



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Ephesians 4: 1-6

Ephesians

"Walking Worthily, Building Unity"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] If you have your Bibles open, follow along with me as I read beginning with verse 1 of chapter 4. Paul writes:

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit.

Now, in the original text, and you probably have this or can see this in your English translation if you have in italics there in the first two words, there is. That's not in the original text. In fact, Paul uses very few verbs in these sentences, verses 4 through 6, to give what one commentator called a staccato effect, the deliberate breaks in which we see the word one very prominently. That's what he's emphasizing here. He's emphasizing unity and emphasizing it with that word one. So really, verse 4 would be not, "There is one body," but, "One body and one Spirit."

Just as also you were called 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.

Well, may the Lord bless this reading of His word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we do thank You for the privilege we do have to come together this morning and study the Scriptures, to open this text of the Bible that You gave to the apostle Paul to communicate to the church

at Ephesus, but one that is to us as well, down through the ages, You have made it very clear through the apostle, through the apostles, through the teaching of Your Son in the gospels, and the Upper Room discourse, to be a people that love one another, to be a people that are unified. That's what You have us to be, and so Father, we pray that as we consider the text this morning, You might teach us these things, and You might encourage that within us and give us a longing to be more and more the family of God that we are, to express that in the midst of the world. May they see us as a people united, a people who love each other and have concern for one another, who bear one another's needs and burdens, as the apostle encourages us to do. Teach us what we need to learn this morning.

We recognize Lord that ultimately our teacher is the Holy Spirit. He is within our hearts, Paul has said. He has sealed our hearts. In chapter 4, he will say it again, that we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. What a blessing that is, that You have taken up residence within us, individually. The infinite God lives with us in the third person of the Trinity and He enables us. He enables us to live lives that are pleasing to You and teaches us, and we pray that He would teach us this morning. Open our ears and our hearts to the truth that we might receive it and live it.

We thank You, Father, for the opportunity that we have to study together and worship together at this hour, and to come to You in prayer, to come to the throne of grace and make these petitions not only for our spiritual condition, but our material, our physical wellbeing as well. We recognize, Lord, that we depend upon You for those things. It is in You that we live and move and have our being. We are totally dependent upon You. We recognize that after in the spiritual life that we live. We cannot live it apart from Your power, Your grace, that You extend constantly to us. But neither can we live physically apart from Your sustaining power. We pray that You would provide for us what we need physically in terms of health, in terms of finances, all the needs that we have. We thank You, Lord, that You have blessed us so abundantly. We pray that our hearts would not be carried away with material blessings, that we would see them for what they are and we would use them properly. But we thank You for them and pray that where we have needs that You would supply. Where there is sickness, we pray for healing. We certainly pray for encouragement. We pray for blessing. We think of those who are away this weekend, who are traveling. We pray that You'd give them protection, return them to

us safely. We pray that if they are visiting family or on vacations, that they would have restful time and enjoyable time. We thank You, Father, for what we celebrate on this weekend of Memorial Day. We think of the men and women down through the decades that have given their lives and service to this country. We thank You for what has been preserved through their sacrifices, which have been great. We live in freedom and we enjoy blessing as no other nation in the history of the world has enjoyed. That, ultimately, Lord, is Your gift to us, and whereas many this day, throughout this land would not recognize that, we do, and we thank You for it and pray that You would preserve our freedoms and bless us in the future. Bless this land with freedom, and to that end, we pray You'd bless our leaders with wisdom and bless the churches throughout this land with clarity and boldness in teaching Your word. May the Word of God go out and men and women be taught by it and many come to a saving knowledge of Christ through it.

