

One Body, Spirit, Hope, Lord, Faith, Baptism, God
and Father (part 3)

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Ephesians 4:4-6

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Bible Text: Ephesians 4:4-6
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Please remain standing for the reading of God's word. Our Old Testament reading is Hosea 11, Hosea the 11th chapter, and before we hear God's word, let's pray.

Lord, we come to you as you alone have truth, you alone have the words of eternal life and so we pray as we come that we might come hungering for your word and that you might fill us. So Lord, open up our hearts and minds as it is read, as we consider it as it is proclaimed to us in preaching that we might enfold it and it produce fruit, some 30, some 60 some 100 fold, all to the glory of your name. We ask it in the name of Jesus and God's people said, amen.

Hosea 11,

1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.
2 The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. 3 Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. 4 I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them. 5 They shall not return to the land of Egypt, but Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. 6 The sword shall rage against their cities, consume the bars of their gates, and devour them because of their own counsels. 7 My people are bent on turning away from me, and though they call out to the Most High, he shall not raise them up at all. 8 How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. 9 I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. 10 They shall go after the LORD; he will roar like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west; 11 they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria, and I will return

them to their homes, declares the LORD. 12 Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit, but Judah still walks with God and is faithful to the Holy One.

And then our New Testament reading again is from Ephesians 4, beginning at the fourth verse.

4 There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call-- 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

The grass withers, the flower fades but the word of our God endures forever. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Please be seated.

Congregation, the past couple of Lord's days we've been looking at Ephesians 4:4-6, the seven statements with regards to the unity of the faith that we are to maintain, the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and to reinforce this reasons are given why we are to do this because there's just one body, one church, there's on Holy Spirit that is given to God's people, there is one hope that we look to and expectantly live for, the return of our Lord Jesus Christ and of his making of all things new; that there is one Lord, one Master, one Sovereign over all of heaven and earth, and especially in his church; that there is one faith, that common faith that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ as the word is proclaimed, as this Gospel is preached, as the word delineates for us what we are to believe concerning him; and then there is, as we are told here, one baptism that as we have received this sign of the admission into the covenant, that there is one way into this and it's through the Lord Jesus Christ; there is one God, we're told now in verse 6 and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. Paul has been moving along in a Trinitarian fashion. We have seen the work of God the Holy Spirit in verse 4, and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ in verse 5, and now in verse 6 the work of God the Father, and as we have been looking at this, we're reminded again that whenever we see this word "one" here it is to be driven home into our thinking and into our understanding of this, and that we embrace this truth that there is one and only one Lord, there is one and only one faith, one and only one baptism, one and only one God and Father of all.

Now as we look at the text before us, we are struck with the fact that there is one and only one God. There isn't a multiplicity of gods, they're not layers upon layers of the gods of the pagan culture, and this is especially important for the Ephesians because, yes, Ephesus is the ground zero for the worship of Artemis or Diana of the Ephesians, but also in that culture you had just the many gods, a god for this and a god for that and this circumstance and that situation, you had all of these gods to appease and all of these spirits to contend with. Now the question is asked, you know, how deeply rooted was this in the culture? Well, some people, this was a continual reality that they were facing, and others perhaps had been more philosophical about this and realized the folly of this, but the fact is that they were not worshipers of the one and only one God; that they were not

worshippers of the one and one true God; that when it came to this Christianity thing, when it came to this one faith that is once for all delivered to the saints, this one Lord, this one Jesus Christ that they are to confess, that this was not one among many. In some cultures you'd go into perhaps into Japan or into Southeast Asia and other places, where there is a multiplicity of gods that one might serve and you introduced this Jesus and sometimes you encountered this, "Oh yes, I'll embrace this Jesus," but it is not to the exclusivity of all other gods, it is an adding him into the mix. "Oh, one more to put on the shelf, as it were, one more god to appease. I kind of like this Jesus character," and so whenever missionaries enter into those particular cultures, there has to be that declaration, "There is one and only one God and he must be worshiped exclusively. You cannot mix and match. You cannot have your own designer religion and take a little bit of Jesus here and a little bit of that god there, and this particular philosophy. It is exclusive. There is one and only one Lord, one and only one God and Father of all." So therefore this is a declaration, it's a shot across the bow of every culture, of every society, of every age that there is one and only one God and the question that is implied in this, what are you going to do with this God? How are you going to relate to this God? And that you must serve him.

