

Foundations of Christian Unity

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Date: 19 September 2021

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[0:00] Good morning. It's good to see all your lovely faces this morning. It's a wonderful sunny fall day.

! And that's the way I personally prefer it. So this is God's blessing to us. Sun and 60, 50 degree weather.

That's good. We're continuing our series in Ephesians. We're going to be in chapter 4 this morning. We're covering verse 1 to 6. So if you have your Bible, please open to Ephesians 4.

If you don't have one, there should be a few Bibles there. And you can open to page 1161. By the way, if you are in the habit of coming to church, this is a friendly reminder that we are people of God's Word.

So we do have a few Bibles and that's great. So if you don't happen to have one, that's why we have them there. But I want to encourage you that you should bring your own Bible to church every Sunday. So it's almost as if, you know, it's like a kid that's going to school and doesn't bring books and pen to write with.

[1:15] We come primarily to study God's Word, to have God's Word preached to us so we can understand more about God. And so, and we do that from His Word.

So if you have a copy of the Bible, it would be good for us to get in the habit of bringing it to church with us. We are people of the Word after all, aren't we? So that's not the sermon this morning though.

So let's get into our text. Paul is now in these next chapters, 4, 5, and 6.

He's going to try to tell the Ephesians what it is, what he has told them to be true about who they are. He's not going to try to tell them how to live. You know, one of the things that we recognize about the world that we live in is that we live in a utilitarian and impatient world.

We live in a world that says, tell me what I need to do to get what I want. The fastest way, preferably, the easiest way, without the least sacrifice.

[2:31] That's what the world wants. But the same is sometimes true in the church as well, if we're honest with ourselves. We come saying to God, here's my problem, fix it.

Here's my need, give it. But that's not the way God wants to deal with us. First of all, the things we think we need most to be fixed are not the things that God thinks we need fixing.

What we consider our pressing needs are not first order in God's timetable for us. Therefore, some church, some people do this.

They church hop. Looking for a place where they can have their ears tickled. And for self-help lingos that will assuage their egos.

That's not what the church is about. Notice the example of Paul in the New Testament. It is the opposite of what we might wish, or at least what the world might wish.

[3:36] In Ephesians, he writes in the first three chapters. He writes to us of the abyss that separates us from God. He writes of our enslavement to sin, the world, the devil, and the flesh.

He makes known to us how great our misery is apart from God. But the Bible not only diagnoses our deepest, greatest need.

Thank God that it does diagnose it, but doesn't leave us there. It offers us the cure as well. Paul tells us of the great salvation that is ours in Christ in the first three chapters of Ephesians.

He tells us that we who were once alienated from God on the outside looking in have now been adopted into God's family. We've been brought together through the blood of Jesus Christ to be his people, his holy temple.

We've been lavished with a wealth of spiritual blessings from God. These are the things that Paul makes known to us in the first three chapters of Ephesians. And then he prays for us that these

truths that is ours in Christ will be known to us, not only in our head, but in our hearts, experientially. [4:58] But the Bible also does tell us how to live. But note the order in which God deals with us. He first tells us of the deliverance we've obtained.

Who we have become in Christ. Our new identity and status. God tells us that first and foremost. And then he beckons us to live as the new creation he has made us to be.

And this is the pattern that Paul has here in Ephesians. This is the pattern of most of his epistles. First, this is who you are. This is what Christ has done for you.

This is now your new status. This is your new nature. Now, this is how you ought to live. And that's what the next three chapters of Ephesians will be.

A lot of imperatives. So far, in the first three chapters of Ephesians, we've only had one really imperative or command in the first three chapters.

[6:03] Which is actually just to tell us to remember. Now, Paul will go on in the next three chapters. You'll notice it. Live this way. This is how you ought to live.

This is what you ought to do as believers in Christ Jesus. And this is actually a natural pattern, isn't it? What Paul is doing here is saying, this is who you are.

