

Ephesians 4:1-6 by Wayne Barber

PREVIOUS

Ephesians 4:1-3: WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY, PART 1

by Dr. Wayne Barber

NEXT

We are turning the corner and are beginning to move into those last critical chapters of the book of Ephesians. I hope you have gleaned something from our study in chapters 1-3 on the Riches, the Reasons and the Revelation of our salvation.

Now we turn to the second part of Ephesians. The first three chapters have to do with identity. It is just like in the covenant relationship. If you have ever studied covenant, there were always two parts. The first part had to do with identity. That is the fun part, to find out what we have got in Him, who we are, whose we are in Him. The second part is a little more damaging when it comes to our flesh because it makes us realize then the responsibility that goes along with the identity He has given us in Jesus Christ. Chapters 1-3 was our identity, riches, reasons and revelation of our salvation. Chapters 4-6 are the responsibilities of our salvation.

The hinge between chapters 1, 2 and 3 and chapters 4, 5 and 6 is the prayer in verses 14-21 of chapter 3. That is the hinge. It sums up what has been said and sets up what is about to be said in the remaining chapters of the book. Well, let's begin to get into chapter 4.

In verse 1 he says, "I, therefore." Now, whenever you see a "therefore," you always want to look to see what it is there for. You always want to look back. We have already looked back, and we know now what he is talking about. "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." Let's nail down what it means to walk in a manner worthy. As we understand that we can jump into the chapter.

The phrase "walk in a manner worthy" has the idea of living a life in such a way that it measures up to something. Think about a set of scales. If I have ten pounds on one side of the scale, I need ten pounds to put on the other side so it will balance. If I put 10.5 on the other side, it would be out of balance. If I put 11, it would be out of balance. I need ten on one side and I need ten on the other. The word "worthy" takes us even a second step. The word for "worthy" is the word *axios*. It refers to the intrinsic value of something.

There is a difference in the intrinsic worth of something and an appraisal of what that intrinsic value is. I'll give you an illustration. When I was growing up, my father had a barrel downstairs and in that barrel he had some old telephones. They were the kind of telephone that you had to pick up the little handle and put it up next to your ear. Dad would take those phones and make lamps out of them. He was just brilliant in what he could do with his hands. He would attach an electrical cord to it and when you took the receiver off the lamp would come on. When you hung it up, it would go off. He would make them for minimal cost for people. He just enjoyed doing that. Back in his day, those phones didn't have the intrinsic value they had a little later on. I took that barrel full of phones and stuck it in our garage or basement. It kind of followed us around. I never understood what I had in that barrel, what the worth of those phones really was.

One day a man came over to our house. He said, "I would like to have some of those phones." I said, "Sure." He gave me a check maybe for \$25 or something like that. My appraisal of their value was nowhere close to the intrinsic, inherent value of those phones. I found out a few weeks later what they were worth. Oh, it hurts.

Friend, what is your value of your salvation? The value of your salvation is going to determine how you live. You see, if it has not affected your lifestyle, if it has not affected the way you talk to people and about people, if it has not affected the way you treat others, then friend, you have got a low appraisal value of something that is intrinsically worth far beyond what you have even realized yet. Therefore, your life is not measuring up to any standard that God requires. Walk in a manner worthy. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 gives you the intrinsic value of your salvation. Therefore, measure up by the way you allow it to affect your life.

So if our view of salvation means everything when it comes to living, how you look at your salvation dictates how you live. Look at what it meant to Paul in verse 1 of chapter 4. He says, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord." Now we know what it meant to Paul, don't we? Paul said, "I have completely submitted to His lordship." Why? Here is a man who knew who he was and knew whose he was. He understood what happened to him at salvation. It overwhelmed him and changed him for the rest of his life.

When I get to heaven one day, I am going to look at Jesus for about a million years, maybe two or three, but after that, I want to get over there next to Paul. I want to spend at least a couple of hundred centuries with him. You see, he didn't get any more or any less than what I got when I got saved. The difference is, he understood what he got. He was overwhelmed with what he got, and it made all the difference in the world in the way that he lived. He was submitted to the Lordship of Christ. I love what Philippians 1:21 says. Paul said, "I can't speak for anybody but myself but 'For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.'" He said, "Do you want to know what makes me tick? Buddy, I am so overwhelmed with my salvation, I'll never be the same." He was writing from prison when he

wrote that! Now that kind of view of salvation, friend, will radically change how you live, but it won't change until you begin to realize what happened to you when you got saved. You begin to realize the resource you have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are getting the idea now. We have the intrinsic value so now measure up. How is this going to work itself out in our relationships in life with each other? Well, first of all, it will be reflected in the corporate unity of the body. Look at verses 2 and 3. Paul tells us how to walk. He says, "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We will go back up to verse 2 in a minute, but you have to look at verse 3 first. There is a constant thing going on with people who have a high view of salvation. Those people preserve with every ounce of fiber in their body the unity already given them in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's talk about that for a second. Verse 3 says we "preserve" it. We don't produce it. Now doesn't that relieve you a little bit? I am so grateful. You know, some people think we produce unity. They say, "If you will just have more fellowships, if you just had more flock groups, if you could drop down to smaller groups and interact with each other better, if you could have more fun and get to know each other, maybe name tags."