Bless Your church wherever it is, in this land, and in other lands. Build up Your people in the faith that we might be lights in the world and salt in the earth. Bless us now, Father , as we sing our hymn. May it be good preparation of heart for us now as we study, and bless us this evening when we return and worship You at the Lord's table. We think of His death for us and His resurrection and His coming again. We thank You, Lord, that this world is not the sum and substances of all things. But for us, it is just the beginning, that He is coming again, and His reward will be with Him. May we live lives today in light of that future day. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] The Book of Ephesians divides neatly into two sections, chapters 1 through 3 and chapters 4 through 6. Chapters 1 through 3 are usually referred to as the doctrinal section of the book, while chapters 4 through 6 are sometimes described as one commentator described them as the practical portion. Now, that's a proper division, but the description is a little misleading. It suggests that doctrine isn't practical. And the fact is: doctrine is imminently practical, as practical as a foundation is to a house. Proverbs 23 verse 7 makes that clear where Solomon writes, "As a man thinks within himself, so he is." Thoughts that we have, the things with which we fill our minds, they affect the way we live our lives.

And so, a better way to describe the shift from the first half of this book to the second is from principle to practice, or from doctrine to duty, or from creed to conduct. However we might want to express it, our conduct is now the principal focus of the Book of Ephesians. Paul indicates the change in verse 1. He writes, "I therefore the prisoner of the Lord entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling." That word, "therefore," is important. It marks the transition in the book and it indicates that the instruction that he will give in the remaining part of the book will be based upon the instruction that he has given at the first part of the book in the preceding chapters. He is saying, in effect, we can draw upon the teaching that he has already given very briefly. He's saying you have been redeemed by Christ. You have been reconciled into one body. You have been made into God's temple. Therefore, walk in a manner worthy of all of that.

Watchman Nee wrote a little book on the epistle to the Ephesians entitled *Sit, Walk, Stand*. He wrote it a number of years ago and it was a popular book. Perhaps some of you are familiar with it and you've even read it. That's how he outlined the Book of Ephesians. Sit, walk, stand. He took the word sit from chapter 2 and verse 6 as the key word. And there, the key word of the doctrinal section, and there, Paul writes that God has seated us with God in the heavenly places. That is our position, and the point he makes is before we can live a Christian life, we have to be aware of our position. We have to understand who we are and what we have in Christ. Then, we walk, and that's the word that is the key to the second section. He finds that word in the text that we look at this morning, chapter 4 and verse 1. That is the challenge that Paul gives to us to walk or to live according to our high calling. And finally, as a subsection of chapters 4 through 6 is the word "stand." He finds that in chapter 6 and verse 11 where Paul describes the Christian response to the enemy as one of standing, standing against the devil and his angelic forces.

I might not want to endorse everything in that book, but I do like the title. Paul has given us high doctrine. He has explained who we are as Christians, where we sit, and the blessings that we have. And now, he challenges us to walk according to those blessings. And in the rest of the book, he will explain how that is to be done.

And there's the rub, as they say. That's where the difficulty lies. It is often easier to set forth doctrine than it is to live it out, live out the implications of the teaching. It's often easier to instruct and to exhort on how to live than it is to actually

live and put into principle, or rather, put into the practice the principles that have been taught.

The Pharisees were notorious for that failure. Our Lord called them hypocrites who, He said, tie up heavy loads and lay them on men's shoulders. But they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.

Well, that was hypocrisy and Paul was no hypocrite. He practiced what he preached and he indicates that by the way he refers to himself. He doesn't assert his authority in this letter or this portion of the letter by saying, "I therefore the apostle," or, "I therefore the teacher." Bur rather, "I therefore the prisoner of Christ."

Paul was no armchair theologian. He knew what was involved in the Christian life. He knew what was involved in the Christian walk. He knew its cost, and he was a prisoner as a result of that. Paul could easily be described as both a man of the cloister and a man of the open road. He was a man who was concerned with truth and a man who was in touch with human need and was deeply concerned to carry the gospel of reconciliation to the world.

He did that. He walked in a manner that was worthy of his calling, to the extent that he was now in a Roman prison. Paul knew the cost of discipleship. But he doesn't describe himself as a prisoner of Rome, but a prisoner of the Lord. Literally, he says, I, the prisoner in the Lord. He is Christ's prisoner. He is in Him. Regardless of where he is in terms of the city or the place, regardless of the fact that he was in a prison, he was fundamentally and most importantly to Paul, in Christ, in union with the Lord.

