

Eph 4.4-6 The Nature of Unity

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[0 : 00] The New Testament teaching is that conduct is always the outcome of truth and teaching. It is not by experience or intuition.

So it's not that if somebody has a certain experience, that then Christian conduct is to conform to the experience, and then as such, doctrine to conform to the conduct that conforms to the experience.

So experience or human intuition does not form the conduct or the doctrine. Rather, the New Testament teaching is that conduct is always the outcome of truth and teaching.

Right practice is the result of right doctrine or right knowledge. Now in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 3 speaks about unity, endeavoring to keep the unity.

Now the context, the greater context of that is that chapter 4, verse 3 is preceded by 4, 1-2. Right? And 4, 1-2 speaks about walking worthy according to your calling.

[1 : 04] So this then brings to mind that chapters 1-3 of Ephesians is the basis and background of the pre-existing unity that is to be kept, it is to be maintained, it is to be stayed within, it is to be preserved.

It's not go out and make a unity that does not exist, rather it is a keep the unity, which is based upon the doctrine of chapters 1-3 of Ephesians.

So it's not unity then doctrine, if it is compatible, but unity from harmony of doctrine. Now, chapter 4, verse 3, which speaks of unity, is not a standalone verse.

So we don't want to just read that statement and take it as a standalone verse without the greater context of what's been happening in Ephesians so far. So if you had picked up the Bible and started reading in Ephesians chapter 1 and been reading all the way through, when you get to Ephesians 4, verse 3, what's in your mind is what's already been worked through in Ephesians.

So what is the greater context of this unity that's pre-existing? If it's keep the unity, unity is there, keep the unity. So what is this unity that he's speaking about where it's a matter of walking in a way that balances our doctrine?

[2 : 36] So doctrine needs to be balanced, needs to balance the way in which we walk. So unity, walking in a way that's balanced by the doctrine, what is the doctrine that he's gone through?

Well, if you remember in Ephesians chapter 1, this would be a very quick overview. Essentially, Ephesians chapter 1 speaks of the covenant of redemption, and then Ephesians chapter 2 speaks about the covenant of grace. So, in other words, chapter 1, covenant of redemption, salvation from the perspective of an eternal God.

That God the Father purposed redemption by electing the redeemed, that the Son accomplished redemption by purchasing the redeemed, and that the Holy Spirit applies redemption by claiming the redeemed.

So the work of salvation from the perspective of the Trinity. And then, as we progress into chapter 2, it's the work of salvation, the covenant of grace, as the individual, or as the believer, experiences it.

And you he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sin. For it is by grace you have been saved. This is not of yourselves, it is the work of God. And then it progresses to see how then there is a unified new creation, no longer dividing wall, and that believers are constituent members of a spiritual temple built on the foundation of Christ, which is the church, the household of God.

[3 : 55] So what is that doctrinal foundation then of the unity that he's speaking of, that needs to be kept? So this must be the undergirding factor of the unity we consider, so it's not to go out and create a unity that doesn't exist.

This is important, particularly when we think of the ecumenical movement, where it was trying to embrace those who did not have an understanding of salvation, according to Ephesians chapter 1 to 3.

Those who think of salvation by way of works, or by merit of the saints, that is into a bank which we reach into, for example.

But another example would be in Acts 4.42. As the church progressed, it was they continued steadfastly in, first, the apostles' doctrine, and then fellowship.

Fellowship followed their continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. So considering the context of the unity behind what 4 verse 3 speaks of when it says keep the unity, it is based on a Trinitarian work of redemption.

[5 : 11] Consider, for example, if somebody, if you were in a room, and somebody were to think that the work of salvation was their own doing, and in that room they had certificates and trophies and medals congratulating all the ways in which they've saved themselves.

What the Bible does, and when you read through Ephesians 1 to 3, is it takes down all of those self-congratulatory medals and certificates that congratulates self or I or me for the work of salvation, and then as it takes down all of those certificates and trophies and medals, then what's left is nothing that points to myself, but it leaves you beholding the undeniable greatness and power of God in all of his mercy and grace and love.