Friend, if you will look at the passage he didn't say that you produce it. He said that you preserve it. You've got to see something here. I don't need to know your name. I don't need to know where you are coming from. If I am one with God by surrendering to Him, if my view of salvation has rendered me a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ and if the same is true in your life, friend, you and I are one! The Spirit produces it! We can have 5,000 in the worship service and still have unity. Unity is not what is produced by man. It is what is preserved by our willingness to walk worthy of that which God has done in our life. God has already given us unity. He says it in the verse.

Look again at verse 3:

"to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

The word "bond" refers to a ligament or a tendon. I like that. "Do you mean to tell me that we are linked together even though we don't know each other?" Listen, I know some folks from Hotzig, Romania, and we are bonded together. I don't know their language. Why is it I can feel a oneness with the people from Hotzig? Because the Holy Spirit lives in them and the Holy Spirit lives in me. He bonds us together. There is a ligament that is holding us together.

Do you know what the word "peace" is? The word "peace" is the word that means the absence of conflict, the absence of dissension. Isn't that incredible? Now, he says the Holy Spirit, when He came into your life, bonded you to the family of God. As a ligament, He made you one with the family of God. When we enter into covenant with the Lord Jesus, we enter into covenant with one another. We are ligamented together. We are united together. We are bound together by this ligament. The peace is the signal of that. It is the fruit of the Spirit, remember? The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. It is something He produces in our life. It means the absence of conflict. It means when two things go together and there is nothing in between that keeps them from cohering.

What does that mean if I am preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace? Well, there are several attitudes that will be seen in my life if I am. The signal that you are filled with the Spirit of God is not that you can speak in tongues, contrary to many people's opinion. The signal that you are filled with the Spirit of God is not that you can do some ecstatic gift. It is not that you can stand on your head. The signal for being filled with the Spirit of God is a love bond, a oneness with other believers. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples by the fact that you love one another."

Now Paul says, "Since God has provided you with the abilities that you didn't have and given you every spiritual blessing, now measure up to that standard and let it be seen by the fact that you are diligently preserving the bond of peace that the Holy Spirit has produced within you."

What is the first attitude we have to have? It says it in verse 2, "with all humility." What in the world does this word "humility" mean? Friends, it frames the whole thought. If you miss this word, you have missed the whole thing. The word is the Greek word *tapeinophrosune*. It means to think less of yourself. The word *tapeinos*, is the word for humble. It is the word that means to get down as flat as you can possibly get so nobody can see you at all. That is the thought. It means to be level with the earth. The word *phren*, is not just the word mind. It is the word that speaks of a framed attitude of the mind. You will recognize that from another text which we will look at in a moment. It is an attitude. So what is the attitude we must have towards ourselves? The attitude is that we are not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. We need to get down where we belong. Listen, the only way up is to get down before God. Do you want a proper estimate of self? Here it is right here. Die. Get down, flatten out, so that the Lord now in His divine ability can continue to keep you united with the body of Christ.

There are three things that I want you to see about humility. Paul uses it three times in three different books. Each one teaches us something about that little quality of humility. It might be helpful for us. Look in Acts 20:19. This is a very important scripture because Paul is talking to the elders of Ephesus. He has brought them down to Miletus. I want us to see how he uses this word here. In this passage, we see that the attitude of humility is essential to our serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Did you know that? You know, some people think, "God is so glad to have me on His team." That is about as unbiblical as anything you could ever say. God doesn't want

to use anything about who we are. He wants us to be an empty vessel so He can infuse His power in our life. Humility is the essential attitude of our serving Christ.

Let's back up to verse 18 to catch the context.

"And when they came to him [the elders coming down to Miletus from Ephesus], he said to them, 'You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all **humility**.'

That is our word right there. The first point you want to see about this essential attitude in serving Christ is that when it is there, everybody else knows it. It says "you know, you saw, you experienced." Paul said, "You know that I was serving out of humility." How did they know? Paul didn't tell them.

I like what Ian Thomas said,

**"I can't.
He never said I could. He can.
He always said He would."**

That is the essence of humility. I want to tell you, when you have that attitude, everybody knows it. Everybody is aware of it. You are not aware that they are aware, but they are aware. Paul said, "You know, you know. You've got to know."

Secondly, if humility is real it will provoke the religious. Look at Acts 20:19:

"serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews."