Then we're told there's one and only one Father. Now this is a radical concept, that there is one and only one Father and that God exists as Father not in the sense that he is the Creator of all things, in that sense he has a fatherly-ness towards all of his created order, but what we're talking about here is that he is Father in the salvation sense; that he is that one that we have this blessing in Christ Jesus; and that his kindness and his goodness and his mercy is demonstrated to us and that we might approach him. This, as I said, was a radical concept because to the Jews they believed in this exclusive relationship that they had with God. Now, yes, they believed that God was indeed over all of the nations and tribes and tongues and peoples, but they especially had this relationship with him and indeed they did. They had the covenant. They had all these blessings. But even then among them there was not that clearer sense and perhaps a comfortableness and an attractiveness to approaching God as Father. That was not as, there was, yes, there's God of wrath, a God of might, a God of power, a God of love, yes, and of grace and mercy, but we do find from time to time throughout the Old Testament these reminders that he is indeed a gracious Father. You find this through the Psalms, in the passage that we read here in Hosea of God being Father to his people and of his love and his compassion, and that is what the Holy Spirit is driving home through Hosea here, of this compassion and grace of God towards his people. But here this statement from the Apostle Paul is one that is staggering, that the Gentile is on the same footing with the Jew before this God and may appeal to him as a gracious Father, and so he is that one and only one God, and one and only one Father, and then we're told here of all who is over all and through all and in all. Now whenever we see a word repeated for us as we've seen seven times now this "one and only one God," and "one and only one Father," and so forth, we have here the word "all," exclusive, inclusive all covering.

Now the question we ask here, it's not brought up to us here in the language before us, is that God is above all and through all and in all things, or is he above all and through all and in all men, because we're not given a specific reference here and either meaning

applies sufficiently well in this, that God is indeed omnipresent, that he is everywhere all at once, and so therefore we can say that he's in all and through all and so forth, but God the Father is not just over the created order, the focus of the apostle here in Ephesians 4 is with regards to the church, that he is Father and through all and as God he is in all. By his Spirit, our heavenly Father, our God so infuses and diffuses and completely envelops and enwraps and is through all and is indeed present in his church, spreading himself throughout all the members of the church, all the parts, embracing all in his love and in his care and his compassion and in his mercy. He governs it. He shows to it his grace, that he is more oft in that direction and less over here? No, he is everywhere in his church all at once; that he is especially pouring out his grace and mercy on each and every individual, each and every member, each and every part; that he is there.

He is transcendent. We find this, that he is over all and through all. As one commentator wrote: the great God is high over all, robed in unsurpassible glory. There he is and can be, there is and can be no superior, no coordinate sovereignty, that is, there's no one else kind of as co-ruler with him. The universe no less than the church lies beneath and far beneath his throne and the jurisdiction of that throne high and lifted up is paramount and unchallenged. We see this mentioned for us already in Ephesians 1. You remember that this glorious mighty power that's at work in us who believe, that same power that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come, and he put all things under his feet and gave them as head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

But then not only is this God transcendent over all things but he is also eminent. He is that God who is through all and in all. Just as the psalmist says in Psalm 139,

7 Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! 9 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," 12 even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

Children, if you remember in your Catechism, I want to ask you the question: where is God? And the answer is: God is everywhere. That's right. So when you turn out the lights at night, mom and dad turn that off, is God there? Can you see him? No, he doesn't have a body like men but he's there, isn't he? He is there. He is everywhere all at once. If you are there at the hospital and you are receiving that awful news concerning your wife or your husband, where is God? Children, what is the answer? God is everywhere. He is there and he is not silent. He is there, congregation. He is there, Christian. He is this God who is sovereign over all.

As Isaiah 66:1-2 tell us,

1 ... Heaven is my throne [God says], and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?
2 All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

This is where he especially dwells; he is throughout all his church but those who are humble and contrite in spirit and who tremble at his word.

Now notice here this all, all without exception because this God, this Father is transcendent and eminent, he is with his church wherever it is found; that he is that one who gives it salvation; that he is that one who gives it unity; he is that one who is with them and gives to us that sense of his presence. He is that one who reminds us, "Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you." He is that one who is at work in us with those groans which cannot be uttered whereby we cry, "Abba, Father!" Father, and that word "Abba" there in Aramaic is daddy. That we are going to him. This is our Father, that there is one God and Father.

Now by way of doctrine this morning, I want you to see and you know this, but it's always good to be reminded of this, the Fatherhood of God is of incomparable blessing to the Christian. If we are to say and as Paul was saying in his day and age that there's only one and only one God, to write this in the world of the Greeks and the Romans would appear to be intolerant and to this day if we were to proclaim the exclusivity of Christ, that there is only one way appointed to heaven, there is only one way and that is in the Lord Jesus Christ, increasingly we'll fear that we are intolerant of other people's gods; that our culture today is, "Look, you may worship the god of your choice, just don't impose that god on me. Don't go around saying the exclusivity of this God because that's going to make me upset." But the basic confession of God's people from Deuteronomy 6 is, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is," what? "One."