That a sinner was purposed, purchased, and claimed by God. You were dead in sin and a slave to the lust of the flesh, and you he made alive. So we have the doctrinal background of chapters 1 to 3.

Now having heard what right doctrine is, now you must balance right doctrine with your practice and conduct. That is, walk worthy.

Here's right doctrine. Now ensure that your walk becomes it, or ensure that it fits. In Titus 2, 10, it says, Adorn the doctrine.

[6 : 42] So right practice adorns right doctrine. As Paul shifts from the right doctrine to right practice, he appeals to endeavor to keep unity.

So unity adorns doctrine as clothing adorns a person. So to say unity without having the doctrine, or unity apart from doctrine, would be like walking around carrying a sweater on a hanger, or telling everybody, look how good this sweater looks on.

If unity adorns doctrine as a sweater adorns a person, then trying to create unity, where there isn't the unity of doctrine, is like a sweater without the person.

There's nothing that it's adorning. Ephesians 4, I will read all of Ephesians chapter 4. Therefore, my beloved...

Oh, sorry. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

[8 : 00] There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

But to each one of us, grace has been given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, he says, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men.

Now this, he ascended, what does it mean but that he also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.

And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men and the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ.

From whom the whole body joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does it share, causes growth in the body for the edifying of itself in love.

[9 : 35] This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart, who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard him and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man, which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man, which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, putting away lying, each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.

Let him who stole, steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice.

[11 : 04] And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Our great God, again, we thank you for your word. And as we seek to unpack the meaning of the message that's contained in this text, we pray, Lord, that truth would be spoken and that you would attend the proclamation of your word by your spirit, that the saints would be edified, and that sinners would be convicted, and that your kingdom would be advanced.

We pray that you would build your church, and we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So our text today is Ephesians chapter 4, verses 4 to 6. And in this text, what this text is saying is that the nature of the unity of the unified new creation does not originate from man, but from the triune God. And we think of unity, a unified new creation, unity, unified, and a new creation. So, well, let's go back to creation. What is creation? The work of creation is God's making all things of nothing by the word of his power in the space of six days and all very good.

So the work of creation, two particular things to point out, is of nothing, God made all things of nothing by the word of his power. The working of God's almighty power of creating out of nothing. Now, the church being a unified new creation is likewise God making life where there is no spiritual life by the word of his power.

[12 : 45] The church is a new creation and is also a work of God alone. J.C. Ryle wrote, Let us believe that no sinful soul can be saved without the work of all three persons in the blessed Trinity.

And let us rejoice that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost who cooperate to make man do also cooperate to save him. There is no salvation without the work of the Trinity.

There is no salvation without the work of each person of the Trinity. We cannot remove the Spirit from the work of the Trinity. We cannot remove the Son from the work of the Trinity. And we cannot remove the Father, sorry, from the work of salvation.

We cannot remove the Spirit's applying of redemption and quickening and regenerating and sealing. We cannot remove the Son and the work of redemption and his accomplishing redemption by atoning for sin and his positive righteousness.

righteousness. We cannot atone for our own sin. The blood of lambs and bulls will not atone for sin and we do not have a positive righteousness to stand before God. We need the Son as our mediator between God and man.

[13 : 59] Nor do we want to remove the Father from the work of salvation, the Father who purposed redemption in electing the redeemed and giving them to the Son. There is no salvation without the work of the Trinity.

To deny the Trinity is to deny salvation. In our text, you'll see there's one Spirit, one Lord, one God and Father.

In our text, it says one, one, one, one. It says one seven times. This is a seven-fold unity and new creation harmony. Unity, beginning uni, means one.

Unified. The unified, new creation, reconciled to God and to man. Now unity, this unity that's speaking of in Ephesians 4, is not a work of man, but a work of God.

