

# One + One + One = One

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[ 0 : 00 ] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Ephesians chapter 4. Begin reading in verse 1. If you look there, look along there with me. I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

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.

There is one body and one spirit. Just as you are called to the one hope that belongs to your call. One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. This is the word of the Lord. You know, we all have places that are special to us.

[ 1 : 27 ] Places we love to visit. Places we cherish memories of from times long ago. One of the places precious to me was my grandfather's farm.

I remember many a day walking underneath those sweet Georgia pines. Hunting coveys of quail with his dogs. Eating barbecue on the back porch.

There was no place I'd rather be than there. That plot of earth and the memories there are so precious to me. Years after that, there was an old chapel in the mountains of North Carolina. Where I was called into life through the gospel. I remember how the carpet felt on my knees. I remember the joy that flooded my heart.

I could have stayed there for the rest of my life. What are the places from your life that give rise to joy and comfort? To a sense of being home?

[ 2 : 26 ] When you think about the church, does it give rise to those similar deep affections? Do you have the same joy of the psalmist when he said, I was glad when they said, let us go to the house of the Lord?

Do you have the same sense of comfort and strength of the psalmist when he said, how good and pleasant is it for brothers and sisters to dwell together in unity? Do you have this similar longing to be there, to be among that number again, to be among the people of God?

Charles Spurgeon captures the way all believers are meant to think about the church when he says it is the dearest place on earth. Now, dear is not a word we use anymore generally.

Underneath the word, though, dear, is deep affection. Sometimes we begin a letter, dear so-and-so, but we don't always begin it with that deep affection.

But if we're writing to someone who means a lot to us, someone very important to us, someone a particular treasure to us, a dear friend, we might use that word.

[ 3 : 45 ] Now, Charles Spurgeon calls the church the dearest place on earth, not because Christians have found it to be the dearest place on earth, but because God himself has deemed it the dearest place on earth, the place most precious to him.

Spurgeon continues and he says, nothing in the world is dearer to God's heart than his church. Therefore, being his, let us also belong to it, that by our prayers, our gifts, and our labor, we may support and strengthen it.

Nothing in the world is dearer to God's heart than his church. Well, over the past three chapters of Ephesians, the apostle Paul has been on a tour de force to convince us that the church is the dearest place on earth to God himself.

He began in chapter one, telling us how God powerfully raised Jesus Christ from the dead and seated him far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and gave him as head over all

things to the church.

He continued and talked about how we were once dead, but God made us alive together with Christ. He went on to talk about how we were once lost, separated from Christ without hope and without God, but God found us and made us fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, members of the church in which Jesus Christ himself is the cornerstone.

[ 5 : 25 ] He continued in chapter three as if it could get even better to say that the church, what God has done, what God is doing in the church is the plan for all the world. He's saying the church is the mystery hidden for the ages.

All along, history was unraveling the plan of God in the church. History was not random chance events that just occurred, but the unfolding of a plan to pave the way for a people of every nation to be welcomed in Christ through the faithfulness of ordinary people and ordinary local churches.

It could not be more clear that the church is the dearest place on earth to God.

But is it the dearest place on earth to us? Are we stunned by what God is doing in the church?

Perhaps you were stunned when you began, but are you still there? Have you grown tired, tired of all the work of doing church, such that you forgot what it all means, what it all speaks of?

[ 6 : 44 ] Have you become annoyed, worn out from trying to overlook stumbles and slights and idiosyncrasies of those around you? Have you gradually become more and more irritable?

Have you hardened your heart? Have you given in to bitterness and anger? Are you apathetic, unemotional, indifferent to this institution that God loves most of all?

Are you on the bench, so to speak? Have you pulled away from the church? Not because you're tired or annoyed or whatever, but because you're just enjoying your life, too busy to devote yourself to what God has done.

Wherever we find ourselves this morning, we must not lose sight of what God is doing in the church. We must not lose sight of Ephesians 1 to 3. We must take it on, take it in.

In these verses, the Apostle Paul, he turns from unpacking what God has done in Christ to call us and tell us how to live now. And the first thing he urges us to do is to give our lives to protecting what God has done in the church.