There is only one God and we have to get this into our thinking. We have to work this into our daily profession of our faith as well because God is one. There's only one God and everything else is a lie. Everything else is not the one and only one God and because we are called to be like this God, we too must be one. There must be that continual awareness that our unity as a congregation, our unity with the body of Christ centers on him; that it centers upon him, it isn't about us, it is always about him. It never has been about us, it never will be about us, it is all about our Lord Jesus Christ, it is all about this one God and Father, all about this one Holy Spirit. This God is indeed that Father to everyone whom he has birthed from above. As John 1 puts it, "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."

So therefore if we have this one Father, then we if we are in Christ Jesus, if we have this one Father, then we are also one as brothers and sisters under this heavenly Father. He is that one whom we boast in, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named;

that we are gathered together as his people and to his family and therefore have all the benefits and blessings and responsibilities and requirements as his children. Now if you come from a wretched family background, the whole concept of family to you may be, "Ah, you know, family has always been one of those things that has been a trouble to me." But here you've been incorporated into a family under a heavenly Father who loves you with an everlasting love, who has loved you with such love that he has given his one and only Son, his one unique Son, his only begotten Son to come and to lay down his life for you. And yes, he has placed you into his family and this family, yeah, well, we look at our faults, we look at our foibles, we look at our failings, we look at our sins and so forth and, yes, we horribly fall short of the family name, but then let's keep looking to that one from whom we derive our name, even our heavenly Father and there we begin to see that, yes, he is at work shaping us and molding us and making us after his own dear Son. You see, being part of God's family can be messy. We all want everything nice and neat and packaged thing that there's not any of the loose ends hanging out, there's none of the uncomfortableness, there's none of the fact that we may rub each other the wrong way from time to time, but that's not how it is. We are under our Father and our Father graciously is at work chastening us and correcting us and shaping us and making us like his own dear Son.

I heard a preacher this week talk about the fact that, you know, and he was inviting people to his church, I was listening to him on the radio and he says, "Look, you know, you might have been hurt in church before and say, 'I don't know about that. I don't know if I want to go there and to be in a church again. I've been there. I've been hurt.'" And his point was Jesus knows exactly what it's like to be hurt by the church. He was put to death by the church. He was condemned by the church and he lay down his life for the church.

This is that Father who has sent his Son who has so loved us that we come and gather together and we find our respite in him, we find our help in the name of the Lord; that we find our help in this Father. So as we understand that this is his Father to whom we can go and to lay out our prayers and our woes and our sorrows, that he hears and he understands, that his heart is moved in compassion towards us as his children and there is one and only one Father and what a Father we have.

Now by way of application, because we have this heavenly Father, one Father, we have a commitment to this unity of the faith. We've talked already about the necessity, the imperative here, this command that is laid upon us that we are to do everything to give of ourselves, to throw ourselves into this work of obtaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Our prayer, the prayer of our Lord Jesus in John 17:11, "I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one." Jesus and the Father are one. He said, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father. The work that I do is the Father's work. As the Son glorifies the Father, so I glorify my Father. This is that work that he has come to do." In that same way, if we have him as our Father, we are to be united in him; that we live in such a way that we understand that this God is transcendent over everything, that there's nothing left in this universe, there's nothing in

this universe that is ever outside the bounds of his sovereignty and of his direct attention, and of his complete care and keeping.

There is, as R. C. Sproul would say, no maverick molecule out there. There's nothing out there that is beyond the scope of his rule and his control and his power, and we think of that of God's great transcendent power of his almightiness of God and his rule and control of all of his creatures and all their activities and his marvelous providence, but believer, I want you to understand this as well, that this is your Father who is also holding the reigns of the universe. This is your Father who is so ordaining all things after the counsel of his will. It is your Father who is there working all things for good to those who love him, who are the called according to his purpose; that you would see that this is your Father who is over all and realize that this is not something impersonal, that when we talk about predestination and fore-ordination and God's sovereignty over all things and God's providence over all things, it is not some remote distant God but this is your Father who loves you and is bending and shaping and maneuvering and working all things for his name's sake and especially you who bear his name and for whose sake the Lord Jesus lay down his life and has been raised from the dead for our justification.