It is not man-generated, nor is this unity a decision of cooperation. It's not a church or an organization deciding to cooperate with another movement or organization where there is not unity in a decision to cooperate for unity.

[15:13] This is contrary to the unity that's speaking, that's the biblical unity, the biblical concept of unity. Rather, what God has produced and currently exists, hence, for, verse 4, starts with there is.

And that's why Christians are to keep the unity. There is endeavor to keep. This is not an organization of various bodies.

It is one body. One body with no dividing wall. One body produced by the Spirit of God. It is not a body produced by man.

It is a body produced by the Spirit of God. One body of blood-bought sinners, redeemed from sin and death, made alive as a unified new creation. One body, that is, the Church.

The body of Christ with Christ as head. This term, the body, is an analogy of the organic nature of unity and how each member of a body works together.

[16:17] With so many various parts with different functions, they all, they're all bound together and function together. I'm sure you've heard this saying, having two left feet. The term of saying two left feet means clumsy or imbalanced.

Imbalanced because it's not in unison. Not in unity of working together. Unity does not have its origin in man, but in God.

It is originated in the triune God. So that brings us to one spirit. In our text, you say, it says one spirit. This speaks of redemption applied.

In the Trinity, when we think of the Father purposing redemption, the Son accomplishing redemption, and the Spirit applying redemption, one spirit brings to mind redemption applied or grace applied from the perspective of Ephesians 2 when we consider the sinner's perspective of being saved.

The Spirit effectually calls, convicts, quickens, and enables us to believe and enlightens our understanding. Hence, the term where it says as you were called.

[17:30] In Ephesians 4, there's one body and one spirit just as you were called. Your calling. There is no Christian unity with those who are not redeemed by Christ.

Those who have entered into his unity according to Ephesians 1, 4-6 when we see how God saves and experienced in 1, 12-13 when we see how sinners, how salvation is applied to sinners.

Redemption applied by the Spirit being called out of darkness and death into marvelous light and life and granted the graces of faith and repentance. One spirit just as you were called, called out of darkness into marvelous light.

Romans 8, 30 says, Moreover, whom he predestined, these he also called. Whom he called, these he also justified and whom he justified, these he also glorified.

The Baptist Catechism answers the question what is effectual calling? Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit whereby convincing us of our sin and misery and lightening our minds and the knowledge of Christ and renewing our wills.

[18:38] He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel. Just as you were called, effectually called by the Spirit out of darkness into marvelous light.

Those whom God effectually calls, he also freely justifies by pardoning their sins and by accounting and accepting them as righteous for Christ's sake alone, by imputing Christ's active obedience into the whole law and passive obedience in his death for their whole and sole righteousness by faith which is not in themselves.

It is the gift of God. A person cannot merit a right standing before a holy God by our own works. It is only by the righteousness of Christ. Furthermore, in answering the question of what is justification, justification is an act of God's free grace wherein he pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in his sight not only for the righteousness of Christ imputed sorry, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

One spirit, one hope of your calling. Consider hope and calling. Calling, that is effectual calling, we're sealed with the spirit.

Being sealed with the spirit as we saw in Ephesians chapter 1 13 and 14 is the guarantee of our inheritance which speaks to our hope. And our hope being effectually called and sealed by the spirit, our hope of our inheritance, one hope is a living hope.

[20 : 19] It is a living hope because the Lord Jesus Christ is resurrected and ascended as our mediator. And the Lord Jesus Christ will return, judge all evil and consummate his eternal kingdom of glory with the blood bought people robed in his righteousness in a state of glory and no longer able to sin declaring his glorious praises in his presence a world without sin or pain or suffering or death a world without end eternal joy and eternal glory.

