**The Worthy Walk, Part 6**

**Ephesians 4:3**

**May 2, 2021**

1. Introduction
   1. I invite you to turn in your Bibles this morning to Ephesians 4:1-6 for our time of studying God’s Word together this morning.
      1. These verses are the beginning of the exhortation in Paul’s letter, and he begins by exhorting Christ’s people to walk worthy of our calling.
      2. Here, we are being called to live out our Christian faith in a manner that reflects the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
   2. As we have been studying these verses, we have arrived at v. 3, where the Apostle puts before us the final aspect of the worthy walk in this section: We are called to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
      1. If we would walk worthy of Christ, it is not enough that we merely as individuals live godly lives on our own, in the privacy of our homes, in our private lives.
      2. We must walk worthy in our relationships with the body of Christ, and that means that we must preserve the unity of the church.
      3. The question that is raised by this exhortation is quite simply, “What is this unity?”
      4. We’ll spend more time on this in a couple weeks, but let me for now just call your attention to the fact that we are not called to create unity in the church, but to preserve unity in the church.
      5. There is an assumption that the unity already exists, and our task is to preserve what is already there, what God has already created among His people.
      6. And so what is this unity that God has created in the church?
   3. To understand this unity, we need to think of it along three lines.
      1. The first line is that we are people who have the same mind.
         1. When God joins us to the body of Christ, He shapes our thinking by transforming us from the inside out.
         2. Romans 6:17 puts it like this…
            1. The word translated **form** in that verse means a pattern or a stamp.
            2. You became obedient from the heart to the teaching with which you were stamped.
            3. You became obedient from the heart to the teaching after which your mind became patterned.
         3. There is, then, among the people of God, a way of thinking, a pattern of thinking, a way our minds our shaped that unites us.
         4. And you know what I’m talking about as a believer.
         5. You can meet someone for the first time who is a follower of Christ, and within minutes feel like you are talking with an old friend because you share the same pattern of thinking, your minds have been committed to thinking God’s thoughts God’s way.
         6. And when you meet someone who is an unbeliever, it becomes evident rather quickly that you and the unbeliever don’t live in the same reality and that the fundamental things that shape how you think and view the world are totally incompatible with the unbeliever.
      2. What is it that shapes our thinking, that God uses to stamp our minds to view the world as God would have us view it? It is the Word of God.
         1. To be of the same mind requires that we view things through the same lens, we share a worldview, and that worldview must be determined for the Christian by the written Word of God, the Bible.
         2. This goes back to the Reformation statement *sola scriptura*, Scripture alone.
         3. The Bible is completely sufficient for everything we need to do the good works God has called us to do.
         4. God has, in His inspired, inerrant, sufficient Word, given us all we need for life and godliness.
         5. To put it negatively, to walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord requires nothing but the Word of God; the world has no help to offer in teaching you how to live and please God.
         6. To preserve the unity of the Spirit requires that we all submit our minds to Scripture and Scripture alone so that we are of the same mind.
      3. Now, some people have objected to this by asking why we would ever, for example, go to the doctor when we are sick if the Bible is all we need for life and godliness.
         1. When the Bible teaches us about its sufficiency, it is not claiming to have all the information you need for every task in life or for every career path.
         2. For example, the Bible does not tell you how to brush your teeth, change a tire, or perform brain surgery.
         3. Furthermore, the Bible points us outside the Bible for some things we need in life to honor the Lord.
         4. For example, we might think of prayer.
         5. Why do we pray?
         6. We pray because the Bible tells us the importance of prayer.
         7. It would be foolish to say that we only need the Bible and not prayer, and that would in reality be a denial of Scripture because Scripture tells us we need to pray.
         8. Or it would be foolish to think we don’t need the church and that we can just sit home with our Bibles and please God.
         9. The Bible itself tells us not to forsake assembling together, and it commands us to live out the “one anothers” in the context of the church.
         10. But the reason we know about the church and the commands to care for one another is because we find them in the Bible.
         11. When we need help dealing with a problem, we learn in Proverbs there is wisdom with a multitude of counselors, and we learn in Psalms the kinds of counselors we want are people who are steeped in the Word of God, not in the thinking of the world.
         12. So when we go to a biblical counselor for help, we are not denying the sufficiency of Scripture; we are obeying the Scriptures that tell us there is wisdom in seeking counsel from godly people who also have submitted their minds to the Word of God.
         13. The Bible, then, is not designed to tell us every detail about all the minutia of life, such as brushing teeth, changing tires, taking the proper antibiotics, and so on, but it does tell us how to approach all of these things in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.
         14. It gives us all we need so that whatever we are doing in life, we are doing it for the glory of God.
      4. Our unity, then, is built around us having the same mind where the Word of God is the lens through which we view everything in life.
   4. Second, not only do we have to be of the same mind about the Scriptures, but we must also…
2. Serve the same Master (v. 3)
   1. This naturally follows from the first point that we have to be of the same mind.
      1. If we have the same mind, and everything we think about life and how we see the world is derived from the Word of God, then it follows that we will share the same view of God.
      2. People ask about the major doctrines upon which Christians agree; the first is the doctrine of Scripture, while the second is the doctrine of God.
      3. The Word of God reveals God to us.
      4. The Bible is a book about God.
      5. And so if we are to preserve the unity of the Spirit, we must have the same mind about the Word of God, and we must as a consequence serve the same God.
      6. If you look out across the landscape of everything that attaches itself to Christianity, you will inevitably find that it does not seem like we are all serving the same God.
      7. And so the question is, “Who is this God?”
      8. How do we know if we are serving the same God?
      9. This is a big question because, as we have said before, doctrine has fallen on hard times.
         1. People do not like to define these things.
         2. I have often heard people say, “No creed but Christ.”
         3. And that sounds great at a superficial level, but you have to eventually get to the question, “Who is Christ?”
         4. And once you get to that question and begin to answer it, what do you have?
         5. Doctrine!
         6. And so we must know who God is.
         7. That is, in fact, the entire goal of the Christian life, according to John 17:3 and Phil 3:10, that we might know Him.
      10. I want to walk through a few things as examples that define from Scripture who God is that we should all be able to get behind and recognize as genuine characteristics of the God we serve.
      11. And I want to do this by staying in Ephesians and seeing who this God is as Paul has defined Him in the letter that we have already covered, what Paul assumes these Ephesians will understand and agree upon regarding God.
   2. The first thing we notice about God that is necessary to believe to preserve the unity of the Spirit is that God is Trinitarian.
      1. That means that we believe there is only one God, and that this one God exists as three distinct, co-equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
      2. It’s quite amazing how often Paul presents to us God as Trinity throughout the first half of Ephesians.
         1. Take the opening section in Ephesians 1:3-14.
            1. This entire section is all framed in terms of God as trinity: Father, Son, and Spirit!
            2. Verses 3-6 tell us all about God the Father and His role in salvation of choosing and predestining His children to adoption.
            3. Then we move on to verses 7-12 and we read all about the work of the Son, that we have redemption through His blood.

