

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Lowly Walk, Part 6

Scripture: Ephesians 4:2-6

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Ephesians chapter 4 the first six verses, and I'd like to read them for you as we begin. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation to which ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are 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."

Let's ask the Lord to bless our study.

Father I ask You right now to take control of the words that I speak, the thoughts that I think and move them to Your own ends and Your own purposes. Accomplish in our hearts what You will from the tremendous treasure of this text, and we'll praise You in Jesus' name. Amen.

We are learning these days the standards for Christian living.

We're learning the basic principles of the worthy walk. And we have been seeing the truth that the heart of the issue is a series of inner attitudes, a series of inward graces that characterize the believer. We mentioned to you in our last study that it is not the issue...living the Christian life is not the issue of simply what you do, far more is it the issue of what you are. When someone becomes a Christian we, we tend to say to them, now that you're a Christian you need to read the Bible and you need to pray and you need to go to church and you need to talk about Jesus to others and, and that's right, that's true but that's really one step removed from the real issue because that's external. And what the Apostle Paul is saying here is look, now that you're a Christian and now that you know who you are here is what I want you to do, and he talks only about the inner man, only about the inward graces.

Because as we remember in chapter 3 until you're strengthened by His Spirit with might in the inner man you can't begin to see the power of God in your life. So it all starts on the inside, that's the issue of Ephesians chapter 4 verses 1 to 6. The worthy walk begins in the heart. The inner man. Now verse 1 we saw was the call to the worthy walk, based upon the great theology of the first three chapters he says, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation to which

ye are called." Thus the call to the worthy walk based on who we are as indicated in the first three chapters. Then we saw the characteristics of the worthy walk. What is it that we are to do as we have been called to this worthy walk? And in verses 2 and 3 he mentions five inward graces, five inner attitudes, five characteristics of the heart, five things that God desires in the life of a believer. They are progressive and they lead to the concept of unity. Now get this at the very beginning, the goal of this whole thing is unity. Notice it in verse 5, the end of it all is "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Now God's primary direction for the church is that we be one, now listen to this because it's very important. Jesus said to the disciples in John 13 they were to love one another and have this beautiful loving oneness that the world would know they were His disciples. That is if they had this kind of love the world would recognize they had a supernatural origin, okay? The whole idea of the loving unity of the church is to manifest a supernatural origin, that's the idea. In other words in John 17 when Jesus prayed, Father that they may be one, that the world may know that You sent Me, Jesus was really saying that the unity of the church will manifest the supernatural character of the leader of the church, do you see? In other words if the church is like every other human institution they're going to know it's human, and every other human institution is fragmented. It is typical of our world and always has been that there is no unity, there is no peace, there is no real love, we are a divided group of people, we always have been throughout the history of mankind, from the moment of the fall man has been divided, the tower of Babel scattered him everywhere and it's been the same ever since. Whenever the world evaluates itself it sees discord. The point is this. if in the midst of all of this disunity and all of this lack of peace and all of this lack of love there is a community of people who are totally in love with each other, who are totally one, who are absolutely united then somebody's going to have to recognize that that's not a human institution, see?

Because human institutions don't have that. And they're going to say, then these must be of a supernatural source and Jesus says they will know that God sent Me. See that's the point. It is the unity of the church that grants to the world a reason to believe that the church is a supernatural organism. Where there is discord and friction and factions and fighting and disconnection and a lack of peace the world sees us as just another human institution, and they have every right to make that evaluation.

There's a second reason the Lord wants unity in the church, and that is because only when the, when the church of Jesus Christ is one can it manifest Christ. Now the church is called the body of Christ, and I've called it body two, body one was Jesus incarnate, body two is Jesus incarnate in His church. And First Corinthians 12 says that we are all members of His body, right? Some of us are eyes and some of us are noses and some of us are fingers and some of us are toes and some of us are knees and so forth, we are all part of the body of Christ. But only as we function in the right manner, only as we function as one ministering mutually to each other without schism in the body, remember that in First Corinthians 12? Only as we mutually minister to one another is the body seen as one and therefore Christ rightly manifest in the world. Where there is discord, where there is disharmony, where there is non-functioning members, where there's a low level of commitment the body is spastic,

the body is crippled, the body is maimed and the world looks and sees a crippled, maimed, spastic Christ, see. So listen, God's goal in the church is unity, a loving, invincible, unconquerable, indivisible unity, because that's what shows Christ to the world, that manifests His wholeness. And that's what says to the world this is not just another human institution, human institutions can't pull this kind of love off. So the unity is the goal. That's why he says when all is said and done about the worthy walk the ultimate end is oneness and unity. And God knows we need unity, that was the prayer of Jesus, that was the bequest of Jesus to the disciples, and nothing's changed. When the Apostle Paul looks at the church he says, there's neither male nor female, "there's neither Jew nor Greek, there's neither bond or free for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

And that oneness is to be manifest, that organic oneness, that salvation oneness, that common eternal life that we all have as joined to Christ is to be made manifest. So unity is the goal.

