**The Worthy Walk, Part 5**

**Ephesians 4:3**

**April 18, 2021**

1. Introduction
   1. We return this morning to Ephesians 4:3 and our study of the worthy walk.
      1. We are looking at the final component of the worthy walk.
      2. To walk worthy of our calling, we must preserve a unified church.
      3. Notice how Paul puts this in v. 3…
      4. We are to be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit.
   2. The unity of the Spirit has always been a difficult subject within the church.
      1. As we saw last week, it was difficult for the early church to preserve.
         1. They started off unified, all in one room devoted to prayer, about 120 believers.
         2. But as the church began to grow, unity became a challenge.
         3. It seems like every time one area of disunity is addressed, another area popped up.
         4. We see the same thing throughout the NT epistles, as the churches in the NT were constantly struggling to preserve unity.
      2. Unity has also been a challenge because it is frequently misunderstood.
         1. Reading the NT call to preserve unity, many well-intentioned but misinformed people have made unity such a high priority that unity became even more important than truth.
         2. Unity has often become an end in itself, with all kinds of doctrinal distinctives being swept away in the name of preserving unity.
         3. This drive to unity at all costs, or unity at great cost, is known as the ecumenical movement in the church.
         4. And it is not an exaggeration to say that theology is predominantly influenced today by this idea of unity being the top priority.
      3. Because unity is difficult in and of itself when properly understood, and because of the many difficulties simply understanding biblical unity today, we are taking our time walking through a study of what the NT says about unity.
         1. Really, this is a timely subject for us because of the way this church has grown over the past year.
         2. The great challenge we will face moving ahead as we try to figure out facility space and staffing needs and leadership needs and all the other opportunities in the future is to stay unified because we won’t all agree on every decision.
         3. The more decisions need to be made and the more people involved in making decisions, the greater the risk of disunity.
         4. Furthermore, more people means more opportunity for hurts and offenses, for interpersonal conflicts, for personality differences, and all the other challenges that come relating to one another.
         5. This is, then, a wonderful time in God’s providence to come to Ephesians 4:3 and our study of church unity, the unity of the Spirit.
   3. The way we are approaching this study is to answer three questions raised from this verse.
      1. What is the unity of the Spirit?
      2. How do we preserve the unity of the Spirit?
      3. And what are the blessings that come to a church that obeys this command to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?
   4. We began to answer the first question last week: What is the unity of the Spirit?
      1. The answer is threefold, and the first part of the answer is that the unity of the Spirit means that we all must have the same mind.
         1. The unity of the Spirit is a unity in sound doctrine.
         2. That’s what it means to be of the same mind.
         3. We are to have the same beliefs, to have the same doctrine.
      2. The NT does not present unity as a minimizing of doctrine, or a compromise of true doctrine with false to achieve some external unity.
         1. To the contrary, the NT expressly says that divisions are to be expected when people reject sound doctrine.
         2. We should not try to eliminate those kinds of divisions, but we need to appreciate them as God’s way of purifying His church.
         3. In Titus 3:10-11, Paul wrote…
            1. A factious man is one who is creating divisions by bringing false doctrine into the church.
            2. The proper response to someone who sows seeds of false doctrine is not to find some common ground where we can all be united.
            3. The proper response to the person who brings false doctrine into the church is to warn them twice and then put them out of the church if they refuse to repent.
            4. Division of this sort is protective of the church.
            5. It preserves sound doctrine within the church, and it is absolutely vital and necessary.
      3. The question we left off with last time was this: How much doctrine do we have to agree about to be unified, to preserve the unity of the Spirit?
         1. Another way to ask this question is like this: What is out of bounds doctrinally?
         2. What types of beliefs are significant enough that if there is a difference, we cannot be united?
         3. We can ask this question about individuals within the church.
         4. And we can also ask this question about cooperating with other churches.
         5. We recognize and joyfully confess that there are many sound, biblical churches around the world that we are unified with in the truth.
         6. But how do we know which churches those are?
         7. What are the parameters?
         8. When do we have the same mind, even if we have a disagreement about certain things, and we do we not have the same mind, making unity in the Spirit impossible?
      4. This morning I want to give you three broad categories to think about when you consider what it means to be of the same mind.
   5. First of all, to be of the same mind means that we have…
2. The same mind about Scripture
   1. Here we have the foundational element of being like-minded, because everything we believe is derived from the Word of God.
      1. When we wrote our new statement of faith last year, one of the first things we did in writing it was to put our statement about the Scriptures first in the statement of faith and the statement about God second.
      2. It always concerned me with our older statement of faith that the Scriptures came second.
      3. Historically, if you look back at the confessions of faith that came out of the Reformation, you consistently found a statement on Scripture as the very first article in the statement of faith.
      4. Why?
      5. Because the Scripture is more important than God?
      6. No, of course not.
      7. But because what we know about God comes from the Scriptures.
      8. You cannot have a proper view of God if you do not have a proper view of the Bible.
      9. We understand some things about God from creation, as Paul says in Romans 1, but the special revelation God has given in His Word is absolutely necessary to a clear, accurate understanding of who God is as the Savior of sinners.
      10. And so in a sense we must have that right before we can go on to anything else!
   2. Having the same mind about Scripture, then, includes a couple things.
      1. First, it means that we have the same mind about the origin of Scripture.
         1. In 2 Peter 1:21, Peter tells us this about Scripture…
            1. Scripture is not something someone sat down and decided to write.
            2. The Apostle Peter did not sit down at his desk and say, “Tonight I’m going to write 2 Peter to include it in the Bible.”
            3. No, Peter was moved by the Spirit of God to write this letter, as were all the other writers of Scripture.
            4. They did not speak of their own will, but they were moved by the Spirit and spoke from God.
            5. If we are to enjoy and preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, we need to recognize that the Word of God is just that, the Word of God, that these men spoke from God.
         2. Paul put it like this in 2 Timothy 3:16…
            1. All Scripture is inspired by God, or breathed out by God.
            2. The Word of God is the result of the work of the Spirit of God, using the men of God who wrote down the words of God.
         3. What that means is what the psalmist wrote in Psalm 119:160…
            1. Notice the two statements he makes.
            2. First, the sum of God’s Word is truth.