Now, he wants to focus. Knowing who you are is showing us the features of the family of God. This is who you are as a people of the family of God.

Now, this is what people who are in the family of God ought to act like. This is their future. What they are like in the world. And it's not unlike, I remember when I was a kid, my father telling me, This is, this is, you are the son of so-and-so and the grandson of so-and-so.

This is the family you belong to. This is the name that you carry. And then exhorting me with stern warnings to live up to my family name.

[7:11] Not to bring dishonor to it. Well, this is what Paul is doing here too. The similarities is there. Paul is exhorting us.

This is who you are. Now, live up to the family name. The difference is Paul reminds us that it is God himself actually working in us to make us more and more into the image of our Lord.

So, Paul starts in verse 1. I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord. Remember, this is why the therefore is there.

He's reminding them. After all I've said, from chapter 1 to 3. Therefore, I, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called.

Paul, 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.

[8:21] Paul reminds them again. It's almost as if you notice here in verse 1. He's repeating the first way he introduced himself in verse 1 of chapter 3. He reminds them, I'm a prisoner for the Lord.

And he's saying that not as a shameful thing. He's proud to be a prisoner for the Lord. And he says, I, I, therefore, now urge you.

Look at the manner in which he's actually exhorting these people. By the way, I want to remind us of what Paul said last week. The Ephesians, the book, the epistle is written to the Ephesians.

Right? But it's written for us. Right? That's a key reminder. It's written to these people at this particular time. But it's also written for the church at large.

For us. So, when Paul says, I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called. That's us. But look at the way in which he does it.

[9:24] He doesn't command, really. He has the right to command it. After all, he's an apostle. Right? You can say, you ought to do this. And he's done it in other places in his epistles.

But that's not, he's not actually making himself the authority here. He says, I urge you. Because Paul recognizes, I'm talking to people who are spirit-filled believers in Christ Jesus.

Who know God. Who are in Christ. Who have a new nature. So, the commandment, the exaltation is almost pleading with us.

I heard you. I plead with you. I beg you. To walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called. The language, walking.

To walk. Is what actually is descriptive of the Christian life. Our whole life in Christ is a walk.

[10:30] This is not the first time the New Testament language is referred to our life in Christ as a walk. To walk in a manner. It's not a run. It's not a sprint, really.

It's a walk. And when you walk, you walk with other people. You're bringing people along. You meet people on the way.

You're having conversations. This is the manner. This is a good description of our life in Christ. It's a walk. And he says, I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called.

And then he says, with all humility and gentleness. By the way, this is, it's almost like an headline of the next three chapters. This is what I want to do.

This is what I'm going to tell you. This is what I want to tell you. This is what I want to tell you. This is, if you were to sort of put an headline or a theme in our next journey through the rest of Ephesians.

[11:44] It will be walking in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called. Notice that we've been called. Right? Then Christ Jesus has called us to himself.

In the power of the Holy Spirit. We are now his. He has done it. Now we are called to walk in that same way. The path that has been laid before us. And he gives us examples in the manner in which we ought to do it.

He says, with all humility and gentleness. With patience. Bearing with one another in love. Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

You know, humility is something that is a virtue in our day. And it's good that it's a virtue. By the time when Paul is writing this, humility was not considered a virtue.

There is an account. One of the commentaries I was reading. There is an account of one of the emperors. He refused to pay his praetorian gods after he was made an emperor.

[12:44] He refused to give him a bonus, really. Which is the typical practice of a previous emperor. Because he wanted. And they accused him of being humble. Meaning that he was trying to be, you know, humble by not paying them.

And they didn't mean that as a compliment. They meant it as your emperor. Why are you trying to be humble? This is beneath you. And guess what? That emperor didn't last long.

He was quickly replaced. But the point is, humility is not a virtue. At the time when Paul is saying this to the church. But he's saying to us to walk in all the humility.

And humility here is not also false modesty. Or falsely demeaning of ourselves. Rather, it is not being overly impressed with one's self-importance.