Unity originating in God comes from being united to Christ which brings us to one Lord verse 5 one Lord which is Christ Christ our redeemer Christ our head Christ the husband of the church of one body there is no other there is no alternative there is no no other way of salvation there is only one by which we must be saved he is the Lord of glory the Son of God the second person of the Trinity the God man truly God truly man two natures united to the one person the Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things and we through him the only mediator between God and man Christ's work is perfect it is complete it is not a cooperative as in it's not

Christ and Mary it's not Christ and the Pope it's not Christ and my work it's Christ alone one Lord a belief in this reality and looking to no one else but Christ is absolutely essential for Christian unity one Lord one faith one faith receiving and resting on Christ alone casting one soul upon the truth of God's word embracing Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel embracing the promises of God one Lord one faith one object of faith salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ alone faith so one Lord one faith that one faith that it's speaking of faith is the alone instrument of justification there's no other way of salvation justification before God by faith in Christ alone furthermore when it says one faith one faith being one system of belief it is unity of agreement and speech 1 Corinthians 1 10 says now I plead with you brethren by the name of our

Lord Jesus Christ that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment this is unity of belief all agreeing speaking the same thing no divisions same mind same judgment this is not a matter of disagreeing but pushing doctrine out of the room in order to pretend to agree but this is laboring and endeavoring to be in agreement to be united in a system of belief that is one faith now you might think well this is all well and good but it's just not practical I don't see how it would work everybody all the every Christian has different convictions on different things and you can't make somebody believe something contrary to their conviction so it's just not practical I don't see how it would work and that's a good point however when we consider the greater one of the greater themes of the book of Ephesians what do you think of when I ask you what's one of the main themes of the book of Ephesians when Paul says that he prays for the saints what did he say he prays for he says that you may know the exceeding greatness of the almighty power of God so how could a dead lost guilty condemned sinner stand in the presence of a holy and righteous God it's just not practical I don't see how it could work and indeed it can't but for man this is impossible but for God all things are possible so cast your gaze on Christ resurrected and exalted cast your gaze on the almighty power or exceeding greatness of the almighty power of God and trust in him or you might think well being a Christian being saved I just can't mortify sin there's remaining corruption that which I ought to do I don't do and that which I ought not to do that is what I do it's just to mortify sin it's not practical I just don't think it'll work again this is true the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak but this is not about man's strength it's not about man again cast your gaze on Christ resurrected and exalted cast your gaze on the exceeding greatness of the almighty power of God and trust in him so then also how can believers be unified in a system of belief when there's remaining corruption when there's differences of opinion with man's strength this is impossible but we're to cast our gaze on Christ resurrected and exalted cast our gaze on the exceeding greatness of the almighty power of God and trust in him so more practically how can this possibly be attained in a fallen world where all believers have remaining corruption and no one other than

[26 : 14] God is infallible well I'm glad you asked because the reason why this comes up is because the apostle is preparing us for what's to come ahead in the rest of chapter four so you'll have to continue to come for the rest of the series to find out those details for now one Lord one faith one baptism so one baptism that is being incorporated into one Lord being baptism is a sign of being incorporated into one Lord being united to the Lord Jesus Christ as is signified in the ordinance of baptism being immersed under the water is being incorporated into Christ's death and burial and coming out of the water symbolizes being raised to new life and also points forward towards the redeemed being raised in Christ in glory and it points towards our hope

Romans 6 3 to 5 we were buried therefore we were buried therefore with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father we too might walk in newness of life for if we have been united with him in his death like his we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his we know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin and also Ephesians 2 5 to 6 even when we were dead in trespasses made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so what does this bring to mind what greater theme does this bring to mind if we if baptism is being incorporated spiritually incorporated into Christ's death burial and resurrection and Christ died for sins once for all notice notice his once for all sacrifice and in our text one baptism the word oblation means a sacrifice essentially

Christ's oblation is not repeated one Lord one faith one baptism Christ's oblation is not repeated but a once for all sacrifice a finished work the spirit quickens us to new life and unites us to Christ and Christ leads us to the father that brings us to one God and father verse 6 when God and father of all was above all through all and in you all now if you're familiar with the Shema the Jews would daily repeat memorize and repeat and teach that is the beginning of Deuteronomy 6 4 hear oh Israel the Lord our God the Lord is one and Malachi 2 10 says have we not all one father has not one God created us there's one