Is he talking about all Jews? No. He is talking about that religious group. I want to tell you something. Religion is what man does, and therefore, man has to stand up to do it. Christianity is what God does, and man has to get down in order to allow God to do it. The two cannot peacefully coexist. You see, religion does not coincide with Christianity. When you start being humble of mind, it means you are aware totally of what you are not, what He is and who He is. You wait until He initiates it so that He might anoint it in your life.

The third thing is in Acts 20:22. If this humility is real, then God's will will always be preeminent above your will. In verse 22 it says,

"And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there."

We know what happened to him there because we are studying Ephesians. We know he has been in prison for five years because he went to Jerusalem. At this point in Acts 20:22 he doesn't know. He said, "I don't have my will." Everybody tried to get him not to go to Jerusalem, but he said, "I have to go. I am chained to His chariot. I am bound to His Spirit. I am a prisoner of Jesus. I am a bond-servant of Christ."

You see, when humility is real in your life, it is not what you wear or don't wear. It is your attitude towards God working in your life. You won't have an agenda you are putting before Him. You just want His agenda in your life. So we see that humility is the essential attitude in serving Christ.

Secondly in Colossians 3:12, humility is the attitude of those seeking a higher calling. The context is verse 1 of chapter 3.

"If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth."

In that context look at verse 12:

"And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

You see, it is part of the garment of the lifestyle of people who are seeking a higher calling. Who are these humble people? They are not seeking their own calling. They are seeking His calling. They are not looking for the praise of men. They are looking for the glory of God in their life. It is an attitude that just comes out of their life.

Then finally in Philippians 2:5 we see it one more time. This attitude of humility is not only essential to serving Christ, it is not only the attitude of those seeking Christ, but it is also the very attitude of our Savior Himself.

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant,

and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name."

Have you ever heard someone preach on that passage but not put it in context? We know what Christ did. We know He emptied Himself of His glory, but what it says here is that you have the same attitude in you He had before He came to this earth to die on a cross.

So therefore be strengthened in the inner man with an ability that you don't normally have. It is an ability He has now in you. Who is it in you? It is Christ Himself. Let that attitude be released in your life. That is His attitude. What is it? Philippians 2:3 says,

"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind [that is our word] let each of you regard one another as more important than himself."

I hope you are beginning to see something here. If I truly have that high view of salvation, I will have a proper estimate of myself. Therefore, I am going to be humble in the way I approach the body of Christ. My attitude is, I know I can't, but I also know He can. I want to be strengthened with might in the inner man with His power. The scales become balanced.

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Ephesians 4:1-3: WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY, PART 2

by Dr. Wayne Barber

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We are talking about walking in a manner worthy of the calling that God has given to us. I heard the story many years ago of the young lady who was working by herself in a third world country in a leper colony. She was called of God to do this. A millionaire was on a vacation in that country, and he decided that he wanted to see a leper colony. As he went over to see the leper colony, he saw this young lady working with those lepers and said to her, "Ma'am, I would not do what you are doing for a million dollars." She looked back at him and said, "Sir, neither would I." He said, "Well then, why are you doing what you are doing?" Tears formed in her eyes, and she looked at him and said, "It is the love of Christ Jesus constraining me."

Folks, the way you live depicts your view of salvation. The way you give depicts your view of salvation. The way you relate to others depicts your view of salvation. If you don't have a high view, then you are not going to have a worthy walk.

When we have a high view of salvation, we begin to realize something I call the exchanged life. Have you ever heard that terminology? I realize what I can't do, but I also realize what He can do and I exchange me for Him. That's not a bad exchange, is it? All that we are for all that He is. Paul said, "I want you to be filled to the fulness of God." Can you imagine? When we die to self, we enter into His fullness. He, in us, does through us what we could have never done before. You ask, "Is it a passive life?" Oh, no. It is the most active life you will ever have, but the kind of activity is simply your surrendering and your obeying and your trusting. The rest of it is up to Him, and the results are all His. The exchanged life is the only way to live a worthy life. You can't live a worthy life unless you have exchanged your life for His. That is his prayer in 3:14-21.

Ephesians 4:1 instructs us to walk worthy. What does it mean to walk worthy? Well, the word "worthy" means to balance the scales, to measure to a standard. It means the intrinsic value of something. I may have an appraised value of something, but the intrinsic value is its inherent value. Therefore, to walk in a manner worthy and to live in a manner worthy, conduct yourselves in a manner that measures up to the value of our salvation. It implies a lifestyle for all of us.

Look in verse 2. Each one of these words in the verse builds upon the other. We looked at the word "humility" in our last study. That is one of the attitudes we need.

