over for some office to which he thought he had a right and refuses to accept any subordinate office. A member of a choir is not given a solo and will not sing any more...It may happen that someone is given a quite unintentional slight and either explodes in anger or broods in sulki-ness for days afterwards. When we are tempted to think of our dignity, or prestige, our rights, let us see again the picture of the Son of God, girt with a towel, kneeling at his disciples’ feet.”<sup>9</sup>
- To whom do we compare ourselves?
  - A boy or girl playing the piano may think they are quite good until they compare themselves with Rockmaninov.
  - A Good golfer?
  - A good basketball player
  - A proficient computer user
  - A good ...
- Humility is essential to unity (verse 3).
  - Pride lurks behind all discord.

### **and gentle (meekness);**

- The word that is used is meekness.
- Strength under control. It is not weakness.
- ***Ills***. A broken stallion.

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<sup>7</sup> John Chrysostom, *Interpretatio Omnium Epistularum Paulinarum*, ed. F. Field (Oxford: Clarendon, 1849-1862), 4:201.

<sup>8</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1959), 31.

<sup>9</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, 2 vol. (Westminster John Knox Press: Louisville, 1975), 2: 139-140.

- *Aristotle* referred to meekness as “the mean between being too angry and never being angry at all.”
- *Findlay*: “It is the quality of a strong personality who is nevertheless master of himself and the servant of others. Meekness is the absence of the disposition to assert personal rights, either in the presence of God or of men.”<sup>10</sup>
- It is the term that Jesus used to describe himself. “Come to me...I am meek and lowly...” Jesus was no pushover!
- *Marius Victorinus*: “Patience consists in bearing any adverse circumstance that may befall them. With lowliness and meekness they learn not to be afraid to suffer. With patience they learn how to respond if they must suffer.”<sup>11</sup>
- **Ills.** “I wouldn’t mind if what she said about me had been true, but when I know it isn’t true, I can’t stand it!!”

### **be patient,**

- Longsuffering towards aggravating people.
- The Romans: In the greatest disaster it never occurred to them to admit defeat. Christian patience is the spirit which never admits defeat, which will not be broken by any misfortune or suffering, by any disappointment or discouragement, but which persists to the end.

### **bearing with one another**

- *Definition*: Putting up with other people’s faults and idiosyncrasies knowing that we have our own.
  - But not to ‘put up with’ in the sense that we’re boiling just below the surface.
- What does Trish put up with in me?
  - Wash dishes and put them on the window sill
  - Do projects and don’t put the tools away
  - Work in such a way that I create a mess
  - Require more sleep than her
    - What do you put up with in your spouse/roommate/coworker/relative?
      - What should you?
- *Barclay*: “It is the spirit which bears insult and injury without bitterness and without complaint. It is the spirit which can suffer unpleasant people with graciousness and fools without irritation.”

### **in love.**

- The sum of all virtues.

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<sup>10</sup> As quoted by Stott, 149.

<sup>11</sup> Marius Victorinus, *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana*, ed. A. Locher (Leipzig: Teubner, 1824), 174.

- Christian love was something so new that the Christian writers had to invent a new word for it; or, at least, they had to employ a very unusual Greek word—agape.
- Four words for love in Greek
  - *Erōs*: Love between a man and woman (involves sexual passion)
  - *Philia*: the warm affection that exists between those who are very near and dear to each other
  - *Storgē*: typically used of family affection
  - *Agapē*: unconquerable benevolence
    - It is not an emotional thing—“it is the quality of mind and heart which compels a Christian never to feel any bitterness, never to feel any desire for revenge, but always to seek the highest good of every man no matter what he may be.”<sup>12</sup>
- **Stott**: “Here, then, are five foundation stones of Christian unity. Where these are absent no external structure of unity can stand.”<sup>13</sup>
  - The common thread that runs in all five virtues: the obliteration of self.
- **H. A. Ironside**: “I spent quite a little time over this verse (v. 3). It went home to my own heart, for every expression in it was a challenge to me, and I kept asking myself the question, ‘To what extent have I risen to the standard that is here set forth?’...And the more I carefully examined every expression both in the English and in the original Greek, the more humiliated and ashamed before God I was as I realized how far short I have come...”<sup>14</sup>

