

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 18 November 2018. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Walk of Unity

Ephesians 4:1-4

In **Amos 3:3**, the Lord asked a rhetorical question of the nation of Israel. The question that He asked them was this: **“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”** Obviously, the answer to that question is “No.” Two people cannot “walk” together for very long if there be disunity between them.

Walking together in unity is extremely important to God. The Lord Jesus made a very strong statement about this in **Matthew 11:29-30**. He said, **“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”** Christ is using a powerful word picture, here. The word **“yoke”** implies that two people must walk together. A yoke on the necks of two oxen forces them to walk in the same direction. The oxen cannot pull in two different ways; they must walk together. Particularly, they must both yield to their *master*, and walk in the direction that *he* bids them. In the same way, Christians in a local church must walk together in the way that their Master bids them. Here at Redemption Baptist Church, Christ is our Master; and each member of this church must willingly submit to Christ, and walk *together* in His way. And what *is* His way? Christ’s way is the way of “meekness and lowliness of heart.” Meekness and lowliness of heart should be the *lifestyle* of every Christian, and of every church body.

In this message today, we will be focusing on that word “walk.” “Walk” is a word that is often used figuratively in Scripture. In both the Old and New Testament, the word “walk” is often used to mean “lifestyle.” In the book of **Ephesians**, this expression is used a lot. **Six times** in the book of Ephesians the word “walk” means “the way we live.” It is used one time in **Ephesians chapter 2**; but it is used five times in **chapters 4 and 5**.

That’s interesting, isn’t it? Why does Paul use this word “walk” so much in the last half of his letter, but not so much in the first half? The reason is that Paul is now getting into the *practical aspects* of Christian living. Paul’s letters to the churches usually followed this pattern. In the first half of his letters Paul usually dealt heavily with *doctrine*. That is what we have seen in **Ephesians 1-3**. In the first half of this epistle Paul taught the Ephesian Christians much *doctrine* about the church, and about the spiritual riches that believers have in Christ. But now, as Paul is starting into the second half of his letter, he is shifting gears. In **chapters 4-6**, Paul talks about the *practical application* of these doctrines in our lives. Paul is now showing us how the “riches of Christ’s grace” should be applied in our daily conduct, and in our relationships. He is also showing us how a right understanding of the doctrine of “the church” should affect the way that we interact with our brothers and sisters in Christ in our local church. This whole last half of **Ephesians** is about the “Christian walk.” It is about how we live. With this in mind, let’s get into **Ephesians 4**. The title of this message is ***The Walk of Unity***.

Read Ephesians 4:1-4.

I. The Christian walk (vv. 1-3)

In the first half of this letter, Paul has spent much time in telling the Ephesians about the riches that believers have in Christ. He has told them that *in Christ* we have the power to live the way that God wants us to live. He has also spent much time in telling them about the divine institution called the church. He has used many illustrations to help them understand the importance of the church in God's plan. In short, Paul has given the Ephesian Christians much **doctrine**. However, Paul is now saying, "*In light of these doctrines that I've given you, this is the way that you should walk. Because of these truths, this is, 'therefore,' the way you should be living.*"

Paul was earnest about what he was saying. To Paul, it was extremely important that Christians *live* these doctrines, and not just *know about* them. Paul was pleading with them. He starts off by saying, "***I therefore...beseech you.***" This matter of Christian living was very personal to Paul. And why wouldn't it be? Paul was, at that very moment, sitting in *prison* because he had preached and lived these truths. Paul didn't really consider himself to be a prisoner of *Rome*; he considered himself to be "***the prisoner of the Lord.***" It was for the *Christ's* sake, and for the sake of Christ's churches, that he was suffering; and having suffered so much for them, he wanted to be sure that they were walking in the right way.

Now, let's look carefully at what Paul says about the Christian walk. In **verse 1** Paul says, "***I...beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.***" That word "***vocation***" means "calling." Paul is saying that the way we live our lives should match up with our "calling" as believers. We should be conducting our lives in a way that befits our calling. Now, if our vocation be that important, then I think we'd better find out exactly *what* our calling is, don't you? Let's see what Jesus said about our calling.

Read Luke 5:29-32.