Secondly, there is the attitude of **gentleness**. Whereas humility is a proper attitude towards one's self, gentleness is the proper attitude towards God. Now it may fool you. The word "gentleness" there is the word *prautes*. It is translated in many translations as "meekness." What does meekness mean? What does it mean to be gentle or meek? It does not refer necessarily to your outward expression. Certainly there are outward expressions. The word has less to do with our expression to one another and our disposition toward one another than our inward disposition towards God. As a matter of fact, the reason it is translated "gentle" carries the idea that there is such a calmness inside of us because we are right in our relationship with God. That is incredible to me.

Are you stressed out, full of anxiety and just scared to death what is going to happen tomorrow? You haven't learned yet that you can trust God. Get yourself out of the way. Realize you can't do it. You know He can. Exchange your life for His and all of a sudden that divine attribute begins to give you calmness in your spirit. Evidently you are in the dark, but I am in the light. I can see. Gentleness is an inner disposition of calmness towards God. Humility is an attitude towards self, but gentleness is an attitude towards God. It is the attitude of being broken in our wills and being submissive to whatever God is up to in our life. Because of that

submission whatever offense happens in our life, we don't get anxious over it. We have a calmness in our spirit. We trust God completely. The attitude of meekness means we have been broken to trust the One who has mastered us.

You see here in the word "gentleness" the picture of a wild horse being broken. The picture here of being tamed is the idea of being meek or the idea of being gentle. The horse is okay as long as he is under the reins of the one who has mastered him. When the Lord Jesus masters us, when we come to that place of exchanging our life for His, when we come to that place of not thinking of ourselves anymore, His heart now causes us to see others around us. He has tamed our spirit so that whatever offense comes to us, we are calm in our spirit because we know we are under the control of the One who has Mastered us. That is a beautiful attitude one can have towards God.

However, it has another side to it. It also has the idea of virtue. Aristotle said it is a virtue. It is something that stands between two extremes. It doesn't get angry and explode, and it doesn't stay passive. In other words, not only do you trust God when an offense comes to you, but you never cast your anger towards the person who caused the offense. You hate the sin but you keep on loving the sinner. Now that is an incredible heart beat for a person, an incredible attitude that a person can have when he is humble, when he is gentle, when he is meek, when he has been tamed by the Master. Once I have been tamed you can offend me, and I won't even hate you. I hate your sin, but I won't hate you! There is something in me that allows me to love you in spite of what you do to me. When circumstances turn against me, I have a calmness in me to know that God is allowing it and will work the good out of it. That is a tremendous attitude! Now, remember it only comes in the exchanged life. It is a divine ability that God puts within you and me. Do you see how that protects the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?

It is a very beautiful thing when you begin to see what that exchanged life means to you and me, when a person starts walking worthy of that which God has done in his life. The very heart of God begins to beat within him. He has a humility and a proper attitude towards self. He has a gentleness about him that has a proper attitude towards God. He trusts God.

Remember when the fellow came out to curse David as he was leaving Jerusalem. Joab pulled his sword out and said, "I'll get that rascal. I'll cut his head off." David said, "No, hold it. God sent him to me with a message that I need to hear." Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could look at life that way? Somebody may offend us and cause some provocation in our life, but all of a sudden we realize that when we exchanged our life for His, we don't really hate that person any more. We are looking more at God and saying, "What are you trying to tell me through this individual? God, how are you going to work good from what this person has done to me? God, thank you that I don't hate him. Thank you that I can just hate his sin. Thank you, Lord, that you have taught me to direct my anger at the right thing." Scripture says be angry but sin not with your anger.

So we have two attitudes here that help preserve the unity in the Spirit, humility and gentleness. One is the right attitude towards self and one is the right attitude towards the Lord.

Third is the word "patience." The word "patience" is a right attitude towards those people who have caused you the problem. It is the word *makrothumia*. It comes from two words, *makros*, meaning long and *thumos*, which means wrath or anger. It is the ability to suffer someone's wrong doing for a long period of time. Do you know whose character it is? It is the character of God. Well, how can you do that? Because He lives in you. You have exchanged your life for His. You have chosen to be that way. Now that you have decreased, He has increased in your life. You can be that way if you will depend upon the Spirit to strengthen you with that divine ability. It also has the idea that at any time you are able to avenge yourself, but you choose not to do it because you are trusting God and you are not going to give up on that person.

Do you feel oneness in your church body? Please understand what I am saying. You cannot make it happen. I cannot make it happen. It is something God has already made happen. We don't produce it. We just get in touch with it and preserve and maintain it. It is already there. You are my brother. You are my sister. You start seeing that you are linked together. Nothing is worth causing a person to take up an offense. Nothing is worth dividing and tearing down the unity that the Spirit has given.

Well, let's look at these attitudes again.

Humility is never thinking of yourself higher than you ought to think. It is a proper attitude towards self.

Gentleness is being calm in your spirit when offenses occur because you trust God. If you go to work and somebody in the body of Christ gives you trouble, just say, "Well, God, what are You teaching me today? There must be something in this." Then ask God to give you the ability to not hate that person but to hate that sin and never let that sin get into your own life. We have ways in which we can even approach that from other Scriptures about restoration.