Now how do you get unity in the church? You say, well I know, there's an organization, the Consultation On Church Unity, it's called Co-coup. They're after it, they're working on it. you don't do it that way. The Consultation On Church Union is coming up with unity that we don't want and we don't need. How do you get real unity? Well you've got to back up to verse 2, and that's what Paul is saying here, the worthy walk begins here. When you say to somebody, boy you've got to walk worthy, you don't say to them well...how do you walk...well you get your Bible out and start reading the Bible, start praying, go to church and do ah, 48 spiritual pushups, gotta walk worthy. No, those things are all all right, but to walk worthy you start with these wonderful graces. The first one is in verse 2, "all lowliness." That's total humility, we've already discussed that in detail. James said it in James 4:10 he used the same word he said, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up." Humble yourself. Jeremiah said it in the Old Testament, chapter 9 verse 23 and 24, "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches, But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord." See, there's nothing to boast about, there's nothing to glory in, but that we know the Lord. Total humility.

And total humility leads to something else. Remember what it was, we discussed it last time? Meekness, look at verse 2 again, with total humility and meekness. Total humility leads to meekness, meekness is a manifestation of true humility, and we said last time that meekness is a quiet, willing submission to God and to others with none of the rebellion and the revenge and the retaliation and the self-assertion that is characteristic of the unregenerate natural man. And we said that meekness is power under control, it isn't cowardice, it isn't a sort of a, ah, sentimentalism, it isn't an indifference, it isn't a Casper Milquetoast, meekness is the person who only gets angry when God is offended never when he is, remember?

It's power under what? Control. It never retaliates or reacts or revenges anything done to itself, only God. And so boy, does that have a tremendous impact on unity. You know where there is humility

there's going to be beautiful unity to start with, because that's what Paul says in Philippians 2 he says, oh I wish you had the same love, I wish you had that oneness, here's how ah, "Let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not on your own things, but on the things of others. Let the mind be in you, which was in Christ."

The mind of humility, humility is the key to that unity, and where there is humility there will be meekness, that is a non-retaliatory mentality, there just is a beautiful acceptance of whatever comes, to me but when it comes to God I'll defend Him I'll stand for His holiness and against those who would defile Him. So humility that total selflessness leads to meekness and that is the total selflessness that never defends itself but always stands up and fights for the cause of righteousness.

Now humility leads to meekness and meekness leads then thirdly to long-suffering. We're going to go through these more rapidly so watch. Long-suffering, what is this? Makrothumia for you Greek students, beautiful word, it literally means long tempered, long tempered, you don't blow up, you don't have a short fuse, you don't lose it, long tempered. Now it has three main ideas and these are very rich, now listen, first of all, long-suffering is the attitude which never gives into negative circumstances, okay? That's the first one. Long-suffering, makrothumia or patience or endurance, it's translated all those ways, never gives into negative circumstances, it doesn't matter how bad the circumstances are long-suffering never gives in. And it's greatly illustrated in the Word of God, the word is used for example in Hebrews 6:15, and it's used of Abraham. Abraham received a promise from God, "blessing I'll bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee." And in Genesis God said to Abraham, "I'll multiply thy seed as the sands of the sea."

And then it says in verse 15 of Hebrews 6, "And so, after he" that is Abraham "had patiently endured," makrothumia, "he obtained the promise." Now here's an illustration of a man who endured negative circumstances and never ever lost his patience. You know, God says to him, you're going to have as many as the sand of the sea coming from your loins, and he never had had any, his wife was barren, they never had one kid and he was over 90. But he believed God and he patiently endured. Romans 4:20 says, "He staggered not at the promise of God, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." He just hung in there and believed God and believed God in the midst of very negative circumstances, a barren wife and old age. And what happened? God gave him that promise.

