

Sermon Title: The Worthy Walk Of Oneness (Part 1)
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:1 (Ephesians #18)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 10-3-21

Today, we get to enter what you might call "Volume 2" of the Book of Ephesians—the second half of it, beginning with Chapter 4.

Passing through the white space in your Bible between the end of Chapter 3 and the beginning of Chapter 4 is sort of like graduating from school into real life; it's graduation from theory into practice, from foundation to the building, from the drawing-board to the groundbreaking ceremony.

People have come up with vivid ways to describe it. They say Longfellow could take a worthless sheet of paper, write a poem on it, and make it worth thousands of dollars; well, that's genius. Rockefeller can sign his name to a piece of paper and make it worth millions; that's capital. Uncle Sam can take paper, stamp an eagle on it, and make it worth a hundred dollars; that's money. A skilled mechanic can take material with five dollars and make a gadget worth 50 dollars; that's skill. An artist can take a piece of canvas, paint a picture on it, and make it worth maybe thousands; and that's art. But *God* can take a sinful life, wash it in the blood of Christ, put His Spirit in it, and make it a blessing to humanity and get Himself glory for eternity; *that* is salvation.

When we come to Chapter 4 of Ephesians, we're going to start to see *what to do* in light of what we have seen in three chapters. Remember that two-word theme of Ephesians—"in Christ"—occurs 27 times. Well, now we're going to talk about what to do *because* we are "in Christ."

And as we enter Chapter 4, the first 16 verses have a theme that tie them together; the theme is: unity. In this sermon and the next time we come to Ephesians and we finish the rest of the sentence that is in the first three verses, we're going to see The Ingredients of unity; then, Verses 4 through 6 is the Theology of unity; followed by the Diversity that comprises our unity (vss. 7-10); followed by the Functioning of our unity, as we interact with each other (vss. 11-12); and then, the Fruits of our unity, in Verses 13 through 16.

Now, you need to understand that this spiritual unity that we have in Christ is not something *we* create, it's not something mechanical, it's not something external; it is *internal*, it is supernatural. You *cannot* superimpose spiritual unity on people, apart from the life of Christ (Jn. 10:16). It comes from the power of Christ *indwelling* each believer. It is a Spirit-controlled, Spirit-produced unity which is *rooted* in Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-13). If you are "in Christ," you *are* part of this unity (2 Cor. 1:21-22).

"Unity" is a very popular word, but there are some very *wrong* ideas attached to it (e.g., Jer. 7:8-10; Matt. 3:9; 1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Jn. 9-11; Jd. 4, 12-13). To many Christians, the idea of unity is primarily, just maintaining the status quo; we *say* we have unity as long as we always do everything the way we've done it and no one is offended; and so, if nobody "rocks the boat," we have unity—the status quo. Those people do not understand that "status quo" is the Latin phrase that means: "the mess we're in." Unity in Christ is *always* going to be accompanied by *change* and *growth* and *progress* and *multiplication* and *evangelism*—and it's *always* going to be a dynamic thing.

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The "Ecumenical Movement" seeks a *kind* of unity that is a *pseudo*-unity; theirs is based on sweeping aside all the boundaries of doctrine, and ultimately creating a worldwide church by means of compromise and then imposing an organizational structure over all churches. That one is going to finally have its heyday right after the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:17); but now, it just has its seedlings sprouting around the world.

The "Charismatic Movement" seeks unity, but it is *not* unity based on truth; it's unity based on having the same experience, or the same set of experiences. And again, doctrine is largely swept aside.

Various parachurch movements seek unity based on focusing on specific individual goals and avoiding the "tough" issues and focusing only on the things *they* want to accomplish.

Now, there may be unity in such movements, but it's an unrealistic unity because it doesn't encompass the *entirety* of the Body of Christ (cf. Ps. Ps. 15:4; 119:63).

I came to the Lord just before I went into college, and I remember being in "college group" at church and Bible studies in college; and I thought, "Oh, this Christian unity—*this is wonderful!*" And it was easy to have: We all had the same interests, we were all within three years of each other's age, we all had the same worldview. Frankly, we didn't *give a rip* about the 78-year-old that had just gone into the hospital for the final time.