That's what he's speaking of there in that descriptive term. His vital union in Christ. He was drawing his life from Christ so that in spite of the fact that he was in prison, he could live the life of Christ there as well. In fact, because he was in Christ, drawing his life spiritually from him, he could walk, in a manner, worthy of His calling.

This expression, walk, is a very common one in the Bible for the course of a person's life. We have a number of examples of it, but perhaps one of the best known is in Psalm 1 which begins by saying how blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, who does not live under the influence of the wicked, does not conduct his life by their counsel. Walking suggests steady progress. It suggests a consistent advance, a continual advance.

We never come to that point in our Christian lives where we can say we have arrived, where we have reached that higher plane where everything is easier and we can rest, and we can take our ease. It's not the case. We are to be continually walking in God's path. That's what's to characterize us in this life. It's a life of walking. And our walk is to be one that's worthy of our calling.

Now, for us to appreciate that, for us to actually walk in a way that is worthy of our calling, we have to think about our calling. We have to consider it. What is the goal of our calling? What is the nature of our calling? And as we think about that, and particularly think of it in light of the things that Paul has said in the first three chapters, well, we are made very clearly aware that the nature of that calling is one of grace. Our calling is the outworking of God's election in efficacious grace. And what I mean by efficacious grace is the work of the Spirit in bringing us to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. It's all of God. It's His work.

Paul speaks of that elsewhere. In fact, Paul speaks of it in a great many places. But in Romans chapter 8 and verse 30, he writes, whom He predestined, these He also called. So, our calling is the outworking of predestination. It's the outworking of our election. Paul thought it very important that we understand that, that we understand that God is the initiator in our salvation. The writers of Scripture are very clear about that. We don't find it simply in Paul, but all of the apostles make that clear. John's gospel makes that very clear. Go back to the Old Testament, Book of Jonah, and what does Jonah say? Salvation is of the Lord. It's His work from beginning to end, and Paul wants us to know that. He makes that very clear in the first three chapters of this book. It is God who chose us from the foundation of the world. God sent His Son to die for us and they sent the Holy Spirit to call us, to draw us to Himself.

He draws us, one, to salvation, but also to holiness. That's the object of our calling. Paul made that very clear back in chapter 1 and verse 4 where he writes, "He chose us that we should be holy and blameless." That's the object. It's not simply to be saved from the wrath to come, as important as that is. And it certainly is the goal, but it is to be a holy people. That's why we've been saved.

In 2 Timothy 1 verse 9, Paul calls it a holy calling. And so we're to walk in a manner worthy of that calling. We're to walk in a way that shows the world the grace of God, that we have received from Him. They're to see changed lives. They're to see a reflection of God's grace in us in the way we relate to one another, and the way we

relate to one another is to be one that is holy. We are to bring glory to Him. We are to walk in a way that reflects His goodness to us, His love for us in our love for one another.

And the way that we do that is by walking in unity. That's the stress of the first part of chapter 4. Later in this chapter, he will challenge us to walk in purity, and that will become the focus of the walk that is worthy. Yet here, the emphasis is upon unity. We are God's household. We are His temple. That's what he is taught in chapter 2, and then he concluded chapter 3 with the doxology, you remember, and said that to Him, be glory in the church.

So, glory to God is to be seen in the church, but there can be no glory to God in the church if the church is divided. No building brings honor to its maker if its walls are cracked, falling down. A house divided cannot stand, and a church divided doesn't reflect the saving power and the saving grace of God.

That's why Paul urges conduct that builds unity in the church, and that begins with a proper attitude, one of selflessness. So, Paul instructs the Ephesians, he instructs us to do that in verse 2. We are to walk with all humility and gentleness. That's the first step in a walk that is in a worthy manner, in the walk of unity. It is a hard first step because it calls for us to think and to act in a way that is completely contrary to what is natural. Men, by nature, seek their own advantage. We all seek to promote and to protect ourselves. That is human nature. That is common. That's not all bad, by the way. But the problem is, we tend to do that at the expense of others. We are certainly willing to do that, and that's what is natural for man to do.