We know that Paul is not speaking of the Father here because the Father did not die on the cross, but the Son did.

The Father did not send Himself into the world, but He sent the Son into the world to die for sinners.

All of our blessings, then, come because we are in Him, that is, in the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, through faith.

These verses indicate to us that this one God exists as two distinct persons, the Father and the Son, who both exist and do different things in salvation.

The Father planned salvation, and the Son accomplished it through the shedding of His blood.

* + - * 1. Then we go to vv. 13-14 and we read about the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation.

We see in v. 13 that the Father has sealed us in the Son with the Holy Spirit.

And the Spirit has been given to us as a pledge of our inheritance.

The Spirit, then, keeps us as He applies the work of Christ on the cross to our hearts, ensuring that we will be saved in the end.

* + - * 1. You cannot understand salvation if you don’t understand the trinity.
        2. Paul begins not only by explaining to us these immense blessings we have in the heavenly places, but how it is that God – Father, Son, and Spirit – has given us these blessings through the work of each member of the trinity.
      1. We see this again in Eph 1:17…
         1. Paul prays that God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, so that the two are distinct person not to be confused with one another but that they are also the same God, would give to us the Spirit, who is distinct from the Father and the Son!
         2. Again, we see all three members of the trinity active in our salvation and engaged in Paul’s prayer life.
      2. Eph 2:18 tells us about the trinitarian nature of God again where we see that through the Son both Jews and Gentiles have their access by the Spirit of God to God the Father.
      3. And then Paul’s closing prayer in Eph 3:14-17 is framed once again around the members of the trinity as he bows his knees before the Father that He might give them power by the Spirit so that the Son might dwell in their hearts by faith.
      4. People have sometimes argued that the doctrine of the trinity is an invention of the church fathers later in church history, but we see that Paul repeatedly teaches about the trinity in these opening three chapters of Ephesians.
      5. It is not too much to say that if you deny the doctrine of the trinity, you have denied the truth of God’s Word, you cannot begin to understand the gospel, and you worship a false god.
    1. If we would understand the unity of the Spirit, then, we must recognize that God is triune.
       1. We serve one God.
       2. This one God exists eternally as three distinct but co-equal persons.
       3. These persons are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
       4. Any other conception of God is a different god who is not the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.
  1. The next thing we see about God in Ephesians 1-3, and I am limiting this to Ephesians lest it become its own year-long study of the attributes of God, but the second thing we see is the sovereignty of God.
     1. R. C. Sproul has famously said that it is the sovereignty of God that makes God *God*.
     2. Charles Spurgeon has called the sovereignty of God “God’s favorite doctrine.”
     3. What is the sovereignty of God as Paul explains it in Ephesians?
        1. Just like with the Trinity, we see Paul speaking of God’s sovereignty constantly throughout the opening of this letter, and it involves several things.
        2. First, Paul tells us that God sovereignly chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world – Eph 1:4
           1. The sovereignty of God means that God is sovereign over salvation.
           2. He chooses His people sovereignly before the world is ever created.
        3. Then Paul adds in v. 5 that God not only has chosen us in Christ before the world ever was made, but that God predestined us to adoption as sons according to His purpose, as v. 11 also makes clear.
           1. This summer we’ll have a Wednesday night class on how to study the Bible, and one of the rules we’ll discuss is the significance of repetition.
           2. Repetition usually is done for emphasis.
           3. Here, in span of 6 verses, Paul repeats that we have been predestined to emphasize the sovereignty of God in our salvation.
           4. We have been predestined according to the purpose of God, and that statement indicates God’s sovereign work.
           5. We are not predestined according to something about us or those around us or anything other than what God is doing in creation, the purpose He is seeking to accomplish.
           6. This is what it means for God to be sovereign, that He is actively pursuing and fulfilling a purpose with creation.
           7. Creation is not random.
           8. Creation was not purposeless with God just seeing how things would turn out.
           9. There’s a theology called *Open Theism* and its cousin *Process Theology* that teaches that God does not know the future and/or that God is in process of learning just like we are, except He is much further along the learning curve.