[ 8 : 02 ] In a word, where we're going is make it an ambition of your life to live united with brothers and sisters in the local church. Make it an ambition. What are your ambitions?

Make it an ambition of your life to live united with brothers and sisters in the local church. Break this out in three points. The first is the origin of Christian unity.

After ascending the heights of all that God has done for us in Christ, Paul turns to recognize the origin of Christian unity.

Now, you immediately see in verse 1, there's this transition taking place. If you look down there with me, he says, I therefore a prisoner for the Lord.

Paul is clearing his throat in some ways. I therefore a prisoner of the Lord, just like he did in verse 1 of chapter 3.

[ 9 : 00 ] He's alerting us that he's about to talk about something different. He's addressing us on a different subject. Moreover, he includes this word, therefore. On the one hand, the therefore alerts us that he's about to say something different.

But on the other hand, the therefore points us all the way back to what he said in the first three chapters. The therefore points back to chapter 1.

All that God has done in choosing you before the foundation of the world, adopting you, redeeming you, making you alive, and bringing you into a family has been for a reason.

Not to live isolated treasures out there, scattered throughout the world that God has made, but to live together.

And the rest of the sentence tells us the meaning. He says, I therefore a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called. This is somewhat like a thesis for the next 16 verses.

[ 10 : 00 ] Carrying forward the emphasis in the therefore, Paul is urging us to live differently now, to walk differently now. Walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called.

Walking is the most basic human movement. When a baby is born, we wait in anticipation, or if you've had a few kids, you wait in dread for when that baby begins to move, when they finally learn to walk.

You're no longer recording it on two and three. Because it's the most basic human movement throughout the Bible, even what we read in Isaiah 43, walking is a metaphor for life, for conduct, for behavior, for lifestyle.

Paul is saying, the way you walk must change. If you remember in chapter two, once we walked in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires in the body and the mind, we walked not in the ways of the Lord.

But now he's saying, you must walk differently. Once Martin Luther was approached by a man who had become a Christian, desiring to serve the Lord.

[11:14] The man asked Luther, what should I do now that I've been saved? Luther responded, what is your work now? He said, I'm a shoemaker.

Luther responded, then make a good shoe and sell it at a fair price. You know, he's asking a question that we all should ask.

What should I do now? How should I walk now? How should I live now? And Paul answers the question immediately, the question that we might anticipate or respond with.

We must walk now, live now in a manner worthy of the calling to which we've been called. Four times in these six verses is this reference to call or calling.

Sinclair Ferguson says, one of the New Testament's most frequent one-word description of the Christian is that he is called. In the New Testament, it talks about there's a general call in the gospel that goes out to all who hear.

[12:17] Jesus says, come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. But not all who hear that call come. Many hear the words of the gospel.

Many are called, but few come. But most often, when the New Testament uses the word call or calling, it's referring to a different call.

There is a general call that goes out to all, but there is a specific call through the preaching of the gospel in which Jesus calls some sinners to himself forever. He said, John 10, my sheep know my voice.

They hear my voice and they follow me. And so through the preaching of the gospel, Jesus makes sinners alive and draws them to himself. And so most often, when we read this word call or calling, we're meant to reflect on the decisive action of God.

So when these come, when we read this, that's what we're meant to think about. Walking a man who are worthy of the calling of the decisive action of God on your behalf. We were dead, but God.

[13:28] If we go back to chapter two, we were lost, but God. When we read the words call or calling, we're meant to remember again those two unspeakably precious words, but God intervened on our behalf.

And so he says, walk in a manner worthy of that calling. How do we live worthy? Now to live worthy is not to make ourselves worthy.

To live worthy is to make sure that nothing in our life is unworthy. To live worthy is not the work of a slave trying to secure something we do not have, but it's the work of a son trying to make sure what we do have shapes every area of our life.

But the emphasis or one emphasis we could easily miss in this verse is that our calling is the common experience of everyone in the local church.

Paul is addressing the whole church in Ephesus. This is not his love letter to you or me. He's addressing his people. He says, I urge you all to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called, which you all have been called.

[14:56] There's a common experience among all brothers and sisters in the local church, and it is that we have been acted upon by God. That we've been apprehended by him.

We've been taken hold of him. We've been plucked out. We've been called out. We've been rescued.