But Paul is urging us to do what is unnatural. Very much unnatural. Particularly, you see that in Paul's day. He was speaking to individuals who would've found that idea very foreign. Because among the Greeks, humility or lowliness was despised. In their minds, it was a vice. It wasn't a virtue. It was a weakness that they associated with the attitude of a slave. And to the Greeks, slaves were men without souls. Paul is telling the church, telling Christians to be humble, to be the very opposite of what the world considered good and right and virtuous. That's what we are to do. We are to live our lives in a way that is contrary to the world. We are to live lives in a way that reflects that we are different from them. When they look upon us, they should see something that's different, but see something different in a good sense. And so, Paul calls us to humility.

We're called, really, to the same mind that Christ had. He doesn't call us to the mind of Aristotle or Plato or some of the great conquerors of the world as we might want him to do. But he calls us to have the mind of Christ.

Paul told the Philippians to do that. Philippians chapter 2 is perhaps the best exposition, or the fullest exposition on this whole disposition of humility. There, he tells them that they are to be like Christ, or he gives the example of humility and the example of Christ, who thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But nevertheless, emptied himself by becoming a bondservant, becoming a bondservant to the point where he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death.

We're to do that. We're not to seek our own interests first, but the interests of others. We're not to act from selfishness. We're to be humble and we're to be gentle. That's the second step in the walk of unity. Gentleness, or meekness, as the King James Version puts it. It's the meek, our Lord says, who will inherit the earth. But that doesn't mean spinelessness. Meekness is not weakness, not in the Bible at least. Moses is called the meekest man on the face of the earth. It doesn't mean that he was a wimp. Moses certainly was not that. Moses stood face to face with Pharaoh, the greatest king, the greatest monarch of his day, a man of great power, but he stood face to face with him in the truth. He ruled over the rebellious Israelites for 40 years in the harsh climate of the desert. That was very difficult, very hard life. Moses was a man of strength. He had to be a man of strength to do that.

Our Lord is called meek and gentle by the apostles Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:1. But He was not weak or spineless. We have a number of examples that would show that's not the case. On two different occasions, we read of the Lord cleansing the temple. We see that in John chapter 2 at the beginning of his ministry, He did it. There, John describes how He enters into the temple and He sees all the merchants and becomes angry at what He saw. Righteously angry. And so, John says He made a scourge and He cleared out the temple. He turned over the money changers' tables and drove them out and upset the leaders of Jerusalem. I know no man would've done that who didn't have strength, that didn't have courage, and no man has ever had the courage and the strength of our Lord, but He was meek.

The Greeks applied this word, gentleness or meekness, to animals, whose strength had been brought under control. In fact, I have heard that that word meek is used around the racetrack to describe horses, which are easy to manage. So, Paul is

using the word meekness or gentleness with the sense of power under control, a disciplined submission.

And our Lord gives us another example of that. You'll remember the end of the Gospel of John in chapter 18 when He's in the garden and the soldiers come to arrest Him, and they come looking for Jesus of Nazareth, and Jesus says, "I am. I am He." But literally, I am. And their response was to draw back and fall to the ground. In those words, they got just a glimpse of the glory and the holiness of our Lord. And they, in their sin, had to fall away. In that very statement that He made, we see the power of our Lord that could have destroyed them in a moment. They didn't overpower Him. He gave Himself in to their hands. He had power that was under control. Disciplined submission.

Leon Morris defines gentleness as a virtue of the strong who could exert force to their own way but choose not to. That doesn't mean that there are no times when we stand up for what is right. That's not what a gentle person is, a meek person. Paul stood up for his rights at the proper time, when he was mistreated in Philippi, you'll remember, they beat him. That was mistreatment for him because he was a Roman citizen and that was illegal. That was not to be done for a Roman citizen. And so, after all of that, they'd done that, they'd put him in prison. He then informs them that he was a Roman citizen. They became very fearful. They wanted him and his companions to sort of sneak out of town. They were willing to let him go, but they didn't want to make a scene.