### <sup>3</sup>Make every effort

- Note carefully the first three words!
- “Spare no effort” (NEB)
- A call for continuous, diligent activity.
- **Markus Barth**: “It is hardly possible to render exactly the urgency contained in the underlying Greek verb. Not only haste and passion, but a full effort of the whole man is meant, involving his will, sentiment, reason, physical strength, and total attitude. The imperative mood of the participle found in the Greek text excludes passivity, quietism, [or] a wait-and-see attitude...Yours is the initiative! Do it now! Mean it! *You* are to do it! I mean it!—Such are the overtones in verse 3.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Barclay, 140.

<sup>13</sup> Stott, 149.

<sup>14</sup> H. A. Ironside, *Galatians and Ephesians (In the Heavens)*, 2 vols. (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1981), 1: 168.

<sup>15</sup> Markus Barth, *Ephesians, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 2 vols. in *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 2: 428.

### to maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

- The church is organically one
- It is a unity that cannot be destroyed, but we can fail to demonstrate it
- **Chrysostom**: “The purpose for which the Spirit was given was to bring into unity all who remain separated by different ethnic and cultural divisions: young and old, rich and poor, women and men.”<sup>16</sup>
- **Ills.** A family that splits apart, moves to other parts of the world, change their names, etc. They are still relatives... In the same way, we cannot actually destroy our unity, BUT we can fail to demonstrate it!
- **This is NOT unity at any cost.**
  - **Stott**: “Christian unity arises from our having one Father, one Saviour, and one indwelling Spirit. So we cannot possibly foster a unity which pleases God either if we deny the doctrine of the Trinity or if we have not come personally to know God the Father through the reconciling work of his Son Jesus Christ...Authentic Christian ‘unity’ in truth, life and love is far more important than ‘union’ schemes of a structural kind.”
  - **Colson**: “What matters is not whether a church uses skirts or contemporary music or squash courts. What matters is biblical fidelity. If a thoroughly orthodox church challenges people to live holy lives and is growing, it is being blessed by God. But if a church disguises its identity and preaches a message intended to keep everyone in a state of perpetual bliss, then its growth is man-made.”<sup>17</sup>
- **Ills.** Conference in New Orleans on unity. Pray for unity—Paul says ‘preserve it!’

### <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call

- **St. John of the Cross**: "The soul that is alone. . .is like the burning coal that is alone. It will grow colder rather than hotter."<sup>18</sup>
- **Paul Tournier**: "There are two things we cannot do alone. One is to be married and the other is to be a Christian."<sup>19</sup>
- **The Didache**: "Seek daily the presence of the people dedicated to God so that you are refreshed with their words."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Chrysostom, 4:202.

<sup>17</sup> Colson, 48.

<sup>18</sup> St. John of the Cross, <http://www.rebuildjournal.org/quotes.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Tournier, <http://www.rebuildjournal.org/quotes.html>.

<sup>20</sup> *The Didache* or *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (circa 100 AD), 4:2, [http://ancienthistory.about.com/library/bl/bl\\_text\\_didache.htm](http://ancienthistory.about.com/library/bl/bl_text_didache.htm).

- **Stanley Hauerwas:** "Modern people usually seek individuality through the severance of restraints and commitments. I've got to be me. I must be true to myself. The more we can be free of parents, children, spouses, duties, the more free we will be to 'be ourselves,' to go with the flow, to lay hold of new and exciting possibilities. So goes the conventional argument. - Yet what if our true selves are made from the materials of our communal life? Where is there some 'self' which has not been communally created. By cutting back our attachments and commitments, the self shrinks rather than grows. So an important gift the church gives us is a far richer range of options, commitments, duties, and troubles than we would have if left to our own devices. - Without Jesus, Peter might have been a good fisherman, perhaps even a very good one. But he would never have gotten anywhere, would never have learned what a coward he really was, what a confused, then confessing, courageous person he was, even a good preacher (Acts 2) when he needed to be. - Peter stands out as a true individual, or better, a true character, not because he had become 'free' or 'his own,' but because he had become attached to the Messiah and messianic community, which enabled him to lay hold of his life, to make so much more of his life than if he had been left to his own devices."<sup>21</sup>