Note the distinction there. It's not being overly impressed with one's self-importance. And he says, walk with all humility and gentleness.

[13:48] With patience. This is what a theologian says about what it is to be a man of God who is truly humble. The man that is truly humble would neither claims any personal merit in the sight of God.

Nor proudly despises his brethren. Or aims at being thought superior to them. Or reckons it enough that he is one of the members of Christ.

And desires nothing more than that the head, Jesus Christ, alone should be exalted. This is what humility looks like in the family of God.

That we claim no merit of ourselves in the sight of God. Because we have no merit of ourselves in the sight of God. Right? For us as Christians, this is what should mark our life together in the body of Christ.

Is humility. And there's a reason why Paul emphasized it first. As what the manner in which we should walk is in the manner of humility and gentleness.

[15:02] Humility is when you recognize that you have no merit in yourself. Nothing that you bring to the table.

It is all of God's grace. And it's all of God working in you. Still to fashion you into the image of Christ. And then when you come. You see other brothers and sisters in Christ.

Other living stones being brought into God's holy temple. Also that God is doing the same in them. Maybe at different speeds. At different stages. But you recognize none of us have merit of our own. In this place. It is God working in us. And then we're working together. For what purpose? That Christ, our head, will be exalted. Humility and gentleness goes together as well.

Well, you can't. If you're. You can't be humble. You can't exercise humility without gentleness. And so.

[16:07] With patience. Bearing with one another in love. What does patience look like?

It's forbearance. What does it look like in the family of God? It is recognizing that your brother and sister is different from you.

Right? Notice here. We'll get to it in the last three verses of our study this morning. But we are one. Paul emphasizes that. But we are many as well. What do I mean by that? We are different people. We are not cookie cutters from the same carbon copy.

And that is to God's glory that we are that way. Imagine if we're all the same people. That would be a. It's actually. It would be a boring place. It would not be dynamic.

[17:09] It would not be. And when we try to. When we try to do that. Because we all. I will speak for myself. We all try to fashion other people into our own image.

Because we want people to just be like us. And think the way we do. And do the things the way we do it. But when that is actually done.

There is no joy. There is no happiness. There is no growth. In the family of God. God in his wisdom. Has brought us together.

Jews and Gentiles. Male and female. Black and white. Asians. And North American and Africans. He's brought us into one family. Different experiences.

And different backgrounds. We are one. But we are many. And how do we live together. Knowing all of this. Well we can live together. By being humble.

[18:05] And gentle with one another. Patient with one another. As we go along this walk. Of our Christian life together. Patience. Forbearance with one another.

So that when someone. Offends you. As will happen. In the family of God. You are patient with them. You go to them in love.

And confront them in love. And you are quick to forgive them. When are you quick to extend. And ask for forgiveness. To one another.

This is what it looks like. To be. Walking. In the matter. To which we've been called. Bearing with one another.

In love. Notice that. Paul emphasizes. That the. The soil. In which we do all of it. As he's prayed. Even in. In last week. In post.

[19:01] For post. Semper last week. The soil. The context in which we do all of it. Is in love. If there is no love. Our humility. And patience.

One another. Will have a. Will be only to. To a certain. Extent. You know. There's a way in which you can. You can pretend to be humble. And you can be gentle.

You can be patient. But it's not really. In the way. You can do all of those things. In fact. You're actually just boosting. Your own ego. Maybe I'm talking.

I know. I've seen that in myself. Maybe you can. You can. You can. You can recognize that. In which. In which. You can be gentle. But condescending to somebody. Right?

You can be. You can be patient. But you just. Who's this condescension? Even as you're being patient? And the person that you're being patient to. Knows it. And maybe even recognizes it.

[19:56] And they don't feel like you're being patient. They just. All they see is your condescension. But when we do it in love. When that is the heart and the root. In which all of these things emanate.