Well, Paul would not have that. He demanded a public apology. So, being gentle doesn't mean ignore the truth. It doesn't mean ignore justice and what is right. But, the one who is gentle doesn't retaliate. Gentleness involves forgiveness. It is controlled strength.

The third and the fourth steps in the walk of unity are patience and forbearance. Patience has to do with not taking vengeance for wrongs suffered, and forbearance involves bearing with one another's weaknesses and failures.

So Paul lists four steps here. We are to walk with humility and gentleness, with patience and forbearance, and then he adds to that, in love. Walk in love, which encompasses all four. Love is the greatest virtue. Love achieves the highest good. It doesn't seek its own. Love isn't jealous. It isn't arrogant. Paul describes love very clearly for us in 1 Corinthians 13, verses 4 through 8. Love seeks the welfare of the

other individual. Love seeks the welfare of the church, even at cost to self, because love is selfless, fundamentally.

Again, all of that is easier said than done. And Paul indicates that by the way he connects this word "forbearance," with the word "love." The New International Version translates this: "bearing with one another in love." They go together. And in saying that, Paul is showing, these are very realistic about the situation. He recognizes that Christians can be hard to get along with. We are all different. We all have different personalities. And with those personalities, we have different weaknesses. And some of those weaknesses can be rather irritating faults, if we're honest with one another. It's true of all of us, and so the temptation is there to be short with one another or to dismiss one another when we don't measure up, or when we let one another down, or we're let down by one another. That's, I think, the temptation, and that's the inclination. But what Paul is saying here, at least by implication is: no, you cannot do that. You cannot dismiss one because you're irritated with that person or because they've let you down. You have a right to be angry with them. You can't allow that to become the controlling disposition. You have to put them ahead of yourself. You have to love that individual and desire to do that. Bear one another's burdens.

That attitude, that response, that desire is the outworking of the very doctrine that Paul has taught in the first part of this book. That of unconditional election and redeeming love. Since God has forgiven our sins, since God has taken us into His family, we who Paul says are the sons of disobedience, shouldn't we be patient and forbearing toward those who fail us? After all, we don't fail one another to the degree that we have failed our God and creator. And yet, He's loved us in spite of that and taken us into His family, forgiven us of our sins. So should we not love other Christians who fail us? Should we not love those whom Christ loved and died for?

Obviously, we should, and that's the point that Paul would have us to understand from the doctrinal section of this book, as it becomes foundational to the way we conduct our lives. That is the way to unity, and that's what Paul urges in verse 3. Be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Now, you'll notice we don't create the unity. It already exists. Paul says preserve the unity. Christ has unified all kinds of people in the church. That's what

Paul said back in chapter 2 and verse 14. He Himself is our peace who made both groups into one, both the Jew and the Gentile into one group, one people.

So, Christ does that, and the Spirit of God affects what He accomplished at the cross, but we are responsible to preserve that unity and build upon it, and there is an urgency in Paul's appeal. Be diligent, he says, and that means something like make haste. Don't delay in this. Make it a priority, and that calls for effort on our part. And the means of unity is peace, which comes from love.

There are so many differences among us that can spark a conflict in a church, but love seeks to establish peace. Unity will grow up in a peaceful environment. The Lord said, "Blessed are the peacemakers," and that's who we are to be. Peace is the bond that holds things together. Peace results from unity. And unity is a testimony of God's grace. The world sees God's grace in the changed lives of Christians, in the changed lives in the church, and the way those changed lives relate to one another. Before the world and the angels, God is being glorified in the church. That's the doxology that Paul gave. Glorified as our love and concern is turned inward toward one another, and we bear one another's burdens, and we do it in love. Seize us as changed individuals, and that brings glory to God. But then, glorified as the love in the church is turned out toward the world, and we relate to the world in a way that demonstrates our changed character in the grace of God.

