

LSB Ephesians 4:1-6

1 Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, exhort you to walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

This is now our 2nd week within this wonderfully expansive text with a two week break in the middle for Palm Sunday and Resurrection Sunday special celebrations. And it's a joyous return to this passage, because the truths here are probably inexhaustable.

I read through this over and over and I can't help but think, I'm not up to the task of doing these things justice. There is so much here that is defining of how real christianity works. I'm talking about the christianity that caused a riot in Thessalonica when the anti-christians complained, *these men are turning the world upside down.* Acts 17:6

In Tonopah, no one is complaining that we're turning the world upside down. Indeed, what I hear is a lot of christians complaining about a world that has dared to get slightly out of sync with the christians.

In 58AD the world felt threatened by the christians whose lives and doctrines and obedience to godliness had a direct effect on wickedness. In 2024 AD christians are whining and feeling threatened about the world drifting back into the wickedness that is always present. What changed?

Why did the christians in the first century have an effect like salt does on aging meat? The salt effectively stalls the aging and blocks the inevitable rot. Those first generation christians had that effect on the world around them. The purifying effect of the salt prolongs the usefulness of the meat.

In 2024 the opposite thing is happening. Christians, I would argue, largely in name only, christianity that has lost it's saltiness, that doesn't want the world to cancel them and hate them, has taken upon itself the putrifying rottenness of the world. Salt is supposed to limit decay, but instead the salt is no longer salty and the church is taking the decadence of the world. Exactly opposite.

The very situation that causes Jesus to vomit that church out of His mouth.

This passage in Ephesians, if we take it to heart, is the antidote to salt losing it's flavor, and lukewarm putrid water that causes a vomit reflex. Indeed not just this current paragraph, but all of the rest of the book of Ephesians is our marching orders . . . in Satan's world.

This is how the church lives and walks, separately and distinctly, in Satan's camp. On Satan's turf. And if we implement these truths, Satan will be disturbed. Beloved, if we're walking worthy, we're like a pebble in Satan's shoes. The church if it's salty is an irritation to Satan, and by extension, an irritation to the world around us that loves to condone evil.

The problem we've got is implementing that irritation without losing our love for the lost dupes in this world. Do any of you know who Doug Wilson is at Christchurch in Moscow Idaho? Anyone discovered him. Blog and Mablog at dougwilson.com

I have to admit, he's fun to watch. Every November he does what's called no-quarter November. Last year he put out a very well done and fun to watch video with a flame thrower where he destroys a whole line of lifesize disney characters. Wilson against the world. Wilson against the ideological left for sure. I admit it's fun to watch.

But reading through our text this morning I can't help but think to myself, I don't think we're supposed to knock the world down like bullies and rub the salt in their eyes. Mow the world down with a christian flame thrower and rub salt in the burn wounds.

Actually, what we see in this text in Ephesians is that we for the most part ignore the world and go on about our business, quietly, of loving each other in such a way that the world would look at us, and say, that kind of love isn't from this world! How do I get *that*??

The world is our mission field, not our enemies. We don't win them by knocking them flat with a baseball bat and rubbing salt in their eyes. I think what is supposed to happen is we go about our business loving each other in a way that the world can't ignore. And while we're doing that we lovingly, but firmly, do not condone or affirm their evil.

1 Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, exhort you to walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

In our previous session in here we made it as far as humility and gentleness. Two obvious problem areas for the gentleman I mentioned, even though it is fun to watch a flame thrower burning up Disney characters.

Not very humble. Not very gentle. In the context of walking worthy of our high calling, how did Jesus engage the world? That's actually a fair question.

Jesus was humble and gentle with the world just being it's sinful self. But when you add religion to the formula, people who claim to be God's chosen people who were in effect aiding and abetting Satan's world, Jesus could leave gentleness behind and become quite ferocious.

Sometimes ferocity is needed in order to shelter the innocent. If religious people were, as Jesus put it, *crossing sea and land to make a single convert, and you make the new convert twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.. "*

That requires a ferocious response in order to protect the innocent from the false teachers. Jesus was never gentle where the welfare of others was in harms way in the name of false religion.

Gentleness and humility are a balancing act in our world. The current religion of absolute human autonomy in our culture has put children in harms way. Our response in order to protect children and other weak people can be strong but still embody loving gentleness and humility.

Gentleness and humility is never waiving a white flag of defeat. It's somewhere between a white flag and a flame thrower. The church needs wisdom, and increasingly so. Jesus response was always perfect. That's what we shoot for in a worthy walk.

with patience, bearing with one another in love,

Here the language shifts mostly to christians inter-acting with christians. The tip off language is the use of one another. One another is very inclusive of other christians.