In so many ways, when we preach the gospel, we're calling on God to do that work that only he can do.

You know, growing up in the South, there's so much about Christianity that really comes down to us. You might ask somebody, you're walking to the grocery store, are you a Christian? Yes, I was baptized when I was 11.

That's not the question I ask. You know, I'm tempted to say in response because, you know, baptism does absolutely nothing to make you right with God. In John 3, Jesus himself says,

whoever believes is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already.

[16:05] And so the only way to be accepted by God because of our sin and fallenness is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be born again by the Holy Spirit.

And so he's calling us to remember that our calling did not derive with our decision, but it derived with the activity of God on our behalf.

And this is wonderful news because Christianity is not management. It's not something we can perform. Christianity is a miracle of God or it is nothing at all. And so, if you would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, I'm calling for the Holy Spirit to fall on you that you might be born again because unless you're born again, you cannot see the kingdom of heaven.

You know, when attending church it's easy to make a list of all the ways that people around you are different than you. You probably made a little bit of a list when you came in this morning. I'm not married like her.

I'm not straight-laced like him. I'm not really into flannel. We gotta talk to that guy. I'm not really into flannel or flare jeans or man buns or tattoos like them.

[17:21] I don't grind my own wheat like those folks over there. I don't vote like him. I don't school like them.

I don't have the things she has and so on and so on. Oftentimes that's about as far as we go to picking a church. But when we do, we lose sight of the most important thing.

What we should be doing when we attend a church is has it happened to them? Have they been apprehended by God?

Is this a game or is this for real? Have they been called? God? Because that's the foundation.

C.S. Lewis once said that friendship begins with what? You too? And that's the way it's meant to begin in the Christian life. Not what?

[18:23] You like flannel too? Or what? You like homeschooling too? That's all garbage. The real connection connection is what?

You've been born again unsuspectedly by God? You too? That's the origin of Christian unity. That must be the origin of our unity in this church.

Or we'll just be a social club or some other affinity group. And we won't offer people the words of life. Point two, the virtues of Christian unity.

The virtues of Christian unity. After calling them to remember the origin of Christian unity, Paul calls them to put on virtues.

Look at verse two, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love. These are all virtues. Now that's an old word. You might have had that William Bennett book on your shelf growing up, the book of virtues.

[19:24] But it's just a word to refer to the qualities that make up our character. You have virtues. They might not be good ones, but you got some. But they're deeply rooted personal characteristics that shape the way we think and feel.

Now all of these virtues are churchy words. We have meanings in our mind for all of these words. We've heard them all our life. But why do these virtues matter here?

Why are they here? Why are these virtues to be pursued in this context and not other character qualities? And this is why. These virtues are vital for sharing life together.

The Christian life is not an isolated mission but a shared community of projects. And these virtues are vital. Each of these virtues are vital for maintaining unity in the midst of sin and failure and disappointment.

And the first two hang together. You can see that. He says, with all humility and gentleness together. Bernard of Clairvaux was once asked, what are the three most important virtues?

[20:30] And he responded, humility, humility, humility. Humility. Humility is always first. But it's first here because it's the first step to maintaining unity.

Humility begins in the heart. humility is not thinking less of yourself as if criticizing yourself and beating yourself is virtuous at all.

It is not. But humility is also not thinking more of yourself as if congratulating yourself and posturing yourself is virtuous because it is not. Humility is thinking of yourself rightly as a creature with real limitations, as a sinner with real need of grace.

And humility begins in the heart, but in the community, humility puts out a thousand fires before they start. Humility is quick to confess and so, so slow to judge.

Humility does not keep a list. Humility is often what makes someone a joy to be around. Humility is not territorial, looking for a platform for self-exaltation, but rejoices in the gifts and graces of others. [ 21 : 47 ] Humility finds nothing it is unworthy to do. In the hands of humility, the most menial task in the local church, which you could join on our set-up team, the most menial task in the local church become not a source of division and conflict, but the display of grace.

That's what humility does. It's a salve to the local church. It unites the local church, and humility often accompanies immediately with gentleness and gentleness.

Now, gentleness is not a limp-wristed virtue. It is strength under control. Humility is an F-16. It is incredibly sleek and strong.