Then the word "**patience**" is the word that means a right attitude towards other people. You are always able to avenge yourself, but you refuse to. You continue to believe God and do not give up on the person who is causing you the trouble. Do you know what that sounds like to the world? Absolute foolishness.

There is an attitude emerging today that doesn't match with God's Word. It says you have got to stand up for yourself at all times. Have you heard that? Perhaps you have been in a restaurant and have ordered something. Do you believe God is sovereign or do you not? You order beans, but they bring peas and they're cold. You get upset with the person who brought them. What right do we have to do that kind of thing? The world says, "Well, you are paying for it, so you've got a right to do it!" Oh, folks, when we have exchanged our life, we have got to understand that God is in control of even those kinds of things.

You don't have to go through life taking up an offense for everything that goes on. Why? Because you have exchanged your life. You have a gentle spirit. You are patient. You have humility in your life. You know that even when it doesn't turn out the way you want it to turn out, God will weave it into His design somehow. What kind of view do we have of our salvation? "Oh, salvation doesn't work now. There are too many problems that salvation doesn't touch any more. You have got to have other things to help you out." Where is that in God's word? The problem is we have such a low view of salvation that we have added in all this other stuff. We don't believe in the sufficiency of Christ any more. We don't believe in what God did for us at salvation any more. We don't seem to understand that His eternal purpose has been to bring us into His kingdom. So we walk out, and it effects our lifestyle. The way you live is absolutely determined by your view of salvation and your view of the Christ who saved you. When we start exchanging our lives, a humble spirit is going to come out. All of a sudden we are not worried about what somebody is not doing to us. We are more concerned about how we can minister to somebody else. Where does that come from? It comes from the Holy Spirit who lives in the inner man who strengthened you with an ability you haven't had before. We are going to have that meekness because we have been tamed by Him and are being tamed by Him. We don't mind anymore because He has the reins on our life. We are allowing Him to go ahead and rule us because we trust the One who has the reins and has tamed us. We have patience even when people treat us like dirt. We don't give up on them. We suffer long because we know that somehow we could have avenged ourselves, but we have chosen not to for the sake and for the cause of the One who has called us.

There's one more thing I want to show you. In the last part of verse 2 it says,

"showing forbearance to one another in love."

The more I have studied that word "forbearance" the more I believe it sums up the other three. I don't believe you can possibly forbear until you have that patience, that humility and that gentle spirit working for you. The word "forbearance" means you don't fold. You are able to hold on. You are able to stand up against whatever it is that comes to you. One particular lexicon said this word "forbearance" means you are able to bear up, not only while someone is provoking you, but until the whole provocation is over. In other words, all the way to the end. Folks we have so many misconceptions as to what we think Christianity is. It is exchanging our life for His. It is Him being who He is in our life. Do you think you need to defend yourself? Then how come He hasn't done that with us? When He was reviled, He reviled not back, Peter tells us. He kept entrusting Himself to the One who judges righteously. If His example was to do that, why are we better than He is? We have these attitudes that enable us to forbear. We have these attitudes that enable us to hold up against whatever it is going on in our lives, no matter what offense comes our way. That only comes when we have exchanged our life for His life, when we have entered in to His ability.

Paul says to examine yourself. I really believe a lot of divisions among people are in the breakdown of these attitudes somehow in their lives. If one breaks down, they all break down. In other words, if you are not exchanging your life, if you are not letting His Spirit give you this divine ability daily, then obviously these things aren't there. So divisions, factions and problems occur. I honestly believe in my life and your life that if we would go back to where we have departed and ask God to forgive us, we could go to the person we have offended and ask them to forgive us. Folks, He cleans us up.

Jesus did the very same thing for you. He was patient with you. He was gentle with you. He has been very humble in His approach to you. He gave up His glory to come down here to die for you. He forbears until it is over. He continues to sustain His love in your life. Now He wants to do that in you and through you to someone else.

James 3 says we all offend in many ways, don't we? If we would start looking at sin as serious as God looks at it and start taking a high view of salvation and start dealing with sin when the Holy Spirit brings those things to our attention, we could preserve unity so much that the world would be starving to get in. What is wrong? Is it the Spirit's fault? No. It is our fault if we are not living humble lives, if we are not living with gentleness, if we are not living with patience, if we are not forbearing, if we are taking up an offense every time somebody does something that bothers us. We are grieving the very Spirit of God. Whatever else we do, call it church, but don't call it Christianity until we start dealing with relationships.

Maybe you were miffed years ago. You are still upset. Things have bothered you and you have not yet dealt with that under the blood. You have not even been to a brother to make it right with him. God wants to get us to where we are so open, transparent and clean before Him that He can exchange His life for ours. Then whatever takes place will be that potential we have not yet experienced. Then we can enter into the fact that He is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond what we could ever ask or think.