Understand: You can't just claim your unity when it is so limited. *True* unity comes only when God's people are *grounded* in "truth" (2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:25; 2 Pet. 1:12) and *walking* "by the Spirit: (Gal. 5:16, 25). Any unity that requires you to set aside certain truth is *pseudo*-unity—it's something *less*, or something *other* than Biblical unity.

About the time I was invited to start teaching things in Russia, another organization invited me to go and do a very similar thing: go and teach for several weeks in another country, and they wanted me to teach some doctrines. And they let me know: When it comes to baptism, you must give *equal* treatment and totally-balanced treatment to all the different views of baptism. When it comes to the end-times, you have to give *equal* treatment—*equal* validity—to *all* of them. "So, in other words," I said, "You want me to go teach that God said, 'When it comes to the end-times, My view is @%&#+\$@%*%' " "

It doesn't matter—you can *contradict* your brother in Christ, and you can *both be totally right!* That's *not* unity! Unity *starts* with truth *based* in Christ, and then it's worked out in practice (cf. 1 Cor. 13:6b). Now, I just gave you the outline of the Book of Ephesians: The first three chapters are doctrine—truth; the next three are very much a matter of our practice in Christ.

For Chapter 4, Verses 1 through 3, we are going to see The Worthy Walk Of Oneness. The Command is in Verse 1: "Walk worthy"—that's all the further we're going to get today. And then, after "Walk Worthy": Keep The Proper Gait—that's *how* we walk in unity: with All Humility, All Gentleness, Patience, Tolerance, and Diligence. We'll get to that in due time, when we come back for our next visit to Ephesians Chapter 4.

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So, Walk Worthy—Chapter 4, Verse 1. Paul says: "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." (NASB-1995, and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

Now, talk about a significant "therefore"! What did he say just before this? Remember the end of the previous chapter? "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. *Therefore...*"

Don't *disconnect* this! This is how tightly the first half of this book and the second half is tied. Chapters 1 through 3 is all about who we are "in Christ"; remember, there were only one or two *commands* in the first three chapters, and the main one was "remember" (2:11-12). Now we're going to get *an avalanche* of commands, as we build through especially Chapters 5 and 6.

If you want to make a comparison, the "therefore" in Ephesians 4:1 is a lot like the "therefore" in Romans Chapter 12, Verse 1. Romans 1 through 11 is the loftiest, lengthiest piece of doctrine in the whole Bible; and then, Chapter 12 starts out with "Therefore...brethren," in light of "the mercies of God," here's what you need to do... Ephesians 4:1 is *exactly* like that.

So he says: "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord..."—and literally, that's "the prisoner *in* the Lord"; Paul is a "prisoner" but he belongs to the Lord, and the reason he's in prison is all about his ministry (cf. 2 Tim. 2:8-9), so this is God's will for his life.

If you remember what he already said in Chapter 3—he began that chapter with: "For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles..." I am *fine* with being in prison, because it is for the sake of the ministry that God has given to me. And then, as he started to pray for them in Verse 13: "Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf"—this is for the betterment of the Body of Christ, that he is in jail.

As a matter of fact, around that same time he wrote to a different church these words in Philippians Chapter 1, Verses 12 through 14—"Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear." How *else* would you evangelize a bunch of Roman soldiers, better than making them guard Paul? That's basically what he's saying there.

Now back to Ephesians: "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord"—now here comes the command—"implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called..."

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We don't use the word "implore" very often. The older English translation—the King James Version—says "beseech"; still others say "urge" (e.g., ESV, HCSB)—that's the command here, and then he's going to tell us what he's urging us to do.

An interesting thing you can do in Greek that you can't do in English is, give emphasis by the order in which you state words. Our spoken language, our written language, depends on a basic word order: subject, verb, direct object, indirect object—that's the basic sentence structure that we have.

Koiné Greek—Biblical Greek—does that same thing; that's the *normal* way to do it; *but there*, the meaning of the words does not depend on their order in the sentence, it depends upon the *form* of the word: the form of a verb, the case of a noun, and the way that they are to be understood together. And the way to give a word the *most* emphasis is to *move it* from the middle or the end of the sentence to the beginning.