It is different then. Because you recognize. This is someone I care for. This is someone that has been blood bought. Brother and sister in Christ. A beloved by my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Redeemed. Just as I am redeemed. And you come alongside each other. That is what it looks like. That's why Paul emphasizes. All of this is to be done in love.

And what. To what purpose. Is all of it to be done? Ultimately. It is eager to maintain the unity of the spirit. In the bond of peace. Why should our Christian walk.

Be marked by humility and gentleness. With patience. From a heart of love. Towards one another. It is in order to maintain. Look at that word.

[21:01] Maintain the unity of the spirit. Notice. That Paul isn't saying. Do all of these things. So that. You can create unity. Or make unity. You are already unified.

You are one in Christ Jesus. Because of what God himself has accomplished. You are one. Maintain. Is the challenge.

Is the call for us. Is the exaltation. Maintain the unity of the spirit. In the bond of peace. In the bond of peace. I love the way he uses that word.

In the bond of peace. Bond here. Is kind of like a fastener. Like a glue. And it's meant. It's meant to preserve the unity of the church.

Right. Peace. Becomes like a glue. That preserves our unity. Right. You know. When you're in a place. Where there is no unity. It's marked by discord.

[21 : 56] And lack of peace. There is no peace. And you know. When there is a place. Where people are. One mind in Christ. Loving one another. Living and walking. In the manner in which God has called them.

In the manner we ought to walk. That there is peace. Peace. That's one of the. That's one of the. Primary indicators. Of people who are working. Walking in the manner in which we ought to walk. Exercising humility and gentleness. Patient with one another. Bearing with one another. Then love. There will be peace among them. Not that there won't be. Arguments and discord. But they will always strive for peace.

When there is. When there is. When there is. Brokenness. They will strive. Because. The peace is like a glue. A fastener. Binding one of. One to. One to another. And they will strive.

And seek out peace. When. In the church of Christ. There is discord. There is disagreement. And we let it persist.

[22 : 54] And we're okay. Coming in and out. Hearing God's word. Receiving God's body and blood. And. And partaking of him.

And we allow that. To remain. In our midst. We're telling a lie. About what God has done. And who we are. Do you know that is why.

We have a peak. We have peace. In the church. Oftentimes. We go around. We greet one another. During the time of peace. But primarily. It's meant to be.

And that's good. We ought to do that. I'm glad we do that. But it's also. A time when you go. To that brother or sister. Maybe that you are. Having an issue with. And you.

Say. Peace be unto you. And he. He or she. Extends peace back to you. And you commit to. Working out. Whatever the discord.

[23 : 47] You don't have to do it. Right there and there. But you commit. To working out. Whatever the problem might be. Between one another. You commit. To doing that.

Working through all of those things. And then you come. To the Lord's table. That's the significance. Of what we do. When we do that. But when you don't do that. You come to the Lord's table.

You're telling a lie. About who we are. And what God has done. In unifying us. Together. So. Look at the word there.

To maintain the. One of it. And why. Why. Why. Is all of this done. He proceeds then. In the next three verses. To give us seven affirmations. Up in which this unity.

That we are to be. Maintained. Is based on. Look at what he says. There is one body. One spirit. Just as you were called to one hope.

[24 : 43] That belongs to your call. One Lord. One faith. One baptism. One God. And father of all. This is. The most times.

In the. In the Bible. Where the. One has been used. In these three. In these three verses. He uses. One. Seven times. Paul is trying to emphasize.

Our unity. And the basis. Of this unity. Right. It isn't some man made thing. It isn't. Wishful thinking. On our part.

It is what God himself. Has done. We are one body. With one head. And Lord. Jesus Christ. We are one body. This is very.

The. Even the. The use of body. As an analogy. Is unique to Paul. And as I. And I think. This is not original to me.

[25 : 42] I listened to someone this week. And he pointed this out. And I thought it was interesting. Paul recognizes. That the church is one body. Uniquely. Because. Of his conversion experience.