In **verse 32**, Jesus says that He came into the world to "***call***" sinners to "***repentance.***" That's a pretty clear statement, isn't it? The Christian's "***vocation***" (or "calling") is to **salvation**. Time and time again the Scriptures tell us that God *calls* sinners to repent and be saved. Christ calls sinners to "repent" (to have a change of thinking toward God). He calls sinners to agree with God that their sin has earned them eternal death in hell, and that His death on the cross for our sins, and His resurrection, has purchased eternal life for them. Christ calls men and women to turn from sin and self, turn to God, stop trusting in their own worthless good works, and trust Him alone to save them from their sins. Whenever you hear the word "vocation" (or "calling"), think "salvation." Christ has called us to *salvation*.

Now, there is something about this "calling" that you must understand. The calling to salvation is not simply an offer to miss the *penalty* of sin (which is hell), so that you can go to heaven. It is also a call to be freed from the *power of sin* so that you can now live for God. The whole reason why Christ saves us is that we might *be freed* from the tyranny of our sin nature, and receive the divine power to live righteously.

What does all this mean? It means that a person who has responded to God's calling to salvation is a person who has "repented" (changed his mind about his sin). He doesn't *want* to live in sin any more. A person who answers God's call to salvation desires to *turn his back* on

his old way of life, and embrace the new life in Christ. A person who has answered God's calling to salvation desires Christ to change him, so that he can live righteously.

Read 1 Peter 1:15 and 2:9-11.

Those who are truly saved should be walking worthy of their vocation. They should be *living* the way that God has called them to live! They should be striving to live holy lives for God. That is their calling. That is their vocation. Think of it this way. In the secular world, the word "vocation" refers to a person's line of work, right? We refer to people's work as their "vocation" because they are "called" to do the kind of work that they do. Most people go into a certain line of work because it is something that they actually *desire* to do. You would expect, for example, that a garage mechanic would love cars; that he would have a desire to know everything about cars; and that he would know how to fix them. What would you think, then, if you went into a garage and asked the mechanic to replace your cracked radiator: but instead of jumping onto the job, he lazily looked up from the telly and said, "Well, I don't really 'do' cars"? Suppose that he said, "I'm not one of those 'radical' mechanics who study car manuals and do all that dirty work of getting underneath bonnets. I'm a respectable mechanic. We don't have dirty oil stains and smell of petrol around here. Cars aren't really my thing. However, I do have a nice, clean waiting room, with magazines for you to read, and a vending machine where you can get some candy." Now, suppose, at this point, you looked at the man with confusion and said, "What do you mean that you 'don't do' cars? You're not a real mechanic: you're a fraud. Your advertising is false!" Then suppose that he angrily replied, "How dare you say I'm not a mechanic? I *said* I'm a mechanic, didn't I? I have a respectable-looking garage, don't I?"

Do you see where I'm going with this, folks? The man's claim to be a "mechanic" means nothing. His nice-looking garage means nothing. Why? Because his total lack of knowledge of cars, or even *interest* in cars, tells you that he is a fraud. Likewise, a person who is truly saved loves the Lord, loves His Word, and strives to be like Christ, because *that is his calling*. Should a person *claim* that he has been saved, yet he has no love for God, or any desire to follow God, we can assume that this person has never truly been born again.

Now, there are many people out there who are truly saved, and whose lives have *begun* to be changed by Christ; yet, somewhere along the line, they have begun to be lazy in their Christian walk, and have stopped submitting fully to Christ's yoke. They have begun to pull and tug against the yoke. They have begun to walk "*unworthy of*" their vocation. They have lost the love for God's Word that they once had. They have lost the burden for souls that they once had. They have lost the passion for serving God that they once had. (To make themselves feel better about their lack of service to God, they constantly talk about what they *used to do* for God.) A saved person who has stopped allowing God to change him and mold him is like a doctor who has a genuine vocation as a doctor, but who has begun to lose his zeal for his practice. He isn't learning any of the new innovations or medicines; and he doesn't really care that much for his patients, either. As time goes on, he becomes less and less able to help anyone. In the same way, a Christian who has stopped walking worthy of his vocation isn't much of a help to lost people, or to fellow believers.

What, then, are some ways in which Christians should be "walking"? First of all, a Christian should be walking with "*all lowness and meekness.*" (Read Ephesians 4:2 again.)