The words mean long suffering forbearance. Putting up with people who are not exactly at the same place you are. Ever have to do that? Of course you do. You folks no doubt wish for a pastor who is a bubbly loving people magnet that draws folks in with his winsomeness and sparkling personality. Instead you got me. And you bear with me, in love.

I just wanted you to know, I notice. You patiently bear with the pastor God gave you. That's love, and that's what this passage is teaching. None of us are perfect. All of us do things to irritate each other from time to time. We're all very different. This church gets high marks for; *with patience, bearing with one another in love,*

There are other christian assemblies in our village. We patiently bear with other believers here, who do not fellowship with us. But it gets tricky pretty quick. Catholic doctrine gets dangerous quickly if adhered to. And

Mormon doctrine has more in common with the folks Jesus pronounced the woe's upon.

That never means they see anything apart from humility and gentleness on the surface. At the market places and other gatherings, they see humility and gentleness and love from us. The same as the rest of the world. Politically and ideologically to a point, those folks are our allies. Co-belligerents against evil morals. We bear with everyone in love, until we can't.

But in our inner family here, we bear with one another, and that word to bear can also mean to help when needed. We'll see more about that as we go.

vs. 3 being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

I think the word diligent is where we begin to consider this portion of a worthy walk. Sometimes it's hard work to keep the unity of the Spirit.

Real christians possess the living risen Christ, living in their hearts. The Holy Spirit dwells in me. How is it that I have the Holy Spirit in me, and that knuckle head over there also has the Holy Spirit in him, and he still manages to drive me crazy. Ever have that happen?

It was hard enough through all the long centuries. Now we've got twitter, or whatever it's called. And YouTube. Christians with flame throwers burning each other up. The world looks on in derision. Satan looks on and laugh's, nothing to concern about here. They don't need any help from Satan, they're busy annihilating each other.

If you bite and devour one another, take heed lest you be consumed by one another. Gal. 5:15 We used to do that in semi private. Now the whole world is looking on. Their derision is not unwarranted. We look like fools these days. Mowing each other down with flames while the world chuckles over the self inflicted damage.

vs. 3 being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

the unity of the Spirit. This is something real. This commonness with everyone else who also has the indwelling Holy Spirit. In the summer of my 18th year, I was on foot, hitch hiking from San Francisco to Los Angeles trying to get home.

I was walking down a busy sidewalk by a park, backpack on my back, and a small boy came running across the grass and handed me a sandwich in a baggie. He said it was from his family and I looked across the park at some folks waving.

That little act of love went directly to my heart. And I've experienced it often. I've got Jesus in my heart, and I don't know you, but you've got Him too, and there's this instant bond of love between us. You can go to a foreign land and if you run into someone who has Jesus, the bond is instant, even though you're doing sign language trying to communicate.

People who have Jesus have a tangible bond with other people who have Jesus. That's what Paul calls *the unity of the Spirit*. It's real. And yet there have been folks who came to this church for a very long time and I never once felt that common bond between us.

When it is present, you work hard to keep it. We don't let silly disagreements interrupt that bond. We don't let irritations or hard feelings interrupt that bond. Sometimes you could feel like, hey, that person isn't pulling their weight in this deal and a root of bitterness can get started.

If it's hard work to keep that bond, that unity, you work at it. I feel very lucky that in this church, it's been very easy to just enjoy each other. It's nice. But if the day comes when it's not as easy, we need to do the work. Be diligent to preserve the bond and the unity, if we have to.

In the Ukraine, very quickly, the Christians had to join together and go

underground. Maybe two or three or more local assemblies all huddled together in one common assembly. All the different denominational titles and 4th level differences go out the window real quick. You work hard if necessary to preserve the bond of the unity of believers who have Jesus.

All these little experts on the internet fighting with each other airing dirty laundry about doctrines the rank and file folks don't even know what they're talking about, and the world listens in and does what Paul said the world would do, in Corinthians;

1 Cor. 14:23 Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and uninformed men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your mind?

The problem is different, the effect is quite the same. On the internet we have a whole world of uninformed and unbelievers watching, and we're fighting amongst ourselves, and to the world what we're fighting over may as well be in gibberish. To them it's nonsense. And they quite rightly according to Paul, think we're lunatics. Just as Paul said.

And most of it is pride driven. Gonna build my youtube empire by being a spiritual expert and throwing flames at my brothers in order to make me look important. So-called "discernment ministries". You're puffed up enough to think you're God's gift to the church throwing flames at everybody else.