And then there was Noah, and God said to Noah to build a boat in the desert and he did it for a hundred and twenty years and God said it was going to rain, it was going to rain and there had never been rain in the history of the world, did you know that? Never been rain. But he did it, one hundred and twenty years he endured.

Then there was Moses, Moses who would rather endure the afflictions of the people of God than the pleasures of sin for a season, see, endured. This is the ability to take any kind of circumstance and never give up and never bail out and never get angry and never lose control, you can take it. In

James 5:10, "Take, my brethren," he says, "the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example" watch, "of suffering affliction, and of endurance."

Makrothumia. long-suffering, patience, he says, remember the prophets?

Just remember what they endured, just remember Jeremiah. God said to him, Jeremiah, I want you to preach all your life long, here's your message, and I want to tell you this Jeremiah nobody will ever listen, nobody will ever turn and the nation is going to go right on into terrible evil in spite of what you say. But you know what? He said it, and he was faithful and he endured hatred, persecution, rejection, unbelief, because he had long-suffering. Because you know something? He was a truly humble man, so God's causes he would endure any circumstances for God's causes, it didn't matter what happened to him. And through his whole life he spent most of his time crying, didn't he? That's why he's called the weeping prophet.

Isaiah, the same thing, God said Isaiah, here's the message preach it, preach it, preach it and by the way Isaiah in spite of you the nation is going to go deeper and deeper into sin. But he endured negative circumstances. And there was Paul. Paul's on his way to Jerusalem in Acts 20 and he says in Acts 20:22, oh I know that everywhere I go "the Holy Spirit tells me that bonds and afflictions await me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself." I just want to finish the course and the ministry which Jesus has given me. He says look, I'll endure anything to accomplish God's purposes, I'm not out after my own hide, I'm not to do my own thing, I'm just going to be faithful. In chapter 21 Agabus the prophet came along and said, hey Paul you know what's going to happen when you get to Jerusalem, I'll show you, takes off his belt, wraps his hands up and says that's what's going to happen to you, you're going to become a prisoner. Paul says, that's all right. If that's the way it has to be, the purposes of God, the will of God, the work of God, that's the only issue that matters to me. And so in the 21st chapter of Acts verse 13 Paul said, "Why are you weeping and trying to break my heart? I am ready, not to be bound only but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." See? Enduring, it is the ability to endure the negative circumstance whatever it is, the persecution, the hatred, the bitterness, the rejection, the ostracizing. Because you see you're not really concerned about what happens to you anyway. It's like, like I told you last week, John Bunyan said, "He who is already lying down need fear no fall."

Second thing, it is not only the attitude that can endure negative circumstances but it is the attitude that can take anything people can dish out. You know sometimes the problem in life isn't our circumstances it's the people around us. But makrothumia is used in the Scripture also to speak of patience with people as well as patience with circumstances. For example in First Thessalonians 5:14 it is used in this phrase, "Be patient toward all men." This is the spirit that refuses to retaliate to people, it is meekness applied, it is saying I don't care what insult, what injury, what persecution, what unfair treatment, what maligning, what slander, what criticism, what hatred, what jealousy, what envy, I don't care what it is that you throw at me I, I can accept that without bitterness, without irritation,

without a word of complaining. Boy that's tough, isn't it? You know something? You can't start a fight with a person like that, there's no way, you're stuck with living at peace.

You've got to do it. You know I...we all work on these things and it's easy to get defensive and try to defend yourself, and the Lord is just teaching me not to do that, I don't need to do that. Because if I defend myself then I am, then I am really saying that it is important what I am and what I do and that I be accepted. That...and that is not important, I'll defend God but not me. You know I, I, I used to say, well you know I can take anything in the ministry, I can take ah...people can criticize what I do, and they do do that and it helps me a lot I...because I do a lot of stuff that needs criticism, that's true, and that's okay, people who criticize what I do and they don't like what I do and, and they'll tell me and that's good and they...if they do that in love especially it's good but even if they don't do it in love it helps me sometimes because I have to rethink the things I've done wrong. But you know I used to think, boy I can take that, but when somebody starts impugning my motives...like I'll never forget someone said that I was in the ministry for money one time. And then there's other things that are said you know, somebody will say, well he probably does that because ...you know when they start to question your motives that is very hard to take. Because you know they don't know your motive and you know it's just pure slander, see. And if it is your motive then you really ought to listen. But for the most part you know...it's one thing if people criticize what you do but when they start to criticize on the inside...and then I began to realize but it really doesn't matter. I shouldn't be defensive about either of those things, why should I defend John MacArthur what need does he have to be defended, he's totally insignificant. I'll spend my time defending God, not me. That's not the issue, the issue's Him. I'd much rather run around being occupied with that. And so that's the kind of thing he's talking about here. You see this kind of long-suffering says, "hey, I can take any circumstance, because it's only how it affects me that would upset me and I'm not considering that anymore. And I can take anything that people want to give and that's okay too because when they're right I need to listen and when they're wrong that's all right too, I've been wrong."