Those theologies deny the sovereignty of God, and therefore they deny the God of the Bible.

They are outside the bounds of what is biblical and what unites us as believers.

To say that God is not omniscient of not only everything that exists but of everything that could exist or might exist is to deny the God of the Bible and to worship a false god.

To say that God is in process is to reject the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and to serve the Baals.

* + - * 1. We understand from God’s Word that God had a purpose and a plan before He created the world, and He is working that out in history with full knowledge of everything exhaustively to the smallest detail.
      1. We see this again in v. 9 where Paul says that God purposed in Christ to sum up everything in Christ.
         1. God’s purpose in the world, far from being random or meaningless, was directed at glorifying Christ!
         2. Ultimately, at the end of every theological discussion, if we want to know why God did this or that, the final answer is, “To glorify the Son!”
      2. That’s why Paul says in v. 11 that God works everything after the counsel of His own will.
      3. That even included Paul being an apostle, since Paul noted in v. 1 that he was only an apostle by the will of God.
      4. God sovereignly made Paul an apostle.
      5. This sovereignty is further explained in 1:22, where we read that the Father has put all things in subjection to the Son.
         1. The sovereignty of God means that God rules over all as the sovereign Lord, as the King of kings and Lord of lords.
         2. There is no one who tells God what to do.
         3. As Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way, there is no one who can question God, who can thwart God’s plan, or who can say to God, “What are you doing?”
         4. He gives an account of Himself to no one, for He rules over all.
      6. We see this sovereignty in salvation again in Eph 2:4-5…
         1. We were dead in our sins, helpless, unable to save ourselves.
         2. But God!
         3. God made us alive, God raised us up, God seated us in heavenly places!
         4. Our salvation repeatedly is all about what God did!
      7. Then in Ephesians 2:12-22 we see what God did in Christ in reconciling us to Himself and to one another, and it’s all about God’s work, showing how God is sovereign over reconciliation.
      8. When you get to the end of Ephesians 3, if you’ve understood it correctly, you are absolutely blown away by what God has done for us in Christ!
      9. No one gets to the end of Ephesians 3 and says, “Well, lookie there, I guess I had a big part to play in my salvation.”
      10. No!
      11. We are overwhelmed by this God who rules over all and pursues His glorious purpose relentlessly throughout history as He saves a people for Himself.
    1. Now, within this discussion of God’s sovereignty, I recognize that there are differences of interpretation as to how all of this works together with the human will.
       1. This is the big debate over Calvinism and Arminianism.
       2. I understand these are complicated issues of systematic theology, and it’s not easy to put together how God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility fit together.
       3. And so we make space for people who put them together in different ways.
       4. But here’s what has to be true for us to be united: we must affirm both of these things, right?
       5. We must affirm that God is sovereign.
          1. You cannot get away from Ephesians 1-3.
          2. You cannot take man’s responsibility and make it nullify the sovereignty of God.
          3. As believers, we must readily confess that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords, that God has an eternal purpose and is pursuing that purpose, that God chose us in Christ, that He determined our destiny in love before the world began, and that He works everything after the counsel of His own will.
          4. We cannot deny any of those things without denying Scripture.
          5. And so we all have to affirm that Scripture teaches those things.
       6. And we must also say that we are responsible for our actions, and God will hold us accountable for our choices.
          1. We are commanded to repent and believe the gospel, and if we don’t, we will perish in our sins, and we will have no one to blame but ourselves.
          2. We are commanded as believers to walk worthy of our calling, and if we fail, God will discipline us in love because we are His children.
          3. We are responsible moral agents before a sovereign God.
       7. Some people may emphasize our responsibility, and some may emphasize God’s sovereignty, but the difference must be a matter of emphasis, not a matter of affirming one and denying the other.
          1. Like the trinity, there is much mystery here.