The first fighter aircraft purpose-built to pull 9G maneuvers and able to reach a speed of Mach 2, but it is entirely, so all this sleekness and strength is entirely obedient to the will of the pilot.

It is massive strength under control. There's nothing virtuous about strength without self-control. Strength without self-control is what destroys marriages.

[ 23 : 02 ] It rips apart homes. It grinds communities into the ground. But strength under self-control is precious.

In the local church, gentleness is vital. A humble posture of heart moves out in gentleness to use all of its resources to help brothers and sisters.

Gentleness does not explode, but wields its strength to correct a sinning sister with softness.

Gentleness does not tear down, but uses its strong arm to restore a brother with care.

Strength is not in burning things down, not in beating your chest or blurting out what you feel. That's what our culture says. Blurt it out. Blurt out what you feel.

That's not gentleness. That's not, well that's definitely not gentleness. That's not strong. That's not admirable. That's not impressive. That's not virtuous.

[ 24 : 07 ] That's disobedience and ungodly. Gentleness. True strength is found in obeying God and maintaining self-control. He quickly adds patience with patience.

So with all humility and gentleness with patience. He just tacks that in. Axel Rose used to sing all we need is a little patience. Truth is all we need is a lot of patience.

This word patience is a compound word. It includes anger plus long time. A long time or a long time before anger.

Slow to anger. If the angry man has a short fuse, the patient man has a long fuse. It is the Lord who is patient in scripture.

Most often that's what we see. The Lord, the Lord of God merciful and gracious. Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. How many times have we tried his patience?

[ 25 : 11 ] How many times have we provoked him? How many times have we stiffened our back and gone our own way? Yet he has been patient with us.

If humility is a posture of heart and gentleness is using your strength to build up those around you, then patience is a refusal to fall into the trap of wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice.

In the midst of repeated provocation. Lest we be confused, patient is not sweeping things under the rug like good southern people like to do. That is not patience.

Generally, that does not help, though you should. Love overlooks a multitude of sins. Patience is absorbing wrong and not retaliating.

That's why patience is often translated long suffering. Because if it's anger, long time before anger, it's long suffering before anger as well.

[ 26 : 22 ] If you're going to live united with a group of sinners in a local church, you're going to need to be long suffering. He continues bearing with bearing with one another in love.

It could be translated enduring one another. Perhaps someone asks you, how's your church going? Well, we're enduring one another.

2024, it's a little rough. Got a little bit more endurance coming for us in 25. But we do it in love.

Think about that.

Just imagine a local church where these virtues are put on display. They are on display in this local church. I remember as a kid, long before the day of smartphones, we used to love to do all sorts of mischief in the summers, and we loved pestering beehive.

If you're into animals, I'm sorry. I was into terrorizing them most of my life. We'd ride around on our bikes, and we'd ride up to a bee's nest, perhaps in the notch of a pine tree or something like that.

[ 27 : 43 ] We'd get close, and we'd hear them buzz. But they're all inside there, just, you know, inside that nest. And we didn't want to look at them and look at the nest.

And so we would get a big stick of some sort, a log of some sort, and just jam it into the middle of the nest. And we'd wait until that buzzing started exploding out of the nest, and we'd run as fast as we could, hop on our bikes, and pedal away before we got stung.

And then about an hour or so later, we'd come back for round two and just spend an afternoon jamming the bee's nest and riding away for fun.

You know, the church can often be like a bee's nest. Always buzzing. Always stirred up. Always disputing about something.

Always in conflict. John Newton once said, an itch for disputing is the infection of the church.

[ 28 : 52 ] An itch for disputing is the infection of the church. The sober reality about life in the local church is that disagreement and conflict are here to stay.

That's the truth. The sobering reality about life in a local church is that disagreement and conflict are here to stay. Now, many people in the church, when the honeymoon is over, you know, when all the lip gloss wears off and you begin to hear the buzz, people run away.

I don't want to be in a church where I hear the buzz. They run away. Or many people, they just get near the church and you hear the buzz. You're trying to get a cup of coffee and you hear the buzz. You hear conflict.

Did you hear what she said? Or whatever it is. You know, they run away. Well, I want us to be a church that doesn't run away from the buzz. That's my burden. I want us to be a church that doesn't run away from the buzz.