And there's third element to it, *makrothumia* is also used in the New Testament to speak of the attitude that accepts God's plan for everything, and never argues with that either. It doesn't question circumstances, it can endure them, it doesn't question people, it can take people, and by the way in the process it can love them, we'll see that in a minute. And thirdly it doesn't question God. Aristotle said the great Greek virtue is the refusal to tolerate any insult, and readiness to strike back. Well that may be the great Greek virtue but that's not a Christian grace, certainly not toward God. You know what this kind of patience says, "hey, Lord if this is what is for me for now that's okay." You know Jesus is the sum of all these, isn't He? You see Jesus in negative circumstances, He comes into the world and all He's ever known is the pristine majesty and the glory of heaven, all He's ever known in His preincarnate times was face to face fellowship, *pros ton theon*, John 1 with God the Father, all he's ever known is a marvelous kind of intimacy and all of a sudden He comes into this world and from an environment of total love, an environment of total worship, an environment of total sovereignty, an environment where the whole of the created heavens did nothing but praise His name

from eternity past, He comes to a world with men who spit on Him, and mock Him and curse Him and do to Him all those things that men did to Him. And yet ah, He endured that, and He endured right out at the cross. And then He took it all, not only the negative circumstance, the circumstance of being here instead of being there, but the people, the people themselves. While He was even hanging on the cross bearing their sin they were spitting at Him and they were mocking Him and all He had to say to them was ah,...for them rather was, "Father," what? "forgive them, for they know not what they do." And you know what happens to people that God forgive...gives? They wind up where? In heaven, did you know that? You know what Jesus was asking? He was asking that the Father would bring some of His murderers, some of those who hated Him to heaven to be with Him forever. Now that's patience, don't you think? That's patience with people, as well as with circumstance, oh I know in the garden He said, "oh Father this circumstance is so hard, let this cup pass from me," but nevertheless not what? My will. You see His ability to deal with the circumstance was that He knew it was God's circumstance, His will. And then finally Jesus had that wonderful ability to accept the plan from God. He could endure the negative circumstance, He could take all the stuff people had to dish out and He could accept anything at the hands of God, He was totally resigned to total humility which produced meekness, which produced long- suffering, with circumstances, with people, even with God.

That's the pattern. Humility gives birth to meekness, meekness gives birth to long-suffering. And you know something? Let me just give you a little hint here, these virtues are probably the most powerful testimony the church of Jesus Christ has. You know when we think of evangelism we think of methods, don't we? We think of boy get out there and hit them with it, or we think of training or - And the greatest message that we have in this world is if, if we just had love and oneness and unity. I mean the world wouldn't know what to do with us, they would say, hey they have a supernatural source, they're not like us. And some of the times our methods are so difficult to use because we have to overcome the terrible reputation of the church.

I'll never forget Reinhold Niebuhr's statement, he didn't make too many good statements but he did make one that was interesting.

He said, "the church was like Noah's ark, if it weren't for the storm outside you couldn't stand the stink inside." That's a little strong but ah, that's an awful thing for somebody to have to say about the church of Jesus Christ, isn't it? Awful. And you know...just to give you an illustration, if the church, if we just had total humility producing this...the beauty of meekness that is strong and powerful but it's the lion tamed only in response to its Master not in self-defense, and that meekness produced long-suffering you know the world would sit up and take notice of us and our evangelism would be much easier than it is now. Illustration, Mr. Stanley went to Africa in 1871 to find David Livingstone, he'd heard about him. He was infatuated with the man, he wanted to find him. He did find him, and it says in his little history that he spent several months in the company of David Livingstone, who this time...by this time was an old man, and he said, "Livingstone never spoke to me about spiritual things." Livingstone was busy doing what he was doing with Africans; Stanley was just hanging

around observing. Throughout the months he watched the old man, and he said, Livingstone's habits were beyond my comprehension and the thing that amazed me most was his patience.