          2. If we understood these things perfectly, we would be at God’s level.
          3. It should come as a comfort to us, not a frustration, that we do not fully understand God.
          4. That means God is infinitely greater than us.
          5. And the worst thing we could possibly do in studying the Bible is make sure that every doctrine is easy to understand and makes complete sense to us because then it’s very likely that we have just made a god in our own image and after our likeness.
          6. When we preserve the unity of the Spirit, we recognize that God is sovereign, and we recognize that we are responsible, and we make space for people who reconcile those things differently *as long as they affirm both truths*.
    2. God is trinitarian, God is sovereign, and third…
  1. God is gracious.
     1. We worship and serve a God of grace, do we not?
     2. How we all need to come together around this truth that our God is a gracious God who pours His grace out upon undeserving sinners!
        1. Eph 1:6… God has freely given us His grace in Christ.
        2. Eph 2:5… You have been saved by the grace of God.
        3. Eph 2:7… God is going to spend all eternity showing you the surpassing riches of His grace
        4. Eph 2:8-9… Just in case you missed it the first time, you have been saved by grace, and that not of yourselves or as a result of your works, but as a free gift of God.
        5. Eph 3:2… The entire ministry of the gospel is called a stewardship of grace, because it is a message of the grace of God for sinners.
        6. Eph 3:7-8… The ministries we have as the people of God are gifts of grace that God has given to us who do not deserve such marvelous gifts from our God.
     3. As we go through Ephesians, we are overwhelmed not only by the truth that our God is sovereign but by the truth that He is full of sovereign grace!
     4. Here’s another one:
  2. God is merciful – Eph 2:4… He is rich in mercy
  3. And if that wasn’t enough, God is love
     1. Eph 1:4-5… He predestined us to be part of His family because of His love for us.
     2. Eph 2:4-5… He made us alive together with Christ because of His great love with which He loved us.
     3. Eph 3:17-19… God wants us to know the immeasurable love He has for us in Christ
     4. Brothers and sisters, we serve a God who is gracious and merciful and who loves us beyond human calculation.
     5. He is our Master, this sovereign, triune, gracious, merciful, loving God!
  4. He’s also powerful
     1. Eph 3:20-21…
     2. He can do more than you can ask or think.
     3. His power is limitless.
     4. You can serve a God who is omnipotent, who has all the power, who can do anything just as easily as He can do anything else!
     5. And He proved it by raising Christ from the dead and then raising you from spiritual death to be alive with His Son!
  5. He is holy
     1. Eph 2:21-22…
     2. We are growing into a holy temple because the only place God can dwell is in a holy place.
     3. Why?
     4. Because God is holy, so His temple must be holy as well.
     5. That’s why walking worthy includes walking in obedience and holiness.
  6. Finally, in addition to all of these amazing truths about God, our God is personal.
     1. We have personal access to God in prayer.
     2. We see that through Paul’s example in Eph 1-3, where he prays two long prayers on behalf of the Ephesians, more than any other of his letters.
     3. And we see that as well in Paul’s exhortations to us to pray in Eph 2:18 and Eph 3:12, reminding us that access to God is not an apostolic privilege but is the privilege and joy of every follower of Christ.
     4. Our God is personally involved in our lives, He listens to our prayers, He calls us His children, He loves us personally; in short, He is our God, He is our Master.

1. Conclusion
   1. Brothers and sisters, when we think of the unity of the Spirit, we must think of people who serve the same Master.
   2. Who is this Master we serve?
      1. He is the triune God who rules sovereignly over all in grace, mercy, love, power, and holiness.
      2. He is the great and mighty God who condescends to be involved in our lives personally and intimately.
      3. He is the God who knows us by name, and who gave us hope when we were hopeless.
   3. The Scriptures serve as the lens through which we understand everything we experience, and they reveal this glorious God to us who has saved us through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
   4. The unity of the Spirit is the like-mindedness we have about God and about His Word.
      1. While we will have different interpretations over some of the details of these things, the Spirit of God has united our hearts around the core truths of what the Bible is and who God is.
      2. We have one more thing to consider when we think about defining the unity of the Spirit, and we’ll cover that next week.