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Ephesians 4:3-6: PRESERVING THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

by Dr. Wayne Barber

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Ephesians 4 talks about "Preserving the Unity of the Spirit." It picks up right after the prayer Paul has just prayed in Ephesians 3:14-21. That prayer sums up what is said in chapters 1-3, and it sets up what is about to be said in chapters 4-6.

In 3:16-17 we find the real crux of the prayer: "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." If we put that in language that we can understand in our day, he is saying, "Simply exchange your life for His life by obeying Him in all things." You see, that is what the normal Christian life is. It is not me trying to live like Jesus. It is Jesus being Jesus in my life. He is giving me strength and strengthening me with a divine ability far beyond what a human could do apart from the Lord Jesus Himself.

Now in 4:1, Paul stresses the importance of every believer living this way. He says:

"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

In other words, Paul is saying, "I have prayed for you now. I have told you what you have in Christ. Now measure up to that standard by the way that you live."

Why does he encourage them to do this? Look at verse 3. He says,

"being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

ONENESS

We do not produce unity. We tried that in our church. It does not work! **Oneness** does not come from being together. Oneness does not come from knowing each other's name. Oneness does not come from going out and eating together. Oneness is produced by the Holy Spirit of God. When you are right with God and I am right with God, we are one together. The Holy Spirit is the divine spiritual ligament that holds us together, given to us by the Lord Himself.

If we are not relationally preserving the unity of the spirit, then what we are doing is working against what the Spirit is trying to do. We are literally tearing the ligament that God has given us that binds us together. There are many times in our Christian walk when we may have problems with somebody. We may be bitter towards somebody. Paul is saying, "Listen, He gave you all this, and the unity of the Spirit is the very ultimate of what the church is supposed to manifest in their relationships." Therefore, when we are not preserving it, evidently we are tearing it apart. We are tearing the ligament that God has given that unites us together.

The proof of our letting the Holy Spirit of God live in our lives and produce abilities beyond what we could do ourselves is found in verse 2. There are several characteristics I want you to see.

First of all is the characteristic of **humility**. Humility is something a man cannot do. It is something God has to do. It is the attitude when a person is willing to die to self by saying yes to the Lord Jesus Christ. It means understanding that others are more important than yourself. It is the attitude when we are more concerned with the unity of the body than we are for our own opinions and our own so-called rights. That is a divine ability. There is not a human being alive who can do that apart from the power of the Spirit of God. You see, when you submit to God, God gives you that humble spirit that Christ Himself had when He left His throne in glory and came down to the earth for the sake of other people. He gave up His glory there, masked it with a body of flesh, came to this earth and died on a cross. That attitude becomes our attitude. When Christ is your life, Christ is your attitude. That is what Paul is saying.

Now when that ability is manifest, it moves into another ability that grows right out of it and builds off of it. That is the word "**gentleness**" in verse 2. It is the Greek word *praotes*. It is really the word "meekness." It has the idea of a wild horse that has been tamed by the master. This horse now is comfortable in the reins of the one who has tamed him.

Let me explain that to you. Gentleness is the calm spirit that you have. You're not anxious. When does it manifest itself? When somebody is talking about you. They are hurting you. That is going to happen in the body of Christ. But when you have a humble spirit and the desire to protect and preserve the unity of the Spirit instead of protecting your rights and your opinions, then your attitude is going to manifest itself in a gentleness about you, an inner calmness. You know that God is in control and God will use whatever is going on in your life to conform you into the image of Christ Jesus. That, by the way, is the hope of our calling, that one day we be like Jesus.

If you will exchange your life for His and realize you can't handle that offense, then God will produce within you a humble spirit. You will become more concerned with them than you are with yourself. Have you ever noticed when you surrender to Him you refuse to

complain to others and spread your misfortunes to others and the membership of the body? Why? Because you want more than anything to protect the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. It is trusting God to work it out.

The third quality he mentions here is patience. All of these qualities are interrelated. Patience is the word *makrothumia*, which is the ability produced by the Spirit that enables us to take the unkind words that are said, and the unkind deeds that are done. Not only can we take them and tolerate the people who did them, but we can love them in spite of themselves and not give up on them because there is still hope that God can change their hearts. No human being can do that on his own. That only comes when you exchange your life for the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. When I realize who I am not and who Christ is, I begin to step into that which He has put me into at salvation. I say, "Lord, be who you are in me." Then the God of glory begins to manifest His presence through humility, gentleness and patience.

If you take all three of those words and sum them up, they come into one word, forbearance. Paul says, in the last part of verse 2,

"showing forbearance to one another in love."