That means that when you stand back and look at the Bible as a whole, its entire message is truth.

You take everything it says and add it all up, and you come out with the truth.

* + - * 1. But he then adds that every detail is everlasting, which indicates that they are eternally true as well.

This means that the Word of God is not only true in the big picture it presents about God, man, sin, and salvation, but every statement it makes about everything to which it speaks is eternally true.

It’s true in the details as well as the big picture.

I’ve heard people say that the Word of God is generally true about the major themes of Scripture, but sometimes it gets some details about certain things wrong.

But that’s not what Scripture says about itself.

It gets the major themes right and all the supporting details are true as well!

* + - * 1. The Bible, then, is the Word of God, spoken from God through the Spirit and written down by men who were moved by the Spirit to record accurately everything God wanted to communicate to us.
      1. Look at how Paul describes the Thessalonians in 1 Thess 2:13…
         1. The Thessalonians recognized what the apostles proclaimed as the very word of God, not merely human opinions or theology or philosophy, but a message directly from the mouth of God.
         2. That’s what created unity among them and with the apostles.
         3. In fact, v. 14 indicates there was such great unity that they even shared in the unity of suffering the same things as other churches in other parts of the world!
         4. It was their common belief that the Word of God comes from God that created this unity.
      2. To be of the same mind, therefore, requires that we have the same mind about the origin of the Scriptures, that we all agree these are not the opinions of men but the very words of God, in their sum and in their individual words.
    1. Second, it means we must have the same mind about the sufficiency of Scripture.
       1. The inerrancy and origin of Scripture creates some division because many people reject that, but here we find an even greater divide when we begin to talk about the sufficiency of Scripture.
          1. If you believe the origin of Scripture is from God, this should naturally follow.
          2. The Word of God should, if it is the Word of God, do the work of God, as Paul wrote in 1 Thess 2:13.
          3. But we find in many, many cases that those who profess to believe in the inerrancy of Scripture fall away when it comes to embracing the sufficiency of Scripture.
       2. When we speak about the sufficiency of Scripture, we should think of it in at least two ways.
          1. First, the Scripture is absolutely sufficient to convert the unbeliever.

In Rom 1:16, Paul said…

When the unbeliever encounters the Word of God, the unbeliever is encountering the power of God for salvation.

The power is not in the preacher, the presentation, the lighting, the décor, the music, the ambiance, or anything else except in the Word of God.

So Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because he recognized that it was alone sufficient to bring sinners to repentance and faith in Christ.

James wrote in James 1:18…

It is the word of truth that God uses to bring sinners to life.

James recognized that the power to give life is found in the Scriptures and in the Scriptures alone.

The Bible is sufficient for the unbeliever, to bring the sinner to repentance and faith in Christ.

That’s why in our worship services we don’t need one service for the unconverted and one for the believer.

The same Word of God is effective and powerful; as long as the Word of God is preached, the power is present to save.

* + - * 1. Second, we also need to think of the Scripture and its sufficiency for everything a person needs after coming to faith in Christ.

The Scriptures are completely and totally sufficient for everything we will face in this life, either together as a church or individually in our personal lives.

We must have the same mindset about the Word of God in this way if we are to have genuine unity.

Peter explains it like this in 2 Pet 1:3…

God, through His divine power, has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him.

Where do we get this knowledge?

Peter goes on to describe in the rest of the chapter how this knowledge comes not from cleverly devised fables or human wisdom and philosophy but, as we saw earlier, from the Word of God.

Everything we need for life and godliness, then, is found in our knowledge of God obtained through being constantly reminded of the Word of God.

If we go back to 2 Tim 3:16-17, we go on to read this…

The Word of God is profitable, Paul says, to make sure that you are equipped for every good work.

The Word of God is so powerful, so sufficient, so mighty, that no matter what situation you are in, it can equip you to do what pleases God in that situation.

It is absolutely sufficient for everything in life.

* + - * 1. When we think about the Word of God this way, as sufficient to convert the unbeliever and sufficient to equip the believer for every potential scenario in life, we recognize that the Word of God is utterly and totally sufficient for anything and everything in life.

There are no areas of life where we can say that the Word of God does not speak to this thing.

It might not be readily obvious to us how the Word of God applies to a given situation, but we know that it is designed to equip us for every good work in every situation.

In His Word, God has given to us everything we need for life and godliness, which is everything we need for all of life.

* + - 1. If Scripture is sufficient, as it claims to be, then that means that we must have a worldview that is determined by the lens of Scripture.
         1. Scripture must be determinative of every area of life.
         2. It must shape how we think about everything in life, whether finances, marriage, parenting, employment, government, politics, taxes, economics, history, illness, death, or any other subject – all of it must be shaped by the Word of God.
         3. I think over the past year, one of the things that has become evident is that although many people in the church might agree about the inerrancy of Scripture, that it is without error, we have seen that there are massive worldview discrepancies that fundamentally come down to whether or not we believe the Scriptures are truly sufficient.
         4. Let me give you an example.

John MacArthur has recently called the social justice movement in the church the greatest threat to the gospel in his lifetime, and he has lived through a number of dangerous false gospels that have threatened the health of the church.

Many, many professing believers are being deceived by this movement.

The question arises, Can we have unity on this issue?

And the answer ultimately is no, we cannot, because it undermines the sufficiency of Scripture.

According to the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, the foundational elements of social justice are described as an analytical lens.

This definition is considered a standard definition of CRT by those who are proponents of this belief system.

What is analytical lens?

An analytical lens, as Voddie Baucham points out in his recent book *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism’s Looming Catastrophe*, is a worldview.

We have seen this worldview adopted by many well-known evangelical leaders.

We have seen major evangelical denominations embrace CRT and social justice as helpful analytical tools.

And the question that must be asked is simply this: Is the Word of God sufficient to address issues of justice?

If it is, then these other tools which are self-described as analytical lenses, or worldviews, are rivals to Scripture and not aids to Scripture.

That means we are in a situation like Joshua with the Israelites in Joshua 24: Choose this day whom you will serve.

Choose this day what worldview you will adopt.

Will you see the world through the lens of Scripture, or will you see the world through the lens of social justice?

* + - * 1. To put this another way, we have to think antithetically about these things.

We must intentionally and rigorously ensure that our minds are held captive to one thing and one thing only: The Word of God.

It cannot be the Word of God plus something else.

We have to recognize that all competing world views are antithetical to the Word of God.

They are opposed to the Word of God.

There are really two authority structures that exist: the Word and the world.

The Word comes from God, and the world is under the influence of the evil one.

Now here’s the thing about the world: The world will allow you to have the Word of God, just as long as you are willing to supplement the Word of God with worldly philosophy.

The world will pretend like it’s ok for you to like the Bible, to go to church, to put Bible quotes on your wall at home, and so on, just enough to get you to think you believe the Bible when really your worldview has been compromised because you have the Word plus the world.

In the end, you’ll lose the Word and have nothing but the world, and then ultimately, you’ll have nothing.

The Word of God makes an exclusive claim on our minds.

That’s why we are called not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of what? Our minds.

We are called to have a worldview utterly dominated by the Bible.

* + - * 1. I think one of the things that is happening in the church over the past year is that people are beginning to see like never before that people they thought were spiritual leaders who had a biblical worldview do not.

And what is happening here is happening all over the place, where people are leaving churches that have been shown to have a worldview more shaped by the world than the Word, and they are seeking out a place where the Bible really is seen as sufficient.

They want to be under leadership that really believes the Bible is what it says it is and does what it says it does.

And the times in which we are living is making these lines clearer than ever.

* 1. What we are after here, then, is having the same mind about the Scriptures so that we approach life the same way, under the same authority, with the same philosophy.
     1. This does not mean we agree on every detail of what Scripture means.
     2. It means that we all agree that at the end of the day, everything about our lives will be driven and determined by the Bible, and the Bible has everything we need for life and godliness.
     3. I love how Paul puts this in Phil 3:15-16…
        1. The word **perfect** there means *mature*.
        2. Paul is saying to these believers, “Let us all have the same attitude about the Christian life and how we approach the Christian life: we forget what lies behind and we press on toward what lies ahead with the singular focus of knowing Christ.”
        3. In other words, we should all be thinking about life the same way.
        4. We are seeking Christ, and everything in our lives is now determined by this one focus: to know Christ.
        5. Paul says, “Look, let’s at least agree on this foundation; if you disagree about other things, God will deal with those things, but let’s not go backward on the fundamentals.”
        6. We are going to disagree about various interpretations and applications of Scripture, but can we all get on the same page and say together with one voice that the Scripture is absolutely sufficient?
        7. Can we say together that the Scripture comes from God, that it is God-breathed, inerrant, containing all we need for life and godliness?
        8. And can we say together that we not only embrace the sufficiency of Scripture, but because the Scripture is sufficient, we reject all competing lenses, all competing worldviews, all competing systems of self-help or social improvement that are not derived from the Word of God?
     4. If we don’t have the same foundation, we will not, indeed we cannot, have unity.
  2. Now, I want to tackle a question that might be looming in the back of your mind as we talk about this.
     1. Am I saying that someone who does not have a biblical worldview is de facto an unbeliever and outside the church?
        1. I’m not saying that necessarily.
        2. I think just like any other area of our lives, our understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture and our application of that truth will grow as we grow in sanctification.
        3. That means you can have people who are genuinely converted but whose worldview is currently not what it should be.
        4. In fact, that’s true of every Christian; none of us have arrived at perfection, not even in our application of the sufficiency of Scripture for our lives.
        5. And so we have to make room for sanctification and the need of sanctification.
        6. We have to be patient with people who are immature in their thinking about this area of doctrine, just like other areas of doctrine.
        7. And we have to realize that all of us are tempted to view life through a worldly lens, so we have to be renewed daily through the Word of God.
        8. We do have to understand that these immaturities, if they are especially severe, can create tensions and make unity difficult.
        9. In fact, some people who struggle with applying the sufficiency of Scripture to their lives might feel judged or uncomfortable in a church where that standard is held high, and they might not feel unity there.
        10. But you hope that over time, with love, patience, grace, prayer, and discipleship, that unity becomes more evident and tensions resolve.
     2. But I will say this: People who are immature in their understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture or in their application of this doctrine should not be in leadership.
        1. To put people in leadership who are still working on the fundamentals of this truth, who are still being grounded in their understanding of the sufficiency of the Word, will be damaging for them and for the church.
        2. And it would be very difficult to have any practical unity with church leadership that constantly, either intentionally or unintentionally, undermined the sufficiency of Scripture.
        3. How can a believer follow someone in good conscience if that leader is constantly undermining their trust in Scripture and pointing them to worldly solutions for their problems?
        4. It seems some break in visible unity would be necessary at that point for the good of everyone involved.

1. Conclusion
   1. Brothers and sisters, we need to be amazed constantly at how incredible the gift of God’s Word is to us.
      1. God’s Word is absolutely and utterly sufficient because its origin is divine, being the very Word of the living God.
      2. There is nothing in your life that the Word of God is unable to address or help you work through so that you live a life pleasing to the Lord.
      3. If you’re here this morning as an unbeliever, the Word of God is the only thing I would point you to for your eternal salvation, because the power to change your heart from unbelief to faith in Christ is found in the gospel message of the Scriptures.
      4. I have nothing for you except this book, which is God’s perfect, eternal, unchanging, sufficient Word.
   2. If we want to walk worthy and preserve the unity of the church, we must be of the same mind about the Scriptures.
      1. We must all have the same foundation and the same lens through which we view everything in life.
      2. Yes, we will differ on some details of how we interpret or apply the Word in certain situations, but we must have this common foundation that the Word is from God and sufficient for what we need.
   3. There are two other areas we need to cover about which we must be of the same mind, but we’ll save those for next time…