We do the hard work to keep unity. Those are the guys I respect. Now don't mis-understand me. When someone crosses over into heresy, then you must break unity with them. That's a different problem. Then, danger to other weaker christians is possible and you speak up.

We work hard to maintain the unity of the Spirit until we can't. Wisdom is the jewell that the church needs these days. Not discernment ministries throwing flaming darts at other christians while the world enjoys the show.

You say, this is sort of a tightrope. How do you discern the people that you work hard to stay in unity with and the people you don't? Like a thin line here. I'm going to fight to maintain unity with these folks but I feel like I can't be in unity with those folks. Fine line. Tight rope narrow walk? Maybe. Who exactly do I do the extra work to keep unity with?

But I think that's what Paul addresses next;

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Who am I going to go to the mat for, in order to keep the unity of the Spirit? Who warrants the hard work, if it comes to that. Who doesn't.

This sentence of Paul's is like a checklist you can work through to answer the question, is this person or this group part of our unity. Part of our extended family.

We'll think in the positive to begin with. All Christians all over the world, in every place, in every country are united in commonality to each other, IF these things are present.

4 There is one body

All Christians are one body. All Christians are one united body. We are the church, the body of Christ. One body spread over the globe in many thousands if not millions of local groups that gather. One body.

and one Spirit

All Christians have One Holy Spirit dwelling inside their redeemed persons. We are one body in common and we have One Spirit. In common.

just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

All Christians have a single calling. God has called us out of Satan's kingdom and into His kingdom. Every Christian has experienced that, or

they aren't christians. The whole identity of being a christian is that God called us out of this world, into His world. Out of Satan's authority to reign over lost sinners who are trapped by their sin in his kingdom, into the authority to reign, of God. The kingdom of God. Every christian holds in common with every other christian that God called us, indeed delivered us by forgiveness of sins, out of Satans kingdom and into the kingdom of God.

5 one Lord,

Ownership. Every christian in common with every other christian has one owner. One Master. It's not popular to bring up these days, but the fact of the book is, and what this clearly states, is that He is Lord. Jesus is Lord.

And if that is true, what does that make us, class? Is it hard for you to say? If there is one Lord, what does that make the people whom He is Lord of? Slaves. There it is.

Put that in your evangelism vocabulary for when you're out talking to the culture who worships the god of absolute personal autonomy. Jesus died for you in order that your sins could be forgiven, and if you answer God's call, out of sin and into forgiveness, you will be a slave. That's right, Jesus will own you. Well, actually, He already does. The difference is you'll be a forgiven obedient slave instead of a runaway rebellious slave.

That's exactly what those two little words mean. *5 one Lord,*

one faith

Here is the big bugaboo. Here is the problem words that create real conflict. Wars are fought over these two words. Human blood is shed over these two words. And beyond that, eternal punishment in hell, forever, hang in the balance over these two words.

The world is angry with christians, and getting angrier. The world is out of patience with christians. Some christians. Or if you're me you might say all christians, because these words are the dividing line between real

christians and people who claim to be christians but are not.

The exclusivity of these two words makes people whom these two words exclude, go crazy. It makes people fighting mad. It makes the excluded people want to eliminate the people who hold to the authority of them.

Let me set up the problem, and the exclusivity of the solution that makes people go nuts. Here's the problem; Stated long long ago to Moses up on Mount Sinai, by God. Exodus chapter 34:

6 Then Yahweh passed by in front of him and called out, "Yahweh, Yahweh God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished,

Do you hear the conundrum there, stated by God Himself. He forgives iniquity. But iniquity will not go unpunished.

How do you have it both ways, Yahweh? How can both stated truths happen at the same time. No guilt unpunished. Ever. But compassion and grace and slow to anger and lovingkindness and truth and forgiveness of iniquity and transgression and sin, yet no sin will ever be unpunished.

How does that work? How are both truths possible. How do God's wrath and God's grace, both attributes of the same God, co-exist together? Where does the wrath go for those who are forgiven and pardoned, if no sin ever remains unpunished?

There's only one way both can co-exist at the same time. The wrath must happen or God's words are meaningless. The only way both things can happen is for the wrath and punishment for sins to be fully satisfied upon a substitute.

And that's why John the baptizer, the predecessor of Jesus who announces

Him says these words; *“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”* Jn. 1:29

Jesus and only Jesus will be and is, to this day, risen from the grave and in heaven at the right hand of His Father, Jesus is the lamb of God that was given in sacrificial payment for the transgressions of all who God has called out of this world to belong to Himself.