Forbearance is the ability to stand up and not let it knock you down until the whole provocation is over. Everything is done and you have been able to make it all the way through. I wish I lived this every day, don't you? Paul is saying, "We had better start living it because if we don't, we are not preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. We are literally tearing the ligament that God has given that binds us together." Everything that is done is in love, in the spirit of love. It is a faithful commitment that the Holy Spirit manifests in our life that says "I will do whatever is necessary to protect you spiritually and to protect you in the unity of the Spirit that God has given." That is a beautiful characteristic, and it is not something that you and I can do. It is something He does in and through our lives.

All of this is for the sake of unity. Unity of the body is the heart of the message of the book of Ephesians. As a matter of fact, everything that relates to salvation, the church and the kingdom of God has to do with unity. Anything that infringes on that unity is sin. It is not only sin against God, it is sin against the body. It is sin of the worst kind. It is tearing down what the Holy Spirit is seeking to bind together. We preserve the unity of the Spirit, first of all then, in the way that we are diligent in our behavior towards each other.

We preserve the unity of the Spirit

by our willingness to adhere to doctrinal purity

Secondly, we preserve the unity of the Spirit by our willingness to adhere to doctrinal purity. It is only when we hold on to pure doctrine that we can stay and enhance the oneness the Spirit is producing in our life. In 4:4-6 Paul uses the word "one" seven different times. Watch this—one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. These seven things frame the doctrine that defines the Christian church, the body of Christ. If you divert from these doctrines, automatically you have infringed upon the unity that the Spirit has given to you and me.

I want us to go through these seven doctrines and see how we are unified by what we believe. We are unified by what we believe, not only by how we behave.

SEVEN DOCTRINES:

(1) ONE BODY

First of all, Paul says there is **one body** in verse 4. There is no denominational body; there is no Gentile body, no Jewish body, no male body, no female body, no slave or free man body. There is just Christ's body on this earth.

(2) ONE HOLY SPIRIT

Secondly Paul says, not only is there only one body, but there is only one Spirit. Let me just go over what we know about the Spirit from the book of Ephesians.

In Ephesians 1:13, the Spirit seals every believer in Christ.

In Ephesians 4:30 it says that sealing is unto the day of redemption. You had better believe that there is one Spirit, and that Spirit is very unique and important. He comes into your life when you receive the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Spirit of Christ, and He seals you until the day of redemption. That means that you are absolutely secure in your salvation because the Holy Spirit of God is your seal.

In Ephesians 2:18 this one Holy Spirit gives us access to the Father. Every believer has access to the Father through or by the means of the Spirit. I came down to our church the other day, and I thought I hadn't brought my keys. I wouldn't have access into the building because I didn't have my keys. It is the same way with the Spirit of God. You don't have access in prayer at all unless the

Spirit of God lives in your life. He is one of the two advocates. He takes the plea to Jesus. Jesus takes it to the Father. Without the Holy Spirit of God, you could not pray. He gives you access to the Father.

In Ephesians 2:22 Paul says He indwells every believer on earth. The church is the dwelling of God in the Spirit on this earth. He dwells in every believer. There is only one Holy Spirit, and you get Him when you are saved. Romans 8 says that if you don't have the Spirit of God, you are not a believer.

Ephesians 3:5 of says He reveals the deep things of God, particularly the mystery of the church. Do you realize that man cannot discover what God has hidden? Truth is not something that man discovers. It is something that God reveals as man seeks after it. God reveals that truth through the means of His Holy Spirit.

In Ephesians 3:16 He strengthens every believer. We just looked at that prayer. He does it with divine ability. You had better believe there is one Holy Spirit who lives in you because you couldn't live the Christian life apart from Him.

In Ephesians 4:3 He is the bond to all believers. He is the ligament. If you don't have the Holy Spirit, then you are not joined to the body of Christ or you are not joined to Christ. The Holy Spirit is the ligament that holds on to you and me.

In Ephesians 4:30 it says He can be grieved.

Ephesians 5:18 says every believer is to submit to the one Holy Spirit all the time. The word there is in the present tense. We will look at that when we get to chapter 5. It means the Holy Spirit is in me now, and He is there to rule over me. You see there is only one Spirit, and we must bow to Him.

In Ephesians 6:17 the weapon of His warfare is the Word of God. The weapon the Spirit uses is the Word of God. Therefore, it is our weapon.

In Ephesians 6:18 He enables the believer to pray. Paul brings that up one more time. There is no prayer apart from the Holy Spirit.

We have one body, and that one body is indwelt by one Spirit. Do you realize what Paul is saying? The same Spirit who lives in you lives in me. I didn't get any more or any less than you got. There is only one Spirit, and He indwells the body.