I mentioned Watchman Nee earlier. He tells a story of a fellow Christian who lived in South China and had a rice field in the middle of a hill. And in time of drought, he used a water wheel worked by a treadmill to lift the water out of the irrigation stream into his field. Well, he had a neighbor who had two fields just below his field, and one night, this neighbor made a breach in the dividing bank and drained all of his water into his own fields. When the Christian repaired the breach, the neighbor did it again three or four times, as a matter of fact. So, the Christian became very concerned. He couldn't stop this and didn't know quite what to do. And so, he consulted with the church and said that he tried to be patient, tried not to retaliate. He had not done that to this point. But then he said, "Is it right?" Is that the right thing to do? Should I not now demand my rights and demand justice from this individual? Well, after they prayed about it, one of the men said: "If we only tried to do the right thing, surely we are very poor Christians. We have to do something more than what is right." So, the next morning, the Christian pumped water into the two fields of his

neighbor, and then night after night, that afternoon, he pumped water into his own field. After that, the water stayed in the field. His neighbor was so amazed by his action that he began to enquire the reason. In the course of time, he too became a Christian.

Paul told the Romans, if possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. That is a true testimony to the grace of God. We should be at peace with all men outside of the church, as that man in China was, and did so with good effect, with good result. But Paul's principle concern here is with the church. That's where the bond of peace is to be established, first of all. That's where the world is to see the peace in us first, and then it is to be translated to the world.

As God's household, as His temple, we are to be at peace with one another in order that we be unified with one another. And Paul then demonstrates the unity that we have with a brief doctrinal statement in verses 4 through 6 that gives the basis for maintaining it. I think we could summarize what he's going to say here and perhaps in this way: you are unified; therefore, live in a unified way. Work it out. It's what you are. Be what you are, a unified people.

Well, in doing this, he lists seven spiritual realities that unite us as believers. Three of the seven are the three persons of the Trinity, and the other four are Christian's experiences that relate to each person of the Trinity. And so, each of these, Paul lists, and then with each one, or preceding each one, he attaches the word "one." So, seven times, he repeats the word one. It runs throughout the whole section laying special stress on our oneness, on our unity.

The first three realities are listed in verse 4 with an emphasis on the Holy Spirit. He writes: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you also were called in one hope of your calling." So first, there is one body. There's one church. There are many members in this body, all kinds of people, Jew and Gentile, barbarians, Greeks, slaves, free. That's the way Paul describes the church in Colossians. All kinds of people, all kinds of backgrounds.

Well, in our day, it's the same, maybe even more so. Every continent of the world is represented in the church, every ethnic group in the world, every social background, every experience that can be experienced is seen in the church. All kinds of people, and that means there's potential for all kinds of splits among the people of God. In Paul's day, it was the danger of a split between the Jew and the Gentile, the

danger of a Jewish church and a Gentile church. In our day, any number of churches can come out of the various groups that are within the church.

But there's only one church, Paul says. One body. And so, we are to maintain our unity and function with the coordination of a body. We are to work together, function together. And that's to be seen in the local church. We're to work together as a body. But Paul really is talking here not so much of the local church, though everything he says here would apply to that, but the main subject here is a universal church.

So, we are to see ourselves as united with believers all over the world. We're not in competition with other churches. We're to be walking with them and supporting them as they are to be supporting us. And when other Christians come in to our assembly from another place, from another country, from another background, we're to receive them as one with us, as part of our family, part of the body.

What makes that possible? 'Cause again, that's really contrary to what we are by nature. We tend to fear that which is different or comes from the outside. But what makes it possible for us to do that is the Holy Spirit, the one Spirit, he says. He is the life of that body. He provides us with love, the love that will establish peace, the love which will promote the unity is the fruit of the Spirit. It's not something we generate in and of ourselves. It comes from Him, and so He promotes that unity within each member of the body, and that shows the possibility of unity.

We have the power within us, but it also shows the danger. It shows the sin in opposing unity. It is opposition to the Holy Spirit who lives within the body. It pulls apart what the Spirit has bound together. He has called us together to one body and called each of us to one hope, he says. We all share the same goal. That is, the resurrection to come, the kingdom to come, the world to come, the inheritance to come. Every Christian hopes for that. That fact is proof of our unity. We all have that hope. The Holy Spirit gives each of us a longing for it and anticipation for it, a desire to live for it. And so, we should be living together in that hope and seeking to promote that hope within the church and within the world, proclaiming the gospel together.

After all, we're going to spend eternity together, so we should be learning to live together in the present. In verse 5, the emphasis shifts from the Spirit to the Son. He is the one Lord. Throughout the Roman Empire, the word "lord," the word

kourias, was in common use for the many gods that were worshipped. They believed in many lords. Nero was called the lord of all the world and emperor worship became very common throughout the empire.

But Christ is the only Lord, the only object of faith, the only Savior who is to be honored and obeyed as Lord. That too is another proof of our unity because all who are in Christ, all who are true believers, genuine Christians, recognize that Christ is Lord. In those early years of the church, many Christians died together because they refused to recognize any other lords and refused to honor and worship Caesar.

There was one Lord, Paul says. One faith, one baptism. One faith may refer to one body of doctrine, as it is used in Jude 3 where Jude urges us to contend earnestly for the faith, which was once for all delivered to all the saints. That's a possible understanding here, but normally, the word faith is used of the act of faith, of believing, which is probably Paul's meaning here.

There is only one way of salvation, is what he is saying. It is through faith in Christ and our unity is seen in the fact that we all agree with that. We've all come to salvation in the same way, through faith in Christ. And when we believed, we were baptized into Christ. There was one baptism, he says.

It's unlikely that Paul is referring to water baptism here, as some have argued. It seems that if he were doing that, if he was speaking of the ordinance of baptism, he would've also mentioned the Lord's supper. But he doesn't do that. So it seems more likely that what he has in mind here is spiritual baptism, baptism into Christ. What Paul describes just a few pages earlier in Galatians chapter 3 verses 27 and 28 where he writes: "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." That fits very well with the context here.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13, he describes us as being baptized into one body, baptized into the church. And when you believed in Jesus Christ, you were baptized into His body. You were joined to the church. We were joined together through faith. So, there's one baptism.

In verse 6, Paul emphasizes our unity with the Father. There is one God, he says, and He is Father of all. He has created the church. He made us into one family. His family. And He cares for every believer equally, just like a Father. Paul adds: He

is over all and through all and in all. He is sovereign. He is omnipotent. He is omnipresent.

Now, that's the work of the one Triune God. The Father creates the one family, the Son saves the one family, and the Spirit unites the one family into one body. So, the implication of all of that is: we should remain one. We should be united.

Now, this is not a call to ecumenicity, that denominations should cease to be and they should unite in one church or one world council. That's not his point at all. There can only be unity in the central truths that Paul has set down here. That's very clear from what Paul is saying. He is not saying unite. He's not instructing us to unite. He's saying we are united. He's saying if you are a Christian, you are already united in these truths. If you don't hold to them, to the doctrine of the trinity, for example, or to salvation through faith alone, in Christ alone, then you are not part of that one body, and you cannot be united with the church, and the church cannot be united with you. There must be unity in these truths, unity in Christ.

John recognized that in his first epistle where he writes of a group whom he calls antichrists. They were people who had been a part of that assembly and had embraced, it would seem, the truths at one point, but then they had adopted another gospel, adopted different doctrines. And so they had left. They had denied those truths. And John says in 1 John 2:19, they went out from us, but they were not really of us. They're not united with us, but then they were not of us to begin with. He says, if they'd been of us, they would've stayed with us.

With those people, we can have no fellowship. We can have no unity. They are not part of God's family. They are, in fact, enemies of the truth. We're to love them as we love those in the world, but to be united, we cannot.

For that reason, I think any ecumenical movement that would seek to include different faiths is doomed to failure. What Paul is calling for is love and unity among the believers, true believers, and in that way, God is glorified in the church.

A few years ago, I read a somewhat humorous article in the Wall Street Journal that illustrated to my mind at least the need to maintain Christian unity. It was about two brothers, Ed and Bernie, who were both in the retail industry. Ed, described as the consummate bureaucrat, was chief executive of Sears. Bernie, described as brash and independent, was chief executive of archrival Montgomery

Ward. The article calls their rise to the top a story without precedent in business and then goes on to say it's also a bit weird. Despite working only a mile apart, they rarely got together. No one was quite sure if they liked each other. It calls their relationship odd, and because of their rivalry and the differences in their personalities, an unfounded rumor began to circulate that they were really only half-brothers.