Lowliness and meekness are qualities which only God's people can truly have. Only those who have taken Christ's yoke upon them can truly walk in the path of meekness and lowliness. Now, lost people certainly can *imitate* lowliness and meekness. Many lost people produce a *counterfeit* humility in order to impress others. Many other lost people despise the qualities of meekness and lowliness, because to them, humbling themselves is unthinkable. Most lost people simply have no idea of what "lowliness" and "meekness" really are. Many lost people despise the idea of "lowliness," because to them, "lowliness" means "self-hatred" (and they certainly do not hate themselves)! Many lost people have what is *called* "self-hatred"; and some may even express their self-hatred by attempting suicide. The world's "experts" tell such people that what they need is to *love* themselves, and to have self-esteem. However, this is just the opposite of what they need. What they need is to *stop* loving themselves, and to love and esteem *Christ* instead.

You see, people's "self-hatred" isn't really self-hatred at all: it is *self-love*! Because they love themselves, they are obsessed with their own woes. They are *consumed* with self. They think that their lives are their own to keep or to take. They have no thought for the grief and bewilderment that they cause to others by the harm that they do to themselves (or that they threaten to do to themselves); and they *certainly* have no thought of (or love for) the Lord. If they did love the Lord, they would desire to *live* for him!

You see, true "lowliness of heart" is not "self-hatred": it is hatred of one's *sin*, and embracing of Christ's righteousness. "Lowliness" is not esteeming of self *at all*, but rather esteeming Christ, and others. To be "meek" is to view your life as belonging to the Lord, and not to yourself. To be lowly is to abase self, and exalt Christ. Lowliness says, "**He must increase, and I must decrease.**" Meekness says, "Not I, but Christ, be honoured, loved, exalted; not I, but Christ, be seen, be known, be heard." The very essence of "lowliness" is *submission to Christ*. The very essence of "meekness" is *submission to Christ*. A lost person cannot produce this. A lost person may have what *appears* to be humility; but he has never humbled his heart before *God*. Let's examine Jesus' call to this walk of humility; and then we'll examine Christ's *personal example* of humility.

Read Matthew 11:28-30.

Read Philippians 2:3-8.

Paul says, "**In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.**" Lowliness of mind is a complete lack of self-assertion, self-promotion, or boasting. Is this the way in which you are walking, Christian? Are you learning the Master's way? Or do you subtly craft your words in such a way as to make yourself look good to others (without *seeming* as though you're doing so)? Do you really have a *lowly* spirit? Christ did. The Creator of all things humbled Himself, took on mortal human flesh, took upon Him the form of a servant, and allowed Himself to die a criminal's death—all so that you and I might be saved. What about meekness? Do you have a *meek* spirit? Meekness means "not demanding your rights." Did Christ, the sinless Son of God, demand His rights when He was falsely accused, and mocked, and spat upon, and ripped to shreds? No, He didn't. Yet, how often do we demand our "rights"?

Does Christ's example of humility make you ashamed, Christian? It should! We should be *ashamed* of our pride; and we should desire to put pride to death every day. Our world regards pride as a virtue; but Christians should regard it as an abomination. Christians have a new calling—a calling to lowliness of mind. Christians who boast of their achievements, and don't think of others before themselves, are not walking worthy of their vocation. Their lifestyle does not match up with their calling. Christian, should there be any pride in your heart, repent of it, and ask the Lord to teach you the way of meekness. However, before you ask the Lord to teach you meekness, consider carefully what you are asking. The Lord has ways of teaching us humility which are not so pleasant. In order to teach us lowliness of mind, God must often *break* us (sometimes literally)!

Years ago, a Roman Catholic priest named Peter Bennett found true salvation in Jesus Christ, and left the Roman Catholic Church. However, before he was saved, the Lord literally had to "break" him in order to abase his pride, and to show him how worthless his religiosity and good works were. In Bennett's testimony, he tells about the event in his life which God used to begin to humble him. He said:

"...on March 16th of that year, at a...meeting, I thanked the Lord that I was such a good priest, and requested that if it were His will, that He would humble me that I might be even better. Later that same evening, I had a freak accident, splitting the back of my head and hurting my spine in several places. Without this coming close to death, I doubt that I would ever have gotten out of [my] self-satisfied state. Rote, set prayer showed its emptiness as I cried out to God in my pain."

God answered the prayer of a lost man when he dared to ask God to humble him. Through the humbling circumstance that God sent his way, Peter Bennett eventually came to Christ for salvation. Christian, if God answered a lost man's request for humility, how much more so will He answer the prayers of His children when *they* ask for humility? God may not do something as drastic as splitting our heads or hurting our spines; but should that be what it takes to teach us humility, it's worth it! When Christians stop resisting Christ's yoke, and fully submit to His way of meekness and lowliness of heart, they find that His yoke truly is easy, and His burden light. The world may regard you as a weakling because you are meek; but our Master says, "***The meek shall inherit the earth.***" Christian, are you walking worthy of your calling by having a meek and lowly spirit?