(3) ONE HOPE

Thirdly, there is only one hope of our [one] calling. Now every time you find the word "calling" in Scripture, it is in the singular, particularly in Ephesians. That means there is only one calling. There is not a different calling for you and a different calling for me. When he speaks of calling, he is speaking of something else. It refers to the ultimate goal of our salvation: that every believer is destined to eternal Christ-like perfection and glory. "Do you mean to tell me God is trying to make me like Jesus? I thought you said I can't be like Jesus." Well, now here is the key. I can't, but the more I die to self, the less you see of me and the more you see of Him. He gets stronger in my life. There is going to come a day, friend, when He is going to transform me, glorify my body and make me like Him. I will not be a little Jesus, but I will be like Him. God wants me that way. That is the hope of my calling.

The word "hope;" is never uncertain. The word "hope" means an absolute certainty. So therefore, I have something ahead of me. I have a goal. One day I will be made like Him. There is only one hope of one calling. Every day when you go to work, God wants you to be like Jesus. How do you do that? Die to self because you can't be like Him. Christ will be who He is in your life. You have a hope that one day He is going to transform you and make you like Jesus. Instead of Jesus living, ruling and reigning in you, you will rule and reign with Him on this earth. So we have one hope of one calling.

(4) ONE LORD

Fourthly, there is only one Lord. The term "Lord" always refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, not to the Holy Spirit, not to the Father. It refers to Jesus. Of course, Jesus is the fullness of the Godhead bodily. The word "Lord" refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now what does it mean? It means if He is the only Lord, then He is the only ruler and master over the very things that knock us down. He rules over sin. He rules over death. Therefore, He is the only means of our salvation.

The Word of God says there is one Lord and only one way to salvation. One has ruled over death and sin. That is our Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 4:12 says there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved. Romans 10:12, speaking of Christ, says for the same Lord is Lord over all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him. Galatians 1:8 gives a warning. It says "even though we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed." There is only one Lord, the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The word "Lord" is *kurios*. It means a compassionate, caring ruler and master. If you are looking for something today, there is only one Lord who cares about you. There is only one who can give you what you are looking for. He is the One who rules over life and rules over death. There is only one Lord, one body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling and one Lord.

(5) ONE FAITH

Fifthly, there is only one faith. If you have one Lord, it necessarily means you can only have one faith. He is not talking about the act of faith when a person receives Christ. He is talking about the body of Scripture, the Bible, that fully reveals Christ in the New Testament and shadows Him in the Old Testament. There is only one faith. Therefore, to know about this one Lord, you must know this one faith. You must believe this book, the embodiment of God's Word. It is the Scriptures that must fall on a person's heart whereby he is saved. It is the seed that convicts you. It's not that you are a bad guy. You are just a sinner unable to save yourself. So therefore, there is only one faith. How are we unified? By believing this book, by living in it, by studying it and by being diligent about it. That unifies us as a body.

(6) ONE BAPTISM

The sixth thing Paul mentions is there is only one baptism. Is he talking about spiritual baptism, which is what happens at salvation when we are baptized into the body of Christ, or is he talking about water baptism? I believe he is talking about water baptism. Water baptism doesn't save you, it simply identifies you as a person who has been saved. First of all, if he was talking about spiritual baptism why didn't he put it back in verse 4 when he was talking about one Spirit?

Secondly, we live in a culture in America that does not appreciate baptism. We don't understand the culture of the day in which this was written. We don't understand that when a Jew went forward and was baptized it cost him everything. His family disowned him. They walked away from him. It was identifying him as one who had been spiritually baptized into the body of Christ. There is only one baptism. This baptism identifies us as believers.

If you were in a Muslim country today and you were baptized you would understand the weight of that word. If you were in the Jewish faith and were baptized, you would understand the weight of that word. When we were over in Romania they had a baptism. The church had asked the people being baptized not to give their names, their place of residence or where they work because the Communists were in the services. Do you think it wasn't important to those precious people when they got baptized?

When they walked up to be baptized, they gave their name, their address, their places of residence and if they had phones, they gave their telephone number. They were overwhelmed with the fact that they had been spiritually baptized into the body of Christ. This one moment, this one baptism identified them with believers. They were separated unto Christ. This meant something in their lives.

(7) GOD AND FATHER OF ALL

Finally Paul says, there is one God and Father of all. Did you realize the Fatherhood of God is a New Testament doctrine? You don't find that in the Old Testament. But guess who it was who taught us the Fatherhood of God. The Lord Jesus Himself. He revealed God the Father as Father to you and me. Men did not quite understand that concept. It was alluded to, but never fully explained like it is in the New Testament. Jesus told His earthly parents, Joseph and Mary, "I must be about My Father's business." He told the disciples in Matthew 6 when they asked Him to pray, "Pray this way. Our Father...." And the last words He said on earth before He went back into heaven were, "Wait for the promise of the Father."

We are not only unified by how we behave towards each other, we are unified by how we believe the doctrines of God, which are seven-fold: one body, one Spirit, one hope of one calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through and in all. We are diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the way we behave and by the way we believe. If you depart from any of this, then you are tearing the ligament that God has given that binds us together.