As long as we are the church on earth, we will be a church that will have disagreement and conflict. I've said it again and again over the years. People don't leave churches over doctrine.

[ 29 : 56 ] People leave churches over the coffee. Generally, they leave over little things, little conflicts. Sister Susie took over the Sunday school class and I'm leaving because that was my class.

Whatever it is, just know there's an itch for disputing. And if you're not careful, it'll sideline you out of the church of Jesus Christ. So don't run and look for a church where you don't hear the buzz because you won't find one if you look hard enough.

But learn to put on gentleness and patience and love to help others do the same. God has called us to a life together that will only be good by putting on these virtues.

He continues, says, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. Eager to maintain the unity of spirit and the bond of peace with all this talk of humility and gentleness, patience, enduring one another.

Paul assumes that we're eventually going to ask, what is all of it for? Wouldn't it be better to just pack it up and go home? With all this disputing, all this buzzing, wouldn't it be better if we just did church from, stream church from home or something like that?

[ 31 : 09 ] We wouldn't have the conflict. Well, all of it is about maintaining unity. All the work is for something unspeakably precious to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

Did you notice it said maintain, not attain? Maintain unity. He's pointing out something so crucial to us. Unity is not something we make. Unity is what God has made in Jesus Christ.

God has called us together as one people, one new man in Christ Jesus. In him we have peace and through him we have access to God in one spirit to the Father.

And so he says he's united us in a bond of peace. In a bond of peace.

Paul began this passage saying he was bound, a prisoner for the Lord. Now he says in verse 4, you are bound. You are bound in peace to brothers and sisters in local church.

[ 32 : 20 ] Same way that he had the chains chained to a Roman guard. Lord, you're bound in peace in the local church.

The spirit has united us and so we must be eager to maintain it. There's a striking unity. I mean a striking urgency in this final verbal form in verse 4 or verse 3.

Eager to maintain it. Paul is saying you must not wait. You must not wait. You must not pass the buck.

You must not hope for better days. You must take action. Do it now. Whatever you must do to be unified in the local church to maintain this unity, you must do it.

That's what he's saying. That's the emphasis of the verse. You must do it. Point 3, the foundation of Christian unity. The foundation of Christian unity, after unpacking the origins of unity and the virtues of unity, Paul turns to the foundation of Christian unity.

[ 33 : 33 ] Verses 4 through 6 are just wonderful declarative statements emphasizing the ultimate foundation of our unity with brothers and sisters in the local church. They unpack, or you saw the repetition, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 7, ones, emphasizing their oneness.

What could be more unified than one in unpacking the foundation of our unity? We might begin, or we might assume that the Apostle Paul would begin with God who reigns over all and then work down to our unity in the local church.

But Paul does the reverse. He begins with our unity in the local church, in the body, and works up to God who is over all. The one God is the foundation of our unity that we're going to see in a moment. But first he begins, there is one body. Christ has called us into one body. The body of Christ throughout the world and separated right now between saints in heaven and saints on earth is one. There is not one body for Jews and one body for Gentiles. There is one body for all the people who are born again by the Spirit of God. Now I fear and I feel that we often read this word, one body, and assume it's just a metaphor.

[ 34 : 43 ] That's just a metaphor in the New Testament. It's one body. We are like one body. Although the New Testament never includes that word like. But if it's just a metaphor, then relationships with brothers and sisters in the local church is little more than a voluntary association.

It's little more than a partnership we enter when we're all feeling fed and happy. It's little more than a no fault, or a little more than the meaning of marriage in a no fault divorce age.

But it's not a metaphor. Sure, it feels like a metaphor because we're not united. We don't see. I mean, Romans, I mean, Hebrews 12 tells us that this morning we gathered right now.

We gathered in this moment right now with all the saints. We gathered into the throne room. If we could see what is going on in this moment, we would have been joining the chorus of all the people of God blessing the Lamb who is slain for the sins of the world.

So it's not a metaphor. That is actual reality. But right now, we are separated. So it feels that way. But what he's saying is our commitment to the local church must not include a metaphoric like thinking.