How else should Christians be walking? Paul says that they should be walking "***with longsuffering, forbearing one other in love.***" (Read verse 2 again.) This word "***longsuffering***" is used 12 times in the New Testament. It means to "endure with unruffled temper." Are you walking in the way of longsuffering, Christian? Or do you keep Christ's yoke on your neck until someone offends you, and then take off the yoke, so that you may indulge your fleshly urge to "get even"? Do you think that you have the right to lose your temper, or to "get back" at someone with a snide comment? Christ didn't. Think of His example. The Pharisees had the gall to accuse the sinless Son of God of casting out devils through the prince of the devils! Could there be a more blasphemous insult than that? Yet, Jesus didn't blow His top. He didn't lash out at them. He *never* reacted in that way. He was longsuffering even toward His worst enemies.

By the way, these qualities of lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearing were not given to the Ephesians as individuals; they were given to their whole church, *as a body*. They were to forbear *one another* in love. The “others” of whom Paul is speaking are *fellow church members*. **(Read verses 2 and 3 again.)**

This is where the application of the doctrine of the church comes in. If a church be like a **body**, in which each member must work together, then its members *must* have this attitude of lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearing toward each other. Otherwise, the body will be sick, and will not function well. If the church be like a **building**, in which each stone must be **“fitly framed together,”** then its members *must* have this attitude of lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearing, or else the building will crumble. The members shouldn’t be thinking only about their own needs; they should be thinking about the needs of others in the body. They should be edifying others in the body. If others in the congregation occasionally do or say things that rub them the wrong way, they should bear with them. Should an offence be serious enough to require confronting that person, it should still be done with a meek and humble spirit. **Galatians 6:1** says, **“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”**

The Christian walk is one of lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearing. However, Paul lists one more way in which we should walk. This last part of the Christian walk is so important, that Paul divides it into seven parts. It is...

II. The walk of Christian unity (vv. 3-4)

(Read verses 3-4.) In **verse 3**, Paul says that Christians should endeavor to **“keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”** Paul has a lot more to say about this **“unity of the Spirit.”** In **verses 4 through 6**, Paul lists *seven* unities of the Spirit.

Now, time will not permit us to examine all seven of these unities in this message. This morning, we will talk only about the first three unities. However, before we examine these unities, let’s go back and read **verse 3**. Paul says, **“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”**

Wherever the Spirit of God is in control, there is “peace.” As long as a Christian is yielding to the Spirit’s control, that Christian will have peace in his soul. Christian, do you remember the day when you were saved, and you experienced peace in your heart for the first time? But then, do you remember when you began to *lose* some of that peace because you began to yield to your flesh? *I* surely remember. The peace in my heart has been diminished countless times. Whenever I stop yielding to God, the peace is diminished. It’s not *completely* gone, because the Spirit is still with me, and in me; but it *is* diminished.

When a Christian yields completely to the Spirit, he has peace. When a Christian doesn’t yield to the Spirit, he has little peace. Well, guess what? Not only is it this way with individual believers; it is this way with the church body. Remember that a church is the Temple of the Holy Ghost. The more the individual members are yielding to the Holy Spirit, the more peace and unity there will be in the body. The less that individual members are yielding to the Holy Spirit in their own lives, the less peace and unity there will be.

Let's see how these unities work together. **(Read verses 4-6.)** Did you notice that three of these seven unities are actually the three Persons of the Godhead? Paul says that there is **“one Spirit,” “one Lord”** (Christ), and **“one God”** (the Father). The other four unities are things which *flow from* the members of the Godhead.

With this in mind, let's look again at **verse 4. (Read verse 4.)** In this verse, Paul mentions two things which flow from the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Paul says that there is **“one body,”** and **“one hope of your calling.”** And who is right in the middle of these two unities? The **“one Spirit”**—the Holy Spirit of God!