And knowing this fact, then, that this God is over all, but then he is in all and through all; that he is at work in every one of our circumstances, especially so here in Ephesians 4 in the context of the church; that we realize and must understand that everything is transpiring before the eyes of our Father. How many of us dare not mess around in front of our fathers? We did not choose to be our baddest, our worst, in his presence. How many of us remembered, "Just wait until your father gets home"? And father got home. Oh man, I'm having flashbacks.

Brothers and sisters, especially in the church, we're coram Deo, as R. C. Sproul would put it, we are in the presence of God, we're in the presence of our Father who sees, who hears, who knows our struggles for domination, for ascendancy, to be top dog. Cut it out. Our Father is there and he sees. When we disagree with our brethren, we can't claim any greater measure of the Father's love for us than for them, even if we happen to be more correct than our erring brothers. There can never, there should never be this sense of superiority that we have. Why? Because our Father loves them and he loves us and he doesn't love us more than he loves them. He has shown that equality of his love in that his Son died for us all in his church. We're bound together by the same Holy Spirit. No one of us could ever be classified as second class children.

If we take this reality seriously, then, then we are going to work to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We'll have this consciousness that we are living in the presence of our Father. Now not to kind of keep our noses clean and to behave ourselves just because we're afraid we're gonna get whacked by a father, although there is that healthy sense of the fact that he chastens those whom he loves, but there is also should be welling up within us the sense of gratitude. As Mike had been preaching Sunday evening, the reality of our guilt and of God's grace and then that should elicit the response of what, congregation? What's the third "g"? Gratitude. Gratitude to him. So therefore in gratitude to God, we are to live out our lives together as his church, as his body, as believers in our

own homes as we represent him in the workplace, understanding that we are living for this Father; that we are committed to doing his work, committed to doing his will as our brother Jesus, our elder brother Jesus has done.

Now there is, we're told here, one Father but also notice here there is one God and I want to ask you today: who is your God? If you do not have this God, if you do not have this God as Paul by the Spirit writes and describes him, I want to put before you this morning the God that you have is that one who looks back at you from the bathroom mirror. Oh, you might call him something else, you might acknowledge something else as your God but in reality drilling down to the truth, you probably are your own god. You probably think of yourself as more important than anyone else. Are you self-directed? Are you full of self-interest? Are your thoughts of your self-sufficiency in life? Do you have a problem with self-centeredness and self-indulgence? Well, the Bible describes folks like this, this way in Romans 1:25, "they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator." What is that great lie? The great lie is that you can get along without this God, without this God of the Scriptures. If you reject this God, you turn your back on your Creator and you fail to see yourself as his creature, and when you do this, you worship and you serve yourself, a creature, a mere creature rather than the true God, the Creator.

You become your own god but your Creator says to you, "You shall have no other gods before me." If you violate this very first of the commandments of God, you break his law and you sin and the testimony of God through his word in 1 John 3:4 says, "Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness." In addition to that, if you persist in a self-serving life and you continue to reject your Creator, you face judgment. As Matthew 16:25 says whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, and on the day of judgment you will hear that awful word, "I never knew you. Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness."

So then, what do you need to do? What is that alternative to turn away from that wrath of God which is to come? You see, that's part of the work of the preaching of the Gospel, that we contend and plead with you with everything that is within us that you would flee from this wrath that is to come. The alternative is simple, you need to turn from your self-centeredness, your self-indulgence and you need to repent of these sins of self-worship and of self-service and now is the acceptable time to do this. Mark 1:15 says, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." And as Acts 3:19 says, "Repent therefore, and return, that your sins may be wiped away." You need to trust in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only adequate payment for the penalty due you for your sin of self-worship. 1 Peter 3:18 says Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust in order that he might bring us to God.

You need to know before the living God and to know that indeed that you must bow and you must bow before him and commit your life to him and to his service. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." If you are convinced of your own sin, if you're convinced that you have not been worshipping this

one God who is above all and through all and in all, this God to whom you must appear and give account, this God who has made you and you know deep down in your heart of hearts that you must serve him, and yet you in your rebellion have turned away from him and that you stand under his just condemnation and wrath, hear his mercies to you, "Turn unto me, all the ends of the earth, and be saved." This is this God that you must worship. This is this God before whom you must bow. This is this God whom you must worship and you will receive him not only as God and Sovereign but as Father and he will delight over you in his love, and he will give you exceeding abundantly more than you could hope or even ask in his Son Jesus.

Let us pray together.

Father, for those who are convinced of their own sin, I pray that they might come before you and pray, "I recognize my sin of self-worship and I repent of that sin and all other known sins against you. I believe that Christ died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins and I believe that he rose again from the dead to give me new life and I commit my life to following you. Please forgive me and give me the new life I need." In the name of Jesus, we ask and God's people said, amen.