[ 36 : 04 ] We must not be a mere voluntary association. We must view one another as brothers and sisters bound in one body.

He continues one spirit. We're bound together in one spirit. We have access to God in one spirit. I love the way 1 Corinthians says it. Very much in the same vein.

Apostle Paul says, for just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one spirit, we were all baptized into one body.

Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, and all were made to drink of one spirit. It is this one spirit that unites every Christian. The one spirit that acts upon us in conversion and sets us apart as saints for his purposes.

And so it's one body, one spirit, one hope that belongs to our call. What is that hope? We were dead, now we're alive. We were lost, now we're found. We have a hope that we share with everyone who confesses the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 37 : 15 ] We have a living hope in him. There is one body, one spirit, and one hope. He continues, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

One Lord. One Lord that we confess. Jewish people would have said, every day the Lord our Lord, the Lord is one.

But Christians in the New Testament repeatedly use this title to refer not to the Lord God who rules over all, but our Lord Jesus Christ. Most often in the New Testament, Lord, L-O-R-D, lowercase means Jesus Christ because God has made him not merely the Messiah, not merely the Christ, but our Lord.

He has exalted him at the right hand of God, the Father on I. He is our Lord. He is like us in every respect, yet it's been exalted there because that's where he will take us to be with him forever.

Our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ, the first century, people were, I've told you this before, in the first century, they were fine with addition, not with subtraction.

[ 38 : 23 ] They were fine if you confess another God along with the other pantheon that you would have seen in Ephesus. But this is what Christians refused to do. They refused to recant that Jesus Christ was the Lord over all.

There is one Lord. There is one name under heaven by which we must be saved. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. He continued, one faith. One faith.

Now, faith is used in the New Testament to refer to our personal belief in God, but that's not the reference here. It's referring here to the system of beliefs that we receive, the pattern of sound words that we receive.

The idea is that we did not just receive the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We receive all the truth about God, all that has been revealed about this God who sent his son to seek and save the life, the law.

So Christianity is not founded on good vibes and good feelings. It's founded on a pattern of sound words, on a set of beliefs. It's founded on truth. The church is the pillar and buttress of the truth to maintain, to hold up the truth, the faith that was once received and was delivered to us.

[ 39 : 30 ] And so we confess one faith. We do confess and experience in the sense we've been apprehended by God, but we confess a faith, a system of belief.

We confess truth. Right now we're watching many churches compromise on truth, water down truth, and trim down truth. The church must hold the truth of God or the truth will be lost to lies forever. The church is the pillar and buttress. It holds up the truth. It doesn't create the truth. The truth is revealed in the scripture, but it holds it up, preserves it, and passes it out, proclaims it to the next generation.

That's what we're called to do. Truths these days are not always happy, not always palatable at first taste.

But Jesus himself said, if you're blessed as a man who builds his house on the word of God, when the storms come, you'll be on the rock.

[ 40 : 41 ] That's what we must do, one baptism. There is one true baptism. I'm sure it was full immersion. That was a joke for my Presbyterian fans, but what do you mean?

One baptism. There's only one baptism, the baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We're not saved by water. We're saved because that water unites us.

It expresses our union with Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection where he canceled forever the record debt that stood against us with his legal demand and then raised us up to walk in newness and light.

Finally, he concludes in verse six this majestic phrase, our one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

The climactic end to this string of statements establishing the foundation of our unity is the one God and Father of all. He says, our God is the God and Father of all.

[ 41 : 52 ] He owns all. The earth and the fullness thereof is the Lord's. Our God is the God and Father over all who rules all, who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

He set his throne in the heavens. His kingdom rules over all, but our God is also the God who is through all and in all, who is everywhere, present with the fullness of his being, filling the earth with his presence.

One God rules over all. Unity is not a side project for God. It expresses the unity within the Godhead. This God who rules over all calls a people to be united before him.

Mark Devon-Hefley says, the church is one and is to be one because God is one. Christians have always been characterized by their unity.

The unity of Christians in the church is to be a property of the church and a sign for the world reflecting the unity of God himself. Thus divisions and quarrels are particularly serious scandals.

[ 42 : 57 ] So you get it. The church is one, not because it's one body or one spirit or one hope, not because there's one Lord, one faith, one baptism, but because there is one God who rules over all.