What did the Lord. The risen Lord. Say to him. When he confronted him. Why are you persecuting me? And naturally. Paul looks around. Like.

Lord. I am not persecuting you. I am chasing after these. These. People of the way. These Christians. And. The risen Lord. Tells him. You are persecuting me.

When you persecute them. They are my body. I think. You can see. Paul's development. Of the church of Christ. As the body of Christ. From. From even his conversion.

You are one body. And this one body. Has one spirit. That unifies us. The spirit. The Holy Spirit. It is in the spirit. That we have been brought together. Into Christ.

[26 : 38] It is by the spirit. The spirit himself. Indwells among us. So that. You here. In the church of the Holy Trinity. Are. Have the one spirit.

The Holy Spirit. And. Our neighbors. Who are worshipping. Across the street. In the Presbyterian church. Have the one spirit. The same one spirit. Our brothers and sisters.

Who are worshipping. In. In. In Asia. Have the one spirit. Or in Africa. One spirit. We are marked. By this one spirit.

One body. One spirit. Just as you were called. To the one hope. Do you see the progression. One body. One spirit. One hope. What is the hope of our calling? It is this.

That. It is the one hope. That is in Christ. That we have been called. The gospel of Jesus Christ. Is that we have been saved. And redeemed. And they are one with Christ. We have one Lord.

[27 : 37] One risen Lord. Jesus Christ. Who is the head of the church. Who is the king of his people. Who is the savior of the world. We have one faith. And one baptism. And one God and father of Lord.

Do you notice. Even the triune God. In this. In this. In this foundation. Of our unity. Is God. The spirit. God. The son. And God.

The father. God. And we are. Bond. Bind together. In this. In this. In this affirmation.

Our reconciliation to God. As God's temple. Where he dwells. Is shown to us. In the way that we are reconciled. To one another. Let me say that again.

Our reconciliation to God. As God's people. As God's temple. Is shown. To us. And to the world. In the way that we. Are reconciled to one another.

[28 : 35] They go hand in hand. Right. So that when Paul says. You ought to be. Maintain the unity. He's expressing that. What that unity looks like. This is the motivation.

For our life together. In Christ. This is why we ought to live. With humility and love. This is why. Humility and love. Are necessary ingredients. For such a life together.

Without it. We can't live. A life together. That is. That is God honoring. Christ exalting. But left to you and I. I wonder. What we would have include.

As the foundations of unity. In the church. Look at what Paul says. In the last three verses. One body. One spirit. One hope. One Lord. One faith. One baptism.

One God. And father of all. If it's left to me. I know what I might have included. As foundations of unity. In the church. It will reflect. Things about me. My interest.

[29 : 30] The things I love to do. And I would love to see. This church. Be like this. Clones. Carbon copies of me. You know. And it's probably true. For all of us. To one extent or the other.

If we're honest with ourselves. But that is not. The foundation for the unity. It's not similarities. In interests.

It's not similarities. In backgrounds. It's not similarities. In outlook. Even to the world. It is.

God himself. He's the foundation. For our unity. We would do well. Not to add anything. To that foundation.

We would do well. To make them. The yardstick. Rather than our own. Personal preferences. Get a spray.

[30 : 35] God heavenly father. We thank you. For. You fashion us. Into one body. In Christ. Thank you lord.

That you are. The one. That. Has even made peace. With God the father. And you are our peace. That we have.

Peace with one another. We. We. Are no longer separated. We are one in Christ. We beseech you lord. That you will help us. To.

Maintain that unity. Which you have. Won. For us. Help us lord. In our lives. Together. In the way we interact.

With one another. To display. Humility. Love. Patience. Forbearance. With one another. Towards the end.

[31 : 30] Of maintaining the unity. That you have made. Among us. So that to the world. We will. Be. A display. Of your glory.

Of your gospel. Even in the way. We react to one another. That the world may see. And know. That these are spirit led. Spirit filled.

Followers of Jesus Christ. We pray this. In the name of our lord. And savior. Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen.