

**A Transformed Life Preserves the Unity of the Spirit**  
**Ephesians 4:1-6**

**INTRO.**

1. The book of Ephesians is an excellent discourse on Christ and His church.
  - a. In the first 3 chapters, Paul describes the spiritual aspects and the place of the church in God's scheme of things.
  - b. Paul shows that the church is a part of God's eternal plan.
    - 1) It is in the church that God has placed all redeemed men (Jew & Gentile alike).
    - 2) And it is through the church God is reconciling the world to Himself.
  - c. But if the church is to succeed in this great task, then we must be a certain kind of people.
2. As we come to the final 3 chapters of Ephesians, Paul turns his attention to the type of character each Christian must have if the church is going to fulfill its God-given role of bringing a message of reconciliation to a lost and dying world.
3. In Eph. 4:1-3 Paul began to deal with the type of life we “**must**” live if we are going to be members of Christ's body, the church, and in vs. 4-6 Paul tells us the basis for this type of life: (Read).
4. Before we look at the text proper let me also note that the underlying theme of this text, as well as the entire book of Ephesians, is unity.
  - a. In Ephesians, more than any of Paul's other letters; he calls the church to be unified.
  - b. Paul mentions the unity of the church 18 times in Ephesians.
  - c. Both Paul and Jesus agree on this point: Unity in the church is not just a good thing, it is essential.
  - d. On the night before He went to the cross, Jesus prayed for the church that He knew would be established after His death and resurrection.
    - 1) He did not pray for large fancy buildings.
    - 2) He did not pray for ministry programs or creative worship services.
    - 3) He asked for only one thing: John 17:20-21: *“I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.”*
  - e. If we are going to be the kind of people God intends, then we need to take what Jesus prayed for to heart.
5. With these thoughts in mind let us explore what Paul had to say about a transformed live and unity within the body of Christ.

**LESSON:**

- I. In vs. 1-3 Paul states what we are called to do as Christians: (Read).
  - A. In vs. 1 he states that we are to live a life worthy of our calling.
    - Two key words here:
      1. “Walk.”
        - a. This means to walk along a certain path, to follow a prescribed way which has been designed and planned by the Lord.
        - b. It implies the idea of moving forward as opposed to just standing still.
      2. “Worthy.”
        - a. This expresses the idea that the way we walk (live) can either bring glory and honor to Christ, or discredit His name.
        - b. The challenge to each one of us here this AM is, “Am I walking in a way that is worthy of Christ? Am I walking in a way that all who see me and watch my actions will glorify Christ and God?”
        - c. If not, you need to heed what Paul has to say here and make whatever changes necessary in your life.

B. In vs. 2 Paul begins to describe what it means to walk in a way worthy of Christ.

1. 1<sup>st</sup>: We are to be humble.
  - a. Notice the text does not say just to be humble, but rather “*with all humility.*”
  - b. We are to be humble in all things, and not just the things we feel like being humble in.
  - c. To be humble literally means to have lowliness of mind.
    - 1) It means we do not think too highly of ourselves.
    - 2) Humility helps us to see our lives as a gift from God.
    - 3) It helps us to recognize that any ability we have has been given to us by God.
  - d. ILLUST.:
    - 1) Years ago Walter Cronkite told a story about himself when he was boating down the Mystic River in Connecticut.
    - 2) He was going through shallow water, when a boat full of young people sped past him.
    - 3) The young people were shouting and waving their arms.
      - a) Cronkite waved back a cheery greeting.
      - b) His wife then asked him, “Do you know what they were shouting?”
      - c) He replied, “Why it was hello Walter.”
      - d) “No,” she said. “They were shouting, ‘Low water. Low water.’”
    - e. Such are the problems we have when we have too high of a view of ourselves.
2. 2<sup>nd</sup>: We must be gentle.
  - a. Gentleness could also be translated meekness.
  - b. We have already talked about meekness when we studied the beatitudes, and also a few Sunday evenings ago when we were talking about Christian character.
  - c. Gentleness/meekness is strength under control.
  - d. One person put it this way, “(It) is the quality of a strong personality who is nevertheless master of himself and the servant of others.”
3. 3<sup>rd</sup>: We must be patient.
  - a. Patience means having a long fuse with others, even when they mess up.
  - b. ILLUST.:
    - 1) Two men were riding a tandem bicycle when they came to a very steep hill.
    - 2) It took a great deal of effort but the two men finally made it to the top.
    - 3) When they got there the man in the front turned to the guy in the back and said, “Man that was sure a hard climb.”
    - 4) The guy in the back replied, “Yes, and if I had not kept the brakes on all the way up, I am sure we would have rolled back down the hill.”
4. 4<sup>th</sup>: We must be forbearing or longsuffering.
  - a. To be patient means to be long-suffering toward people who aggravate us.
  - b. Sometimes people are difficult.
    - 1) Sometimes people will irritate us.
    - 2) Sometimes people will disappoint us.
    - 3) Sometimes people will do things that hurt us.
  - c. That is why vs. 2 end with “*bear with one another in love.*”
  - d. Literally this means to suffer with one another.
  - e. ILLUST.:
    - 1) The story is told of a little boy who was sitting on his front steps with his face cradled in his hands, totally upset when his dad came home from work.
    - 2) Seeing that his son was visibly upset he asked the boy what was wrong.
    - 3) The boy looked up and said, “Well, just between you and me, dad, I’m having trouble getting along with your wife.”
  - f. At times life is tough.
    - 1) Relationships will not always be easy.
    - 2) But to live a life worthy of our calling in Christ means we will be humble, gentle and patient with each other, and we will bear with each other in love.

- g. Especially notice that we are to bear with one other in love.
  - 1) Not with sarcasm but with love.
  - 2) Not begrudgingly but with love.
- h. In Col 3:14 Paul reminds us: “*And beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.*”

C. With all this in mind, Paul now takes us to the next level, and that level is a call for unity within the church.

1. In vs. 3 he tells us to be diligent - to make every effort – to be committed to keeping the unity of the Holy Spirit in the bond of peace.
2. The verb which is translated “*being diligent*” is very strong.
3. One commentator said: “It is hardly possible to render exactly the urgency contained in the underlying Greek verb. Not only haste and passion, but a full effort of the whole man is meant, involving his will, sentiment, reason, physical strength, and total attitude.”
4. In other words, we are to apply a full-court press to the business of keeping the unity of the Spirit.
5. ILLUST:
  - a. At the onset of the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin, in order to stress the urgency of the situation, said: “We must all hang together, or we shall all hang separately.”
  - b. There is a similar sense of urgency in vs. 3.
  - c. For the church to survive and be all it can be and for each of us to become all that God intends, we must hang together.
6. One other point to notice: Our responsibility is not to create the unity, but to keep the unity.
  - a. There is a huge difference between the two.
  - b. Paul says, “*Make every effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*”
7. ASK: So what is the basis of this unity?
  - a. What is our unity in the Spirit founded upon?
  - b. That is what Paul is going to spell out for us in vs. 4-6.

II. In vs. 4-6 Paul offers the seven essential ingredients of Christian unity.

A. 1<sup>st</sup>: There is one body - Unity of organization.

1. The Bible emphatically teaches that Christ has just one body.
  - a. Eph. 1:22-23: (Read).
  - b. 1 Cor. 12:20: “*But now there are many members, but one body.*”
  - c. Christ promised to build only one church: Matt. 16:18: “*And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.*”
  - d. He purchased only one church with His blood: Acts 20:28: “*...the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*”
  - e. He gave himself for only one church: Eph. 5:25: (Read).
  - f. And He is the Savior of only one church: Eph. 5:23: (Read).
2. Imagine you were in the first century.
  - a. Imagine walking down the streets of Jeru., Antioch, Ephesus, or Rome - How many churches would you expect to find?
  - b. Would there be church A on this corner, church B on the other, and church C down the street?
  - c. NO!!! Why? -- They knew Christ had only one body, one church.
3. Paul said we must make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit because there is only one body, and that one body contains all those, and only those who are saved.

B. 2<sup>nd</sup>: There is one Spirit - Unity of life.

1. When we became a Christian, God sent His Spirit into our lives.
  - a. In Acts 2:38 Peter tells how each Christian receives the H.S. as a gift from God when they are baptized.
  - b. Peter said in Acts 5:32: “*And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.*”

- c. Paul also said: 1 Cor. 12:13: *“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves of free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”*
  - d. When one becomes a part of God's family, they receive the Spirit: Gal. 4:6: *“And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”*
  - e. This Spirit is given to every child of God without exception: Rom. 8:9: *“However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”*
2. When we allow the Spirit to direct and control our lives, He will have a unifying effect.
    - a. Rom. 8:14: *“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”*
    - b. When we allow God's Spirit to control our lives, the results will be peace and unity (Gal. 5:22-23).
    - c. If we allow God's Spirit to reign within we will have that eager desire to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).
    - d. Thus, God's one Spirit in the lives of all believers promotes unity and peace in Christ's body.
- C. 3<sup>rd</sup>: There is one hope – Unity of direction.
1. The true Christian has only one hope and that hope rests solely in Jesus Christ.
    - a. In Phil 3:20-21 Paul expresses our hope when he said: *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”*
    - b. Because we believe that Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sins, we have the hope of eternal life.
      - 1) It is this single hope that should unite and bind us together.
      - 2) It is this hope that gives our lives aim and direction.
  2. It is because we are looking for that city whose builder and maker is God that we can walk together in unity.
- D. 4<sup>th</sup>: There is one Lord – Unity of authority.
1. We must remember that it is His church and not ours.
    - a. Our acceptance that fact is the basis for unity in all matters of religious authority.
    - b. He is the only one with the authority to state what is to be done and how it is to be done in His church.
    - c. Before ascending back to heaven, Jesus declared in Matt. 28:18: *“All authority in...”*
      - 1) The simple fact is that Jesus has all authority and we have none.
      - 2) He has never delegated, or given any of that authority to us.
      - 3) He stands as King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, period.
    - d. The point is that Jesus' authority is absolute.
      - 1) There is no room left for synods, councils, or conferences.
      - 2) Man cannot legislate in matters where God has spoken.
      - 3) And Jesus will continue His rule as Lord until the end of time (1 Cor. 15:24-26).
  2. To truly accept Christ as Lord means that every Christian must be united under complete obedience to Him.
    - a. As Lord of our life, He has absolute and complete authority and it must be accepted, respected, and obeyed.
    - b. Because He has all authority, Jesus can say in John 12:48: *“He who rejects me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.”*
  3. Unity in the body is assured only if we all return to a *“Thus saith the Lord”* and let Him lead us.
- E. 5<sup>th</sup>: There is one faith – Unity of doctrine.
1. Many times we hear someone ask, *“What is his/her faith?”*
    - a. What they are really asking is what is that person's religious affiliation; or to which religious group do they belong?
    - b. This question betrays their ignorance, for Paul said there is only *“one faith”* or system of belief.
    - c. You could just as easily ask, *“What Lord has he accepted?”* *“What God does she worship?”* *“What hope does he desire?”* - as to ask what faith one holds.

2. In this verse Paul was saying there is only one system of belief that God accepts.
    - a. Time after time the scriptures point this fact out.
      - 1) Jesus said: Matt. 4:4: “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.*”
      - 2) Eph. 4:13: “*Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.*”
      - 3) Jude 3: “*...contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*”
      - 4) The unity of the faith is beautifully described in Phil. 1:27: “*Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*”
      - 5) Acts 4:32: “*And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul...*”
    3. Contending for this one faith insures the purity of the message we proclaim.
      - a. And when anyone corrupts it, God's condemnation comes upon that person (Gal. 1:8-9).
      - b. Simply, there can be unity only when we all accept the one faith or system of belief as Christ stated in the N.T.
- F. 6<sup>th</sup>: There is one baptism – Unity of induction.
1. There is only one way into the body of Christ, and that is through baptism.
  2. Notice what the Scriptures say about it.
    - a. Mark 16:16: “*He that believes and is baptized...*”
    - b. Peter continued the unity of Christ's command when he commanded: Acts 2:38: “*Repent and be baptized...*”
    - c. Acts 2:41 tells us: “*They that gladly received his word..*”
    - d. This is the same baptism the Eunuch requested and Philip preformed: Acts 8:36-39: (Read).
    - e. This is the one baptism Peter commanded of Cornelius in Acts 10:48: (Read).
    - f. It is the same baptism Ananias commanded of Saul (Paul): Acts 22:16: “*Arise and be baptized and wash away...*”
    - g. It is the one baptism that changes our state or relationship with Christ: Gal 3:27: “*For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*”
    - h. This one baptism is into Christ, into His death, and results in newness of life: Rom. 6:3-4: (Read).
  3. When we hear the message of Christ and respond to it by being buried with Christ in baptism, our sins are washed away and we come up out of the water a new person.
    - a. It is this baptism that puts us into Christ, into His church, and into contact with all the spiritual blessings God has for us (Eph. 1:3).
    - b. This baptism emphasizes unity in that we all come into Christ in the same way.
- G. 7<sup>th</sup>: There is one God and Father of us all – Unity of worship.
1. God must be the object of our worship.
    - a. The very first command of the 10 commandments was: “*You shall have no other gods before me.*” Ex. 20:3.
    - b. Later Moses said: Deut 6:4-5: “*Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*”
    - c. Israel's downfall came when they turned to other gods and worshipped them.
  2. Nothing unites people more than having the same object for their worship, adoration, and praise.
    - a. The whole Bible teaches that God alone must be that object of worship.
      - 1) When tempted by Satan, Jesus said: Matt. 4:10: “*You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only serve.*”
      - 2) In Rev. 22:8-9 when John bowed down to the angel, the angel responded: “*Worship God.*”

- b. God is our Father and we are His children; and we are to worship Him.
  - 1) Whenever we take our focus off God and put it on ourselves, discord and division will result.
  - 2) Whenever we do things to please ourselves, rather than to please God, we are setting ourselves up for disunity because what may be pleasing to you, may not be pleasing to me.
  - 3) It is only when we make God the sole object of our worship, and pleasing Him the goal of our worship that we will have unity.

CONC.:

1. ILLUST.: A few years back at the Special Olympics in Seattle, WA, nine physically or mentally challenged runners lined up at the starting line for the 100 meter run.
  - a. At the sound of the gun, all the runners eagerly started out, except for one boy who stumbled.
  - b. He tumbled over a couple of times and began to cry.
  - c. Hearing the boy cry the other eight runners slowly turned around and paused.
  - d. Then they all went back to the boy who had fallen.
  - e. One girl with Down syndrome bent down and kissed the boy and said, "That will make it better."
  - f. Then all nine of them linked arms and walked together to the finish line.
  - g. Everyone in the stadium stood and the cheering went on for a solid 10 minutes.
2. That race paints a picture of what God's family is like.
  - a. We are all wounded.
  - b. We are all challenged in one way or another.
  - c. But God, in His infinite mercy and grace, makes us part of His family through faith in Christ.
  - d. And it is with our spiritual family that we journey through life helping each other along the way.
3. Why, then, are we called to be unified?
  - a. What is the basis for unity in the church?
  - b. Why should we make every effort to keep this unity of the Spirit?
  - c. Why?
  - d. Because we are all part of one body; because one Spirit dwells every Christian; because we all have one common hope, one common Lord, one common faith, one common baptism; and we all bow in worship of the same God and Father.
4. What a beautiful picture Paul paints of what the church should be.
  - a. God made it a united body and he has given us the tools to keep that unity.
  - b. But it is up to us to submit to His lordship and strive with all our might to maintain that unity by totally submitting to Him.
5. Remember, it is His church, not ours.
  - a. Are you a part of that church?
  - b. Are you daily submitting your life to Him as Lord?