And so to not be a united church is so serious because it proclaims a lie about God. God is not divided.

God is one. God is one. God is one. So how are you? Are you tired?

Tired of doing church? Have you pulled back? Are you annoyed?

Irritable? Are you apathetic, indifferent, complacent? I feel like we've been trying to figure out how to do church for seven, six and a half years now.

[ 44 : 20 ] I think we're on the verge of a test. I'm not a prophet or a son of a prophet. Churches like ours that go along united can so easily begin to divide.

We began, all our kids were elementary age, easy. You told them to sit somewhere and they sat there. Now they talk back to you.

Preferences between how to parent, how to school, how to do life, how to relate to the world, begin to emerge that are different. It's a moment like this that we must maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

I want to urge you to keep doing it. There may be somebody you need to go talk to today to unite with, to repent, do whatever you need to.

This is worth it to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. Don't let sun go down on your anger or on your conviction. Be reconciled with your brother or sister today.

[ 45 : 35 ] Make it an ambition of your life to live united with brothers and sisters in the local church at the interest of making you, well, not at the interest of making you, at the possibility of making you feel uncomfortable.

I want you to stand and hold the hand of the person next to you across the aisle. I'm just going to pray for God to unite our church and continue the work he began to do. So go ahead and stand and if you would, let me invite the band up too.

All right, let's pray. If you would, bow with me. Bow your head. Father in heaven, we praise you for uniting us as one. We think about our Lord who said, I do not ask for these only but for all who would believe in me through the word that they may be one just as you, Father, are in me and I in you that they may also be in us.

The world may believe that you've sent me. Lord, we thank you for one Savior. We thank you that we have a shared Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. that we were once far off and been brought near by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Lord, we thank you that we are one body, that we are members of one another, that you have bound us together so intimately that we call one another brother and sister.

[ 47 : 03 ] Lord, we thank you that we unite together in one spirit for through him we have access in one spirit to the Father and so we unite together in the spirit of God.

We thank you for one peace. He himself, our Lord, is our peace who has broken down all the hostility and united us together. We thank you for one story, the story of your steadfast love and faithfulness.

You have called us together and taught us how to live together. God, we thank you that you taught us to weep with those who weep. You've taught us how to rejoice with those who rejoice.

You've taught us how to bear one another's burdens. God, you've taught us how to receive encouragement, correction, and help. Lord, you've taught us how to be patient.

We thank you. Lord, I pray that you continue the work you began. Lord, would you help us to put off whatever is earthly among us, bitterness and anger and wrath and clamor and slander and malice.

[ 48 : 07 ] Lord, I pray against indifference and compromise. I pray against just a low-grade annoyance of one another. I pray that you would help us resist the devil.

There is an enemy who's waging war against our souls. There's an enemy to the work of God. Help us, God, to take up, put on humility and gentleness, patience, and love.

Help us to put on charity. seeing one another in the eyes of grace, to see encouragement. Lord, fill us with the Spirit that we might be more under His influence and follow His leading in maintaining unity and the bond of peace.

I pray that you would unite us. I pray against differences that so often divide churches and difficulties that so often divide churches and obstacles that so often scatter churches.

I pray against persecution and suffering for any of our leaders that so often scatter churches. I pray that you would mature us. Scripture says that we all would behold our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of His Spirit and be transformed from one degree of glory to another.

[ 49 : 20 ] Lord, I pray against a comfortable church life in the sense that we become comfortable with one another's sins. I pray that you'd help us to grow. I want to grow, Lord.

I want to know you. I want to love you more. I want to put off whatever is in the way. I pray this for this church, God, that we would run after you, that the fruit of the Spirit would fill our lives and the fruit of His gifts would mark our church.

I pray that you would keep us. You cause us to be born again to a living hope, to an inheritance as imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept in heaven for us and you promise that you will keep us by your power until that day.

Would you keep us, God? We have so little confidence in our ability to keep ourselves, but we know that you love us with an everlasting love and there'll never be more sin in us than grace and mercy in you.

Thank you. We praise you. Amen. Amen. Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

[ 50 : 35 ] For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at [TrinityGraceAthens.com](http://TrinityGraceAthens.com).