The *first word* in Ephesians 4:1, in Greek, is "implore"—"I implore"; the pronoun is included in the verb—so, he's putting the *strongest* emphasis on this. "This is what the second half of Ephesians is all about: I have *told* you what Christ has done; I have *told* you who we are in Him; I have *told* you this *grand plan* of Jew and Gentile, together in Christ; I have *prayed* that God would get the glory in all of these things. Now, *implore I you*"—and then, three chapters of what he is going to "implore" us to do; and we'll see the first part of it today.

The word translated "implore" is a pretty common Greek word. It actually has quite a range of meaning, depending upon its context. It literally means "to call alongside"; you may have heard the word: *parakaleō*. It has the implication of: calling on, entreating, admonishing, exhorting, or even comforting. The basic idea is: bringing someone alongside someone else to give help, or to give guidance, or to give comfort, or to give instruction. The meaning ranges from the most gentle, encouraging, comforting, soothing kind of words, to the most powerful of commands—and this would be in the more powerful form of it.

Interestingly, the noun form of this word—maybe you've heard somebody use the word "paraclete"; *parakaleō* is the verb, *paraklētos* is the noun; the noun form of this word is the word used for the Holy Spirit! In John 14, it's usually translated as a "Comforter"—Jesus said He would send "another Comforter" (vs. 15, KJV), just like Me.

Over in First John Chapter 2, it's translated "Advocate"—as in, your attorney for the defense, who "comes alongside": If we sin, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (vs. 1).

In other words: From the very beginning, and from the definition of the word—and you'll see it all the way through here—this unity is produced by the Holy Spirit. "God is one" (Jas. 2:19), He puts His Spirit in *all* of His people (Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 1:22); His people, therefore, are one (1 Cor. 12:13).

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So he says: "I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to *walk*..." There's the command: "walk"—put one foot in front of the other. It's a vivid, rather common metaphor in the New Testament. It means: to conduct yourself in a certain way. When I say "walk," it means: well, you have to be standing up, and then you put one foot in front of another, and you *move* in a certain direction; that's what "walking" is.

How fun it is to watch a toddler when they first start to walk—you know, when they stand there and they weave around, and then they realize that, "Uh-oh, I just took two steps and I let go of the sofa! I think now I'll plop on my backside." And then they get up and they go at it again.

You have to *learn* to walk. That's why it's such a good metaphor for being a believer in Christ: You come into this as a "babe in Christ," says the Apostle Paul in First Corinthians Chapter 3, Verse 1 (NKJV); you have to *learn* how to walk.

How does he want you to "walk"? Well, there are a lot of ways this is used. I actually did this—you can check the occurrences of the word "walk" in the New Testament, and it's a great thing to do; you can develop an *excellent* theology of what the Christian life should look like in practice, just by taking a concordance or using your computer and studying the word "walk."

Here are just some of the examples: Don't "walk in darkness" (Jn. 8:12), "walk" in the "light" (Eph. 5:8); "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4), "do not walk according to the flesh" (Rom. 8:4); "walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16), don't walk "in craftiness" (2 Cor. 4:2); "walk by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7); "walk...worthy" (Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12); "walk in love" (Eph. 5:2); "walk circumspectly" (Eph. 5:15, NKJV); "walk in wisdom" (Col. 4:5, NKJV); "walk honestly" (Rom. 13:13, KJV); don't "walk disorderly" (2 Thess. 3:6, 11, NKJV); "walk in truth" (2 Jn. 4; 3 Jn. 3-4); "walk in" God's "commandments" (Lk. 1:6; 2 Jn. 6). So, pick where you're going to go, pick up one foot and put it in front of the other, and *keep moving* in that direction (cf. Hos. 6:3; Phil. 3:12-14).

He says, "I want you to *walk*," and he's going to tell you *how*: "in a manner worthy." Those four words—"in a manner worthy"—are the four-word English translation of one Greek word; it's the little adverb that means "worthily." The root of the word comes from a word that means "weight"; and to be "worthy" in this sense means: "to have the same weight" as another thing. Your Christian walk should have the same weight as your Christian doctrine, your Christian position in Christ. Think of an old-time scale: You put a weight on one side, you put a piece of meat on the other, to find out when they balance so you know how much the meat weighs and how much you're going to have to pay for it.