God in essence not three gods one God in essence who created all things sustains all things plans all things governs all things limits all things directs all things all of the perfections all of the attributes that are ascribed to the essence of God apply to all three persons of God and all the work that God accomplishes is a work of God of the one God and knowing the only true God is the highest good not just knowing him as creator but knowing him as a redeeming God knowing God personally as heavenly father John 17 3 and this is eternal life that they may know you Romans 8 15 you have received the spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry Abba father one God and father of all all of the redeemed share unity as children of the same father and co-heirs with Christ one God and father of all who is above all and through all and in you all now the part where it says who is above all and through all and in you all this speaks to the other than this of God or the transcendence of God

God is other than creatures he is above all his transcendent in existence in essence in perfections in excellencies and sovereign universal dominion over all of creation and sovereign providential dominion over the church Thomas Aquinas on the text said majesty is appropriated to the father power is appropriated to the son and grace is appropriated to the holy spirit now in conclusion the only christian unity that exists originates from salvation that is of the one god and that is the triune god unity in trinity in trinity in unity there is no other god and there is no other way and there is no other christian unity those who are the children of god who have been made alive by the spirit united to christ and led to the father are one body and that is the body of christ we ought to love the body of christ as an extension of our love for christ as a body is a component connected to its head that love for the body of christ will encounter difficulties that we are to respond to as ephesians 4 1-3 says with gentleness patience and long suffering the very fact that it's in there demonstrates that we need to we need to hear it if there were not any challenges if there was not any difficulties then it would not need to be told to us how to respond to them now when it says to respond with gentleness patience and long suffering long suffering that is to suffer long to suffer long means that you will suffer so in terms of gentleness patience and long suffering to each other to suffer means that you will suffer my remaining corruption and that means that you will suffer the remaining corruption of everybody around you and that also means that everybody around you will suffer your remaining corruption but God's word gives us help and we are told this because we need it as we suffer fellow living stones of the spiritual new testament temple we are to suffer long with gentleness and patience and in the bond of peace as we endeavor to maintain or preserve unity that originated from the one triune

[34 : 17] God having worked through Ephesians chapter 1 to 3 it cannot be reasonably disputed that salvation is entirely a work of God if a person thinks that they deserve God's unmerited favor then they require an accurate view of man and sin and the fall and the magnitude of God's holiness and justice God's salvation by grace alone is in no way merited it is in no way deserved the justification of the redeemed has not one thing to do with the guilty sinner at enmity with the holy God that is other than their sin that renders them in utter need of redemption it does have everything to do with the eternal purpose of an eternal almighty God who is working out his plan of

redemption in time and saving dead lost sinners giving them repentance and faith to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel and all to the praise of his glory furthermore seeing that all of salvation seeing that all of salvation is of

God that is the one triune God all glory is due to God alone and not man all glory be to the father and to the son and to the holy ghost purposed from the beginning and still now in God's purpose of redemption and he is faithful he will repeat it he will complete it not just because he has promised it but by the very perfection of who he is as almighty unchangeable eternal uncaused God or as my son says it the firstest and chiefest being chapter four verses four to six there is one body and one spirit just as you were called in one hope of your calling one lord one faith one baptism one god and father of all who is above all and through all and in you all our great god we thank you that in your greatness and your almighty power your almighty power which created all things of nothing by the word of your power your almighty power which raised christ from the dead resurrected ascended glorified your almighty power which made dead sinners alive we thank you lord for your almighty power when we are weak when the flesh is weak when man's strength is inadequate we thank you for your work of salvation that you are working out your perfect plan of redemption thank you for the hope the inheritance of the saints which we look to and we long for christ's return pray these things in jesus name amen if you take your hymnals we'll stand and sing gloria patri you and