He could not understand, says his biographer that Livingstone really had such patience and sympathy for those pagan Africans. For the sake of Christ and His gospel David Livingstone was patient, untiring, eager and literally spending himself, in fact he spent himself for His Master's cause. This is what Stanley wrote in his journal, listen to this, quote, "When I saw that unwearied patience, that unflagging zeal, those enlightened sons of Africa I became a Christian at his side though he never spoke to me one word." End quote. Isn't that great? I'm not advocating that you never speak a word, I'm just saying sometimes you won't have to say nearly as much if you just live different.

Oh if the world could see a clear picture of Jesus Christ manifest through the body, if the world could see the kind of unity that would make them say, this is not of the earth. If they knew of us as humble and meek and long-suffering how our evangelism would be sped on wings. And you know what comes out of this? A fourth inward grace in verse 2, "forbearing one another in love." Let's call it forbearing love. Forbearing love is a product of patience which is a product of meekness, which is a product of humility.

Forbearing love, do you know what kind of love this is? Listen, this is so good. This is the kind of love - that the concept of forbear, that word means to suppress with silence. It's the idea of throwing a blanket over sin, it's First Peter 4:8, "Love covers a multitude of (what?) sins." It's Proverbs 10:12, "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sin." It's the thing that says, "hey not only can I endure it, not only can I take it from you but I can love you in the middle of it." Now there's the test, humility produces meekness, produces endurance with love. You say, "well I know my enemies give me a lot of trouble and I can take it, I'm gritting my teeth and I can take it." That isn't the point, can you take it and love them? Can you love them back, nothing to give but love?

This is the love that has room for failures, and by the way your love ought to have room for failures, you know that? Because everybody else who's trying to love you has got to have love that has room for failures. This is forbearing love, boy this is the kind of love that just...let me give it to you this way, you, you all know there are different Greek words for love, there aren't just three there are more than that, but I'll just - the three that you know; Eros, Phileo, Agape. And just in a general sense this is the way they're used. Eros is a love that takes, okay? That's taking love, ah, I love you because I can get what I want out of you, that's the world's kind of love, sexual, lustful, whatever, that's the take kind of love, that's the drive - that makes us want to get satisfaction, that's eros. Then there's phileo. love that says, "I love you because of give and take, I love you because of what I get from you and, and what I give to you." It's the give and take of friendship, the world knows about this too. But then there's agape and that's the love that says, "I give, period. No take, no get, just give."

Eros - get. Phileo - give and get. Agape - give. And that's the word here, and this is the kind of love that can only think of the highest good of the other person, if you want the best definition of agapao what, what that high word of love means, it means the love that seeks the other's good at any price, that's it. It's, it's selfless, absolutely selfless. It's God so seeking the highest good of us at any price that He gave His only begotten Son, see? It's greater, greater love or greater concern for the highest good of another person can no man have than that he what? Lay down his life.

See it has...it's totally selfless, it is the obliteration of the self. No matter what anybody does to me I'll never seek revenge, no matter what anybody does to me I'll accept it and I'll love them in the middle of it because my kind of love only gives, it has nothing to do with the give and take, so what I get means nothing, be it good, bad or indifferent. It just throws a blanket over evil, it is unconquerable benevolence, it is invincible goodness. Now beloved look at this, what is the Holy Spirit saying to us? He's saying, "get it on with the Christian life, walk worthy," and where does it all begin? Right down inside of you with this commitment to be humble and meek and long-suffering and loving. The kind of love that just seeks somebody else's good, no matter what they do to you so even their sins you just throw a blanket over them and they hide. Now this is what he's - by the way, if you want to sit in a corner and try to produce this in the flesh you'll never do it, all of this stuff is the fruit of the Spirit, right? It's only produced by the Holy Spirit as you yield to Him.

So, God wants to produce in us humility which leads to meekness, which leads to long-suffering, which leads to a forbearing kind of love. And I guess the greatest illustration of forbearing love and I, I just have to show you this, you know it, Matthew 5:43 Jesus said this, listen, "You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy;" now watch this, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies," do you know what that means?

Seek your enemies highest good no matter what it costs you. Then get this one, "bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you."