—<sup>5</sup>**one Lord, one faith, one baptism,**

- Michael Horton, *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology* (Baker Academic, 2006), 159.
- **Horton:** "Wherever there is a discussion of unity in the New Testament, the sacraments are close at hand:
  - "...one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5).
  - "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26-28 NIV).
  - "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (1 Cor. 10:17 NIV).
  - "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all give the one Spirit to drink" (1 Cor. 12:12-13 NIV)."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Stanley Hauerwas & William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, 189), 64-65.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Horton, *God of Promise: Introducing Covenant Theology* (Baker Academic, 2006), 159. The actual quotation is as follows: "“Wherever there is a discussion of unity in the New Testament, the sacra-

**<sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.**

- The unity of the Trinity is the basis of unity of the Church.

Application:

- So where do we go from here? It seems to me that there are a number of different applications that a text such as this can raise. For example...
  1. Be completely humble
  2. Be completely gentle
  3. Be patient
  4. Bear with one another in love.
- All four of those activities/dispositions are set within the framework of the local community church. I have come across more people who have had some type of bad experience in a church setting. When the subject is raised with them you get a response like, “Sorry. No way. I’ve done that. Not gonna do it again!” The problem, of course, to such an answer is that it presupposes that there is another option. *John Wesley* tells the story of when he had traveled several miles to converse with a what he simply refers to as “serious man.” This man said to him: “The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion. Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven? Remember, you cannot serve God alone. You must therefore find companions or make them.”<sup>23</sup> This whole church-life business is not an option. *Adrian Rogers* once wrote, “Becoming a Christian is not making a new start in life; it is receiving a new life to start with.”<sup>24</sup> Do you remember the diagram I showed you several weeks ago about the relation between justification/regeneration and sanctification?
- This is the foundation of our new life; but it is a new life *together!* *Sinclair Ferguson* once wrote that “Holiness is not an experience; it is the re-integration of our character, the rebuilding of a ruin. It is skilled labor, a long-term project, demanding everything God has given us for life and godliness.”<sup>25</sup> What this means is that growth in the Christian faith requires work—hard work.

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ments are close at hand: ‘one Lord, one faith, one baptism’ (Eph. 4:5); ‘You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus’ (Gal. 3:26-28 NIV); ‘Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf’ (1 Cor. 10:17 NIV). For this reason, ‘Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others’ (v. 24 NIV). ‘The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all give the one Spirit to drink’ (1 Cor. 12:12-13 NIV).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>23</sup> As quoted by Howard Snyder, *The Radical Wesley* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 148.

<sup>24</sup> Quoted in R.C. Sproul, *Born Again: Leader Guide* (Orlando: Ligonier Ministries, Inc., 1988), 14.

<sup>25</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, *A Heart for God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1985), p. 129.

- Again the list of activities/dispositions is set *within* the church—not the home (although it certainly would be applicable there as well). As such, when it says be completely humble, it means that you must be humble with the people within our local community. When it says be patient, it means that you are to be patient with the person in the church that drives you nuts! When it says to bear with one another in love, it specifically means that you are to do so with the people in your home-group. We don't get to choose who we will be patient, gentle or humble with. It is with those whom God has placed you with. In this case, it's Northlake. The people you work with in a home group; the people you interact with in the worship department; it's the folks that you are involved with in the dinner theater, etc.
  - It is precisely at the point when you want to tell someone: “\_\_\_\_\_ just drives me crazy! He/she is so irritating!” that you must remember to “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” Why not make it a specific point this week to begin to forgive those whom you have grown irritated with? Why not begin to act with true humility toward them? Why not begin to include them?
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