Now, maybe you're wondering, “Why does Paul say **‘one Spirit’**”? In fact, why does he say **“one Lord,”** and **“one God”**? Why does he emphasise the “oneness” of each member of the Trinity? What Paul is saying is this: If there be *disunity* in the church, it means that there are people in the body who *are not being led by the Spirit*. You see, there is only **“one Spirit”** of God; and the Spirit does not have a “split personality”! The Holy Spirit doesn't lead one group of members to believe and practice one thing, and another group to believe and practice another thing. His will is the same for all. The more the individual members of the body are allowing themselves to be led by the **“one Spirit,”** the greater unity that **“one body”** will have. They will have “one mind”—the mind of the Spirit.

Now, this doesn't mean that every single Christian is going to agree on every minute application of every single verse of Scripture. However, if every member of a local church be led by the same Holy Spirit, there won't be doctrinal divisions. As each member allows his thinking to be shaped by the Scripture, through the leading of the Spirit, there will be *true* unity. It is *not* a unity that is based upon *ignoring* doctrinal differences.

You see, that's what the modern ecumenical movement is all about—ignoring doctrine. Churches that get involved in the ecumenical movement always compromise the doctrines of Scripture, bit by bit. Too many Christians want to “get along” with all the people of all professing Christian denominations, and get involved in huge “crusades.” They want to believe that all professing Christians belong to a “big, universal Church.” However, the only way they can get along with everyone in this “big, universal church” is to abandon doctrine, until they stand for virtually nothing. Eventually, they start compromising the Gospel itself, because most professing “Christians” out there *don't believe* the true Gospel!

Brethren, here's the plain truth: **There is no such thing as a “Universal Church.”** There is only one kind of church: and that is the local, visible assembly. Redemption Baptist Church is not part of some kind of “greater church”: we *are* Christ's church, in this location. We do not seek to “fit in” to some kind of big “body of Christ” outside our assembly. We can truly sing that “We are not divided, all one body we: one in hope and doctrine, one in charity,” because we truly *are* one in hope, doctrine, and charity! We are not gently tip-toeing around, trying to figure out which doctrines we'd best not talk about, so that we don't offend people. We truly are **“one body,”** because we are all being led by the same Spirit.

Not only is this true in the matter of doctrine: it is also true in our relationships. A church's members may agree doctrinally, yet still be disunited, because there is jealousy, fighting, and "cliques" of people who mingle only with each other, and no one else. Brethren, this ought not to be! This is fleshly and carnal. A church with petty divisions is not a church that is being led by the "**one Spirit**" of God. At least part of the body is being led by a *worldly, fleshly* spirit. If they *were* being led of the Spirit, they would love each other.

How is *this* assembly's unity? Are we all being led of the Spirit? If so, then there should be a desire for oneness. There should be a desire for fellowship with one another; and in that fellowship, there should be a lot of **lowliness and meekness** being exhibited. There should be a lot of **longsuffering and forbearing** going on. How about you, Christian? Don't think about how the *other* people in the assembly are scoring; consider *yourself*. If everyone in this body were as Spirit-led as you are, would the body survive?

Now, there is one more unity that is connected with the "**one Spirit**"—and that is the "**one hope of his calling.**" What is that "**one hope**"? Let's see how Paul defined it.

Read Titus 2:12-13.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

This is the "**one hope**" of all Christians. The "**one hope**" is the hope that one day the trumpet will sound; that Jesus Christ will descend from heaven in the clouds; and that all who are in Christ (both the dead and the living) will be resurrected with glorified bodies. On that day, we will be *completely* conformed into His image. We will have bodies that have no taint of the sin nature in them. However, until that day comes, how can we be conformed together into Christ's image? Through the "one Spirit"! The Holy Spirit is the Source of our unity as we await the "**hope of his calling.**" Until the resurrection day, the Holy Spirit will always be with us, to guide us into all truth. Jesus promised, "**Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth**" (John 16:13).

Conclusion: If the members of this assembly will all take Christ's yoke upon them, Christ will teach us His way. He will teach us the way of lowliness, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearing. As we learn this way together, we will have unity; and we will continue to pull the plough in the same direction. As we do so, we will be able to keep our eyes focused on that "Blessed Hope." Meanwhile, the job that Christ has given to us will get done. The ground will get ploughed and seeded with the Word of God, and souls will be saved. Brethren, are we fulfilling this purpose? **I would also ask: Are you saved?** Has there been a time in your life when you were truly born again? You have no hope of Christ's calling until you are translated from Satan's family to God's family. If you have never been born again, I urge you to repent of your sin today, and trust Christ to save you!