Watch this one, "That you may be the sons of your Father, who is in heaven." That's the way He does, you're His son, that's the way you do, see? The ones who hate Him He loves, the ones who curse Him He loves, the ones who persecute Him He loves, now you're His son so you do that. That's the standard. Then He goes on to say in verse 46, "If you love those who love you, what reward do you have? The tax collectors even do that." That's no high standard. "And if you greet your brethren only, what do you more than others? Even the heathen do that. But be ye, perfect, as your Father, who is in heaven, is perfect." And how is His perfection manifest? Because He loves His enemies, He loves the unlovely, He loves the unlovable, no matter what they do to Him. It's Jesus hanging on a cross loving the people spitting on Him, it's Stephen lying beneath the - rocks as they crush his life out of his body and, and looking up and saying, "God, lay not this sin to their charge." It's, it's that, you see it's that forbearing, it's accepting anything and returning only love, only love, only concern for

the other's highest good. And you know when it's all said and done beloved, when you're got those things you know what you're going to have? You're going to have verse 3, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." That's the finale, unity. This is the goal, as I said at the very beginning this is what God is after in order that Christ might be made manifest, in order that the church may be seen as not just another social club but a divine institution of God, supernaturally born, supernaturally sustained, with a supernatural and eternal destiny. Beloved when we are humble, when we're we...when we're meek, patient, loving, then you know what? Then we're really working on unity. The word endeavoring from the Greek verb spoudazo means to work at it, to hurry, to be in a hurry in fact that same verb Paul uses two times once in Second Timothy, once in Titus and he says, do thy dili...diligence to come to me in a hurry. I mean get it on this is for now, he's saying. It is used also by Paul in Second Timothy 2:15, "Be diligent to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." It then carries two ideas, the idea of, of zeal the idea of heart effort and the idea of do it now. It's a hurry up and let's get at it, and let's get at it with real commitment. Listen, we've got to work on unity. And you say, boy, I'll head the committee, I'll make the posters, no, no. No we, we...you don't work on unity that way. This is a personal passage, if you're going to hurry up and work on unity it's going to have to be a hurry up and start in your heart - kind of a campaign.

Remember the little poster that, that ah, said, how do you feed a hungry world? And then the bottom said, one at a time. How do you get church unity? One Christian at a time, one at a time committed in his heart to walk worthy, to balance his life with his theology.

We've got to work at it, we've got to make haste.

Kittel, great commentator on the Greek language says the word means a holy zeal demanding full dedication. We've got to get at it, it's time to do it people. You know I grieve and I look around the world and I see all the disunity in the church of Christ, and I see all the discord and all the...and then I hear somebody get up and ah, announce ah, de...denominational distinctives. You know I'm not interested in denominational distinctives, I'm interested in Biblical distinctives. I'm not interested in what divides us I'm interested in what ought to unite us, and I'm not talking about sentimentalism, I'm not talking about ecumenism, I'm not talking about any of that stuff, I'm talking about the reality of the fact that we are to learn in humility to love each other. And it isn't by starting some kind of an ecumenical movement across the globe, it's simply by me being in my heart what I ought to be so that I can love the ones around me and then they become what they ought to be and they love the ones around them and pretty soon you know something that goes like a wildfire. Working at unity is a full time task, demands full effort by every Christian. And you...you know you'll hear people say, well we're going to do all we can to create unity, we're going to do all we can to build unity. You want something? You can't create unity, you can't do it. You cannot build unity, you cannot make unity, all you can do is destroy it.

You say, what do you mean? The Holy Spirit already did it, look at verse 3, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit." In other words the Spirit has already made us one, it's just a matter that either we keep it or we destroy it, do you see? Isn't it great to know you don't have to create it? You just have to keep it, He made us one, after all He baptized us all in one body and He came to dwell in all of us, didn't He? First Corinthians 12:12 and 13, "For by one Spirit were you all baptized into one body." And you were all indwelt by that same Spirit. Romans 8:9, every one of us has the Spirit of Christ, we have the common Holy Spirit, we're in the one body, He has made us one, the unity of the Spirit is ours, all we are to do is to work hard to keep it, to maintain it. And it's not organizational and it's not ecumenical, it is personal and it is spiritual. And the key of course is humility. And the thing is beautiful he closes verse 3, the thing that holds it together is "the bond of peace." And the word bond means a belt. He pictures the body of Christ standing there and, and, and the belt is peace, he just pulls it all together. Peace, the beautiful peace that is born of love. That's what Paul was talking about in Philippians 2, he said, I wish you had the same love, and you can have the same love if you be like Christ, humble yourself, think not on your own things but the things of others, that's the bond of peace.