Understand the exclusionary effect of that single truth. One faith. *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* Acts 4:12

The claim of the authority of this book is clear. No sin goes without it's due punishment which is removal from God's presence for eternity in hell. One single sin will effect that level of punishment. According to what Yahweh clearly stated to Moses in Exodus 34

The other claim is that Jesus and only Jesus is the possible expiation for sins. There is one substitute that satisfies the punishment of death for sins, for all time. One lamb of God who can take the due punishment for our sins.

Belief and reliance by faith upon that single exclusive "Way" of salvation is the ONE Faith that Paul speaks of here in this passage. When Paul says One Faith here he isn't talking about your individual faith. Actually he is but a lot more. When he uses the word here, it is the "faith" that encompasses all that we believe.

It's like what Jude says at the beginning of his letter; Jude 3 *Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you exhorting that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.*

Literally in the greek *that you contend earnestly* (yes, beloved, that means fight) *for the once for all delivered to the saints faith.* We're in the fight of

our life for this faith which is our complete belief system. That's the one faith

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

one baptism This is spiritual baptism that the Lord who calls you out of the old world accomplishes at the time of your call. In the ordo salutis of salvation, the order of salvation, God quickens your spirit to life, together with Christ, by the indwelling Holy Spirit. You are made alive.

But you are no longer a citizen of this world, trapped by and imprisoned by your sins, ruled by the ruler of this world, captive in your sins by Satan. Jesus removes you from the condemned and places you, immerses you spiritually, into His kingdom. We are immersed into God's ownership. We are citizens of heaven. Already. Right now. We are citizens of God's kingdom of heaven and we have the down payment, the promise of that future, living inside our hearts.

That's the one baptism that Paul speaks of in this exclusive list of ones. Water baptism is the outward obedience symbolising this inner baptism has happened. We undergo water baptism as a witness to the world that this inner spiritual baptism has really actually happened.

It's the baptism that brought me out of Satan's captivity and immersed me into God's kingdom. I was purchased out of Satan's bondage by the blood that removed my sins. And I was baptized, immersed into new life. I am a citizen of another world. The Holy Spirit living in my heart is the promise of a future world, waiting for all of us, in heaven.

6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

God, our Father, is the one who made this exclusive rescue from bondage possible. The language here is only true of those who have been redeemed. Purchased out of the bondage of sin. Sins forgiven and removed.

Until that happens God is not over you or through you or in you. If sin is present and not paid for you are removed away from God. Separated in black darkness and torment. Those words about the Father can only be true for those whose sins are removed and paid in full for by a sin bearer.

Why is it so exclusive? Why is the path so narrow? Why is there only one possibility for reconciliation for all sinners. It is because it pleased the One God to glorify Himself, and His Son, and His Spirit by accomplishing our salvation exactly as He planned.

There doesn't need to be 2 ways or a thousand ways. God is glorified by faith in a single Way of reconciliation. He planned it. He executed it. He revealed it. One way back to God.

The passage is about the unity of believers. The very word is only possible in exclusivity. Unity is simply a form of the word One. One - ity. Unity.

And there is no unity possible for anyone that doesn't possess every single thing that Paul spells out in all of those exclusive ones. Listen to it again.

1 Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, exhort you to walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 being diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Now then, here is conflict waiting to happen. You can take every religion on earth, some closer to this exclusion than others and you can work through that list of exclusions and dismiss every single religion of the world. Only one can claim to comprehensively believe every single One.

Well, you might say, maybe we're wrong and one of the other ones is right. Me, I'm sticking with the guy who arose from the dead. Plus the biblical account from Genesis 3 where Adam got us into this mess, until Revelation where all sins, once for all time are either in hell or in heaven for eternity, it all makes sense. It all fits together. And Jesus rose from the dead.

I believe every single one of those exclusions. Every single one of them is necessary to accomplish God's plan of redemption. I especially love the baptism one, because that's where I got swept out of the old condemned mess and placed into God's everlasting love and joy.

That single baptism placed me into the one body, filled me with the one Spirit, called me out of condemnation, and placed me firmly in a position while still in this world of hope. It placed me under one Lord, Jesus who is the King of all kings. Baptism immersed me into one faith and reconciled me to *one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.*

We spoke earlier of the all encompassing idea of one faith. Earnestly contend for the faith. This little sentence of Paul's with all the one's is a comprehensive statement of what we believe. What the totality of our faith is. This is who we fight to keep unity of love with. Other people called into this same faith with all the same one's.

Vss 4 - 6 may well have been an early church creed that they would sing together and memorize.

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.