So, we are to balance everything that we know—What's that? Well, in this context: *everything* in Ephesians 1, 2, and 3. You have to give *just as much weight* to how you *live* in the name of Christ, as what you *know* about being "in Christ." So, it means, to live up to who you are by God's grace (Col. 3:10); it means, to practice what you say you believe; it means that, whatever you know about God's Word, you are *required by God* to balance that with *living* in light of what it means (see Jn. 13:17; cf. Lk. 11:28).

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Now let's go further: "I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of *the calling with which you have been called.*" The word "calling" means, the divine "call"—God's summons to salvation which God gives to a sinner.

I want to digress for just a moment to help you understand this Biblical concept, because there are two legitimate ways in which "calling" is used in the Bible.

Number 1 is: the "universal call" to salvation; it's a *universal* invitation. Jesus said it this way, in Matthew 11:28—"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Read on in the context and you'll see He means "rest for your souls" (vs. 29)—"*Get off the treadmill, and rest in Me!*" So, it is a universal invitation (see Matt. 22:14). In John 6:35, "Jesus said to them [at the Feast], 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst.' " You might call it the "he who invitation"—"whoever" comes (Jn. 3:16), "*anyone*" can "come" (Jn. 7:37), "*anyone*" can "eat of this bread" (Jn. 6:51), *anyone* can have this "eternal life" (Jn. 3:36; 6:47), *all* are invited to salvation (Is. 55:1; Matt. 22:8; 28:19; Rev. 22:17). Second Peter 3:9—God is "not wishing for *any* to perish but for *all* to come to repentance" and a knowledge of the grace of God (cf. Ezek. 33:11; 1 Tim. 2:3-4; Titus 2:11). That is the "universal call" to salvation. *There are no limits to that!*

But, the Bible *also* teaches that not everyone will come, because how many respond to the invitation? Well, if you go read Romans Chapter 3, how many "righteous" are there? *Zero.* How many seek God? *None.* "There is none righteous, *not even one*...there is *none who seeks for God*" (vss. 11-12). That's one of the reasons why this *idiocy* of the last 40 years, of the "Seeker Sensitive" movement—"We are going to design 'church' for all of those people who are seeking God"—means: "We are trying to *please* unbelievers!" *No one seeks God!*

And you say, 'Well, hold on there, wait a minute! You've heard my testimony. I started being convicted of my sin, and I had this hunger, and I sought God!' Yes, you did—*why?* Because *God sought you!* (Jer. 24:7; Jn. 15:16, 19; Acts 13:48; 16:14; Gal. 1:15-16) We saw it in Chapter 1 of Ephesians: The Doctrine of Election—that God "chose" certain ones to save them (2 Thess. 2:13)—that is the *only explanation* why *anyone* is ever in Heaven: because in our sin, *we don't choose God, we don't seek God* (1 Cor. 2:14)

So, the *invitation* is universal; the *response* is among those whom He "calls" in the *second* sense. We call this the "Effectual Call"—that's the term that theologians like to use—that God *actually "calls"* a certain person (Rom. 8:28, 30; 9:24; cf. 2 Thess. 2:14; Heb. 9:15; 1 Pet. 5:10; Rev. 17:14); He "plucks you out of the fire," if you will (cf. Zech. 3:2).

Here is a key to understanding this: Every single time this word "call"—*kaleō*—is used *in the epistles* (everything from Romans through Jude), every time you see the word "calling" there—try this out—it refers to the "effectual call," that God *actually draws* a person to faith in Himself (Jn. 6:44-45; Rom. 1:6); He "grants" that person "repentance" (2 Tim. 2:25); He *calls* that person "out of death into life" (1 Jn. 3:14), like we saw in Ephesians Chapter 2 (vs. 5; cf. Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:25-27; Jn. 3:3, 5; Titus 3:5).

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And so it's not a surprise that this "calling," according to Romans 11:29, "is irrevocable" (cf. Jn. 6:37-39; Phil. 1:6; Jd. 1); it is God's choice, according to First Corinthians 1:30 and Ephesians 1:4; it is a call to salvation (2 Thess. 2:14); it is an "upward call," according to Philippians 3:14; it is a "holy calling," according to Second Timothy 2:9 and First Peter 1:15; and it's a "heavenly calling," among other things in Hebrews Chapter 3. So, understand: This is how God "call[s]" individuals "to Himself" (Acts 2:39).