So true peace based on true love based on true patience, true meekness, born of true humility that makes us one.

Now listen, this is so basic, it involves the obliteration of self, it is so basic that we be one that he...Paul goes on thirdly after the call to the worthy walk and the characteristics of walk to give the cause of the worthy walk, look at verse 4 to 6, this we'll go by real quick. The, the impact of it needs to be taken in total. He says look, as long as self is at the center, as long as your feelings, your prestige, your rights, your place are the chief concern you'll never know unity, but as you humble yourself you will know unity. And then he says look, there isn't any other way to go, this is the only way to go because this is the design of God, after all, "There is one body, one Spirit, one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in you all." In other words he says, "you have enough sense to know that everything God ever designed into the church is all based on a one concept."

There are seven ones there, the number of perfection. One is the key, and that's the whole design of God. This is behind the worthy walk, this is the cause, this is the reality that stands behind this practical oneness. The cause, the reason, the basis. And this is a tremendous passage. How many bodies of Christ are there? How many? One, there isn't the presbyterian body and the Baptist body and the Methodist body and the Episcopal body and the body in Panorama City and the body in Utah and the body in Kansas, there's just one body, one body. There's neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, male nor female you're all one in Christ, there's one body, there is one church, there is one head to that church, just one body, that's all. Ephesians is based on that whole concept. What...whatever race, whatever creed, whatever culture, whatever nationality, whatever language, whatever

temperament may be in your background you become a Christian and you are instantly made one with every other Christian. Listen 3:15 of Ephesians says there is one family in heaven and earth, just one. One body of Christ, we are an organism made up of every single true believer. Boy that's hard for me to take sometimes. I mean there's some true believers they maybe are saved but boy they're really messed up. You say, you mean -there's presbyterians in there and Anglicans and Charismatics, Neo- Evangelical, Fourth Degree Separationists all in the same body?

That's right, that's right. All in the same body, only one body.

And we've got to realize this, instead of celebrating our differences and instead of trying to create unity out of superficial ecumenism or anything else we've got to start in the heart. You know what I believe? I believe if all Christians were right with the Holy Spirit we wouldn't have any discord, it would purify our doctrine to start with, secondly it would purify our relationships, only one body.

Second thing, only one Spirit. There's one body and one Spirit.

How many Holy Spirits are there? Just one, and everyone of us possess Him. "What, know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?" That is said of every Christian, and the totality of the church Ephesians 2 says, "Is built together for an habitation of that one Spirit." We are all individually the temple of the Spirit, we are collectively the habitation of the Spirit, there's only one Spirit folks, we are all one, there's no way around it.

In fact what is it called in verse 3? "The unity of the Spirit."

Hum, there's only one Spirit, only one body. And then at the end of verse 4 he says, "ye are called in one hope of your calling." We only had one eternal calling, and that concept there is we're only called to one destiny, we're all going to the same place. Do you realize that there will be all those strange groups that I mentioned earlier in heaven? If you think that's shocking, do you know that they'll all be made like Christ? You say, you mean even Anglicans are going to be like Christ, you mean ah, even Neo- Evangelicals are going to be made like Christ? Yeah, if they know Christ they're going to be in His image. All have the same eternal destiny. Now I'm not saying we should tolerate wrong theology, I'm not saying we should tolerate wrong behavior, I'm just trying to point out beloved that the, the Word of God here is saying we've got to work on unity, keeping it, the right way, inside, in my life, in your life. There's only one eternal destiny, one hope of our calling, and by the way ah, the guarantee of the hope of our calling is the Holy Spirit, right?

Ephesians 1:13 to 14, "We have the earnest of the Spirit." The Greek word is arrabon. it means engagement ring, the proof that God's going to bring us to the marriage supper is the engagement ring of the Holy Spirit, He's the down payment, He's the installment. It is the Holy Spirit given to us that guarantees our eternal inheritance.

So you notice something? Verse 4 is the Holy Spirit's verse, right?