Now, when I read that some years ago, I thought of the church because that's the way the world looks at us when we're divided. Our relationship to one another can only impress the world as being odd if we're at odds with one another. And we certainly don't appear to be brothers and sisters if we're in that kind of relationship.

And so, Paul was very concerned that that not be the case, that the church maintain its unity and it do so by walking in a worthy manner, a manner that is consistent with its calling, a manner of graciousness, a manner of loving, self-effacing attitude, one of self-sacrifice. That's the way we are to walk, and that's the way that we are going to preserve unity and to be diligent in it. That's what we're to be doing, seeking to build up the church in its unity. Ultimately, power for that comes from the Spirit. We cannot generate it ourselves. But the motive for it, I think, comes as we understand who we are in Jesus Christ, what He's done for us, understand the nature of grace. That's where the motive and the incentive comes to do what is right and to live a sacrificial life, a life of service.

Christopher Wren was the great English architect of the 1600s and 1700s. In fact, he was such a great architect that after the great fire of London, he drew up plans for the rebuilding of the city. He was a great builder of churches. He built 52 churches in the city of London. A story is told of a man who visited the site where St. Paul's Cathedral was being built in London. And the visitor asked one workman what he was doing, and the workman replied, "I'm shaping this piece of stone." He asked another the same question and the man replied, "I'm earning my pay." And then he asked a third man who responded, "I'm helping Sir Christopher Wren build a cathedral." Now, all of the answers that were given are true answers, but the third answer really showed the best attitude. It showed that the man worked with vision. The man worked with purpose. He saw his work as more than a job. It was a service with a great architect.

That's true of Christians. We are in the Lord's service. He has allowed us to help Him build His cathedral, the church. And as a service to Him, we should be

doing it diligently and doing it as He would desire us to do it. Not for self, but for Him, and do it in a selfless way. And in so doing, build up that church, build up His temple in unity and in peace. We can only do that with an attitude of love. We can only do it by walking in a way that is worthy. That's what pleases Him.

But to walk in a manner worthy of the calling, you have to know that you have been called. And to know that you have been called, you must know that you have believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior, for there's no other way to salvation but through faith and faith alone in Him. We don't obtain salvation by beginning the walk. We don't earn it by the way we conduct our lives. We come to salvation through faith and then we begin the walk.

And so I ask you the question: have you put your faith in Jesus Christ? Do you know Him as Savior? If not, then look to Him. Realize that you are a sinner in need of a Savior and that Jesus Christ is that Savior. He is God's sacrifice, God's substitute for sinners who died in the place of sinners so that all who believe in Him, regardless of their background, the depth of their sin. All who believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Trust in Christ, come to know Him, to know the forgiveness of sins, of life everlasting, and then by God's help, walk in a manner worthy of that calling. May God help all of us to do that. Shall we stand now for the benediction?

[Prayer] Gracious God and heavenly Father, we do thank You for the grace that You've extended to us. We consider a passage like this. We are to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which You have called us. And yet, if we're honest with this and we think about that, we realize that is an impossible task. How can we love others more than we love ourselves. Of ourselves, we cannot do that. But, we are not called upon to do it in our own strength. You have put within our hearts the Holy Spirit. He dwells within us. All of us have that one Spirit, that third person of the Trinity. He dwells within our hearts equally and He empowers us to do that which is pleasing to You. And so, we pray that He would fill us with love, which is the fruit of the Spirit. Fill us with a desire to live lives that are pleasing to You, to relate to one another in a way that will bring honor to the gospel and magnify Your grace and bring glory to You and the church. We pray these things in our Savior's name and pray that if there be any in attendance who do not know Christ as Savior move upon their

hearts, give them an awareness of their lost condition, their need of a savior. Enable them to turn to Him in faith. Pray these things in His name. Amen.