Some people, if you read in certain literature, will describe this as the "Irresistible Call," and it's very unfortunate that they use that language; *what they mean* is: it is "effectual," it gets the work done of bringing a person to Christ (Jn. 6:37, 45). But when we say "irresistible," some people say, "Well, wait a minute! You're teaching that *I don't have any choice!* God just *zaps* you to faith!" Well, I know the testimonies of *a whole lot of people* in this room—including me—and I have *never, ever* heard *one* that said, "Well, I *didn't want to believe, but God made me!*" No! It's not like that! It is "irresistible" in the sense that, there is one woman that I met in my life that I found *irresistible*—and she didn't *overrule* my will (see Ps. 110:3; Lk. 24:45; cf. Matt. 16:17 with Jn. 6:69). Do you get the point? *That* kind of "irresistible"—it is *effectual* (see Acts 16:14; 18:27b).

What is the resolution of the mystery between the fact that *you* are one hundred percent responsible for every decision you make (Rom. 1:20; 3:19), and *God* is one hundred percent responsible for every decision you make? (e.g., Prov. 16:1, 9) Leave it to God! *Both* of those are absolutely true.

Now look back again where we are: "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling"—now, remember that I said, "Test this out"; always in the epistles, this is the meaning of it—"the calling *with which you have been called.*" That's *very* important terminology: "have been called" is an aorist passive verb. The significance of "aorist" means, it looks to a point in time; there was the time at which *you changed direction.* The passive form means, it happened *to you:* God called you—very significant; it is *not* talking about "walking in a manner *in order to become worthy* to be called"; it means, "*You have been called,*" and now that you have *accepted* the call, you need to live in such a way that gives equal weight to your *position* in Christ and your *living* according to who He is (e.g., 2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Thess. 2:10; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:7). You need to live up to who you are (cf. Eph. 5:3; 1 Tim. 2:10; Titus 2:10).

This is why doctrine *always has to come before* exhortation. How can you *possibly* live up to what you *don't know?* How can you use resources that you don't understand?

Again, if you'll let me make a comparison between Ephesians and Romans—you might think the same guy wrote them both, the way he structured them—Romans 1 through 11, and then "Therefore," do this (12:1); and then you get to Romans Chapter 12, Verse 2: You do this by the *transformation of your mind,* the "renewing of your mind"; you are "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (cf. Eph. 4:23; 1 Pet. 2:2). Fill your mind with the first 11 chapters, and now: It's time to put on your big boy pants, grow up, and live the way you are supposed to! Same thing with Ephesians Chapter 1 through 3, and then Chapters 4 through 6.

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This is a *very important* issue, and it's where a lot of Christian teaching goes wrong. A lot of people like to teach the "shoulds" and the "oughts" and the "shalts" without teaching who you are in Christ—and that is *always* problematical, because people get frustrated trying to live up to something, but they don't know what it is that they need to live up to, or *how* to live up to it! If you exhort without building people up, it's *deadly*—it produces Christians who are like children who have been yelled at, but never instructed; and you've seen kids like that. You might have grown up in a situation like that; you know how *horribly* frustrating that is.

Trying to make application without doctrinal foundation does several destructive things.

For one: It produces guilt-ridden, ineffective, ignorant Christians—or, worse yet: people who have been *told* they are Christians, when they really don't even know the Gospel (cf. Prov. 30:12; Matt. 7:22-23; 2 Cor. 13:5). They can't produce spiritually because they have no concept of their resources, and they are spiritually malnourished.

There are some absolutely *heartbreaking* statistics these days, from surveys among "Evangelicals"; the root of the word "evangelical" is "evangel"—*euangelion*, the "good news," the "Gospel." An "Evangelical" should be a person who *knows*, loves, lives by, and preaches the "Gospel"—and *the vast majority* of people who are *fine* with wearing the label "Evangelical," you ask them what the Gospel is and *they can't explain it!*

What is the Gospel? Well, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23) and "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23) because "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and...He was buried, and...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4)—*that's the Gospel*, and you *can't be a Christian* without believing that (Jn. 8:24)!