"One body," we are placed into it by the Holy Spirit, "one Spirit, He indwells us, "one hope," and that is guaranteed to us by the Holy Spirit. Verse 5 is the Son's verse, let's look at it. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." How many Lords are there? Do we all...do we have different Lords? Oh no, "Neither is there salvation in (what?) any other." "There's none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12. "If anybody comes unto you and preaches any other gospel, let him be accursed." " If any comes along and says here is Christ or there is Christ, know that it's the end time and these are false christs." There is only one Lord, right? One Lord, just one. Romans, that beautiful 10th chapter and 12th verse, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." It's the same Lord, it's the same Lord, there's one Lord, no other Lord. In Him is all the fullness of the Godhead dwelling bodily and you're complete in Him, He's the only one, one Lord. One faith, what does that mean? The faith here is talking about the content of the revealed Word of God, there's only one Christianity, one Christian faith, not 25 hundred kinds like we have today, there's only one true faith. Just one. The common faith, the faith Jude said, "that we earnestly contend for that was once for all delivered to the saints." The faith, the content of the revealed Word of God. One faith, that's all, just one. You say, how come we've got so much difference? Oh I guess it's our humanness and inadequate study and lack of diligence and unexamined tradition that we just keep living with, and a lot of things. But there's only one faith, that's all just one. That's why I guess I love Grace Church so much, because everybody here who came as a Christian came from some different place, and yet we all have one faith, don't we? It's kind of a little tiny example of maybe what ought to be. And then one baptism, verse 5. Well you say, what baptism is that? Well that's water baptism, this is the Son's verse.

Some people want to say this is Spirit baptism, but no, that's taken care of in verse 4, one body, we were all placed into that body by the baptism of the Spirit, one Spirit and one hope of your calling, of course the guarantee of the Spirit, this is the Son's verse.

It's beautiful the way Paul has laid it out, there's one Lord and when you put your faith in that Lord you are baptized as a public expression. You see baptism was absolutely essential part of the early church, it wasn't for salvation but it was for testimonies sake but it was important, it was important. There was only one baptism, you weren't baptized in the name of Paul, remember that?

You weren't baptized in the name of Paul, Paul said. There's only one name to be baptized in, that's the name of whom? The Lord Jesus Christ. Only one baptism. When you were saved there was one Lord and one faith that you believed and one person in who's name you were baptized, just one. All of those are parts of the single wonderful complex act of salvation.

Finally he comes to the Father's verse, verse 6. "And there's just one God and Father," the same God, "of all, above all, through all, and in you all." How many God's are there? Just one. There are no other Gods. "I, only I am God." He said it again and again in the Old Testament. "The Lord our God," what does it say? In Deuteronomy 6, "The Lord our God is one God." That's all. One God.

It's the same Father we all have, the one who is above all, sovereign Creator of the universe, controller of the universe, through all, providential upholder of the universe, in you all, personal indwelling presence, same God. We are God created, God loved, God fathered, God controlled, God sustained, God filled, God loved, God blessed, it's all the same God, it's all one people, now do you see what he's saying here? Look, he's saying listen, everything in terms of defining the Christian faith is one. And there's a reason, because God wants us to be one, and if we're to be one we have to go backwards deep down inside, and we have to begin again to think of humility. And where does it come from? Proper self-awareness, Christ awareness, God awareness, remember that? Humility produces meekness and meekness produces long-suffering, long-suffering produces forbearing love and on that basis we can keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace, and the world is going to say, hey they're different, they're supernatural. And maybe like Mr. Stanley they can come to believe in our Christ with us saying hardly a word.

Let's pray.

Lord it's so good and, and refreshing to expose ourselves to the truth of Scripture, it bends us low in Your presence, it makes us weak-kneed, because we are less than we should be. God we would ask that You would humble us, that we would not seek the exaltation of self. Teach us the meaning of true humility as we examine our own sin, we know we're nothing, as we see Jesus Christ we just can't compare, as we see You what is man that Thou art mindful of him.

And out of our humility may meekness be born so that we are quick to defend You, quick to make a whip and drive the robbers out of Your temple, but not to lift a hand to defend ourselves. Teach us the meaning of patience with circumstances, with people and even with You as You mold us and refine us. And while we are enduring things help us to love those around us even those who persecute us, those who bring to bear pain upon us, to return blessing ...cursing with blessing no matter what the circumstance, and thus Father to know the meaning of unity. And as we as individuals commit ourselves to that, to the oneness that You've designed, and keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace then we'll walk worthy and the world will see consistency between the way we live and the way we talk. And then perhaps they'll be drawn to Christ. Make us faithful, for Your glory in Jesus' name. Amen.

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