So, if you have a bunch of people who say, "I'm a Gospel kind of person, and I don't really know what the Gospel is," *what do you have?* You have a beautiful product of the work of Satan—the ultimate *counterfeiter* (Matt. 13:25, 30; 2 Cor. 11:14-15), the ultimate deceiver (Jn. 8:44; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rev. 12:9).

And if you try to make application without foundation, it can also cause people to become very experience-oriented and subjective, instead of Scripture-oriented and objective. You can be *faithful to truth*, you can *stand on the truth*, but it doesn't work that way with experiences. In Ephesians 4 through 6, you're going to see this twofold truth; he's going to tell you, "Walk! Keep walking this way! Always walk this way!"—and you're going to get to Chapter 6, and he's going to say, "Stand!" Well, Paul what do you want? Do you want me to "stand," or do you want me to "walk"? Come on, get with it here! Well, when you're being assaulted, "Stand your ground! Stand *in the truth!*" And if you're not being assaulted—or, even in the midst of the assault—"walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called." And if people decide that their standing in Christ is based upon their experiences, oh, are they going to be confused! I think the Greek word for that kind of life is "yo-yo"—up and down, and up and down (cf. Eph. 4:14).

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Seeking application without doctrinal foundation just makes fertile ground for *all kinds* of things to go wrong! Legalism is one of them. Legalism is where you haven't taught people who they are in Christ, and the riches of salvation and all that we have and the security that we have in Christ and the finished work of Christ; and so, you try to make a person behave like a Christian, so you say: "Here are the rules"—and *always* when you start doing that, you get rules that go beyond what the Scriptures say (cf. Mk. 7:1-13). And you rob people of the ability to think things through; they just say, "Okay, tell me what to think about this." You cannot add or subtract from God's Word (Deut. 12:32). And Legalism is a result of not teaching people who they are in Christ; you teach them that they need to act like this in order to try to be good enough for God to like them—*always* deadly! (cf. Is. 64:6; Phil. 3:9)

It leads to speculation, because if people don't *know* the depths of what God's Word says, they will speculate about it: "Well, this sounds right *to me!*"—*Always* a bad thing to do (Deut. 12:8; cf. Prov. 28:26; Is. 55:8-9; Jer. 17:9).

When we do our Question and Answer series—I call it "Provoke the Pastor"—and I get questions sometimes like, "Well, why did Jesus say this?" or "What was Elijah thinking?" or something like that, I always say: "If the *text* of the Bible says, well then, we'll find it." But, for a true Christian, sometimes the answer is: "The Bible doesn't say"—and that is a *perfect* answer (Deut. 29:29; cf. Ps. 131:1).

Are you willing to believe that God has given to us "everything pertaining to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17), or are you going to *speculate* about things?

People start speculating—a new denomination is born, a new cult is born, a new book is written, all sorts of things fall apart (cf. Jer. 14:14). And that ultimately leads to heresy, which is just speculation run wild. Remember, Paul told Timothy: I left you "at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines" (1 Tim. 1:3). Look what he said right after that, in First Timothy 1:6-7—"For some men, straying from these things"—these specific things about what it means to be in Christ—"have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions." That's just all false teaching is! Let's think up something and saddle up our horse and ride off into Problem-land.

I have spent many sad hours, I've had many heartaches, trying to help people overcome the results of stupid spiritual advice that has been given by people who haven't spent the effort to search out: What does God say on this subject?—Well, *what is* the Biblical definition of "human"? What does it mean to be "in the image of God"?—and then we build from there.

The point of all this is that our unity *cannot* be displayed until we *start* with an understanding of who we are "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17), and we have a commitment to *accurately apply* that truth that God has revealed to us in His Word (Col. 2:6; 3:1-2, 10); in other words: As we walk along, the unity becomes evident.

Sermon Title: The Worthy Walk Of Oneness (Part 1)
Scripture Text: Eph. 4:1 (Ephesians #18)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 10-3-21

Unity is rooted in knowing—here it is again—your *calling*: "the calling with which you have been called." Unity is part of our "calling" (Rom. 1:7)! Unity is *not* an option, it's a *reality*! (e.g., 1 Cor. 1:2) And, by the way: Jesus *prayed* about this unity—and for you and me, when it comes to this reality. Remember the night before He went to the Cross, and the great prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane—and among that, these verses, starting at John 17, Verse 20; Jesus says to the Father: "I do not ask on behalf of these alone"—the antecedent of "these" is the 11 remaining disciples, because Judas had already done his evil deed and departed—"but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me." He goes on to say: "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."

Now, here's the important thing to understand: Jesus' prayer was *answered*! As soon as there was more than one believer in Christ, they were one—they are one unit, they are "one body" together (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 2:16; Col. 3:15). *We are one in Christ!* There is *only* one "body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12; cf. 1 Cor. 10:17). We—here, in this place—we are *one local manifestation* of that Body.

Take a look at what's coming up after we finish this sentence that we began today. Look at Ephesians Chapter 4, Verses 4 through 6, and see if you can figure out if there's a theme here: "There is *one* body and *one* Spirit, just as also you were called"—back to Ephesians 1—"in *one* hope of your calling; *one* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism, *one* God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." You might say: "You are all one!" *We are a unit!*

My friends, our job—as brothers and sisters in Christ—is *not* to *create* unity! That's because, *we can't!* It's God's work! Our job is to *live out* the unity that is created by God through Jesus Christ, and to avoid messing it up. And that's where the hard work needs to be done. That's where it matters *so much* how we walk, how we practice our lives together! Here's a Spoiler Alert: Next time we visit Ephesians, I think we are going to make it all the way to Verse 3, and look at the last participle that dangles from the command, "Walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called"—it's this: "being diligent to *preserve* the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We don't *create it*, we work hard to *preserve* it (cf. Rom. 12:16; 15:5-7; 1 Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:27). The word translated "diligent" has to do with your *first* and *highest* priority. What is it? Hang on to what God has created in Christ.

Here's another way to look at it: Romans Chapter 12. Oh, yeah—Romans Chapter 12 is kind of parallel to Ephesians Chapter 4, isn't it? Romans 12:4-5—"For just as we have many members in one body"—there he's describing your physical body, all of the different parts of your physical body—"and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." My friends, we *belong* to each other! We *need* to function in harmony with each other! This *is* the unity that God has created in Christ Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 12:20, 27).

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So, we need to "walk in a manner worthy"—granting sufficient weight to who we are in Christ. So, as I say: You *cannot* practice Christianity apart from a church (Rom. 12:10; 14:19; 1 Cor. 12:24-26; Gal. 5:13; 6:2; Eph. 4:16; 5:19; Col. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:11, 14; Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25; Jas. 5:16; 1 Pet. 1:22; 4:8-10; 1 Jn. 3:11, 23). You *can't do it*, because we *belong to each other*—we are *incomplete* without each other!

That's why I say, when you are physically reduced to having to watch what is going on here by way of livestream, *oh, how we miss you!* I'm so glad we can get this little bit of connection, but *we have to practice it together!* *We have to be committed to it!* Our *highest* priority, our most *conspicuous* diligence—to belong to each other in Christ!

And I promise you, I and everyone else who has ever preached a message like this, wishes we had a button on the pulpit with which we could make all of the empty seats hear what the people in the full seats are hearing. We need to disciple each other! We need to encourage each other! "I...*implore* you"—that's the word "come alongside"; we need to "come alongside" each other.

I made the comment, as we've been down a little bit for a few weeks because of the Covid numbers and all of that—I said, "You're missing somebody? *Give them a call.* Send them a text. Write them an e-mail. Do something, reach out and get ahold of them. You that are on livestream, you don't see who is here; check out, call, check on somebody." And you know what? Some people *actually did that!* And you know what they said? "Wow, I'm glad I did that!" Or, somebody said, "*I just got this call!* How wonderful!"

That's because we are "one body," and I "*implore* you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which [we] have been called."

Now let's ask our Father to help us in our walk, shall we?

Our Father, how we thank You for this Effectual Call. Thank You for this thing that You have made us part of, this Body. Have Your way with us, Father. It's easy for us to become lazy, it's easy for us to become selfish, it's easy for us to just forget what we are in Christ. So, Father, give us the desire to daily walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called. And then, we look forward to what You will do through us for Your glory, in Jesus' name. Amen.