

# The Exhortation to Unity, p. 1

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**Bible Text:** Ephesians 4:1-3  
**Preached on:** Sunday, September 17, 2017

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Go to Ephesians. I actually started Ephesians thinking I would preach a message or two or three or four and I can't stop. So we've come to chapter 4 and when you come to chapter 4, the scholars would say here you finally come to the practical exhortation part of Ephesians and I know exactly why they wait until chapter 4 because this is where he actually speaks to them directly in an exhortation but, however, in the previous chapter, he outlaid an extensive description of his own call into the ministry and how God uses men called to the ministry and we were able to glean great truths about Gospel ministry and men called to the Gospel ministry. And then at the end of chapter 1 and at the end of chapter 3, he outlines how he prays for the church at Ephesus and we were able to glean some rich application for our own prayer lives, as a matter of fact, wonderful guidelines for our prayer lives. So there is lots of application coming out already but technically chapter 4 is where he actually speaks to the church and says, "Okay, do this. Be this. Do that." Alright?

Let's look at it together. Ephesians 4. I'm going to read verses 1 through 3 and we'll only really deal with verse 1 tonight. Ephesians 4:1, Paul says,

1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, [now he amplifies what specifically he wants them to work on] 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love [and here's the crux of the whole matter], 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

So when Paul finally gets to the direct exhortations that he wants to give the local church at Ephesus and God is giving us as a local church, he goes right to the unity of the church. The oneness. The way we get along with each other.

Now he says something interesting. I'll just throw this out and then get to verse 1. In verse 3, he talks about preserving the unity of the Spirit. That is so radically essential. We do not have a unity whereby we take our natural fallen ability and grit our teeth and try to tough it out and get along with each other and get over hurts and offenses and whatever else might cause disunity in the church. No, you have to be a Spirit-reborn person, truly regenerated of the Spirit, a true born again child of God, then you can work to preserve

the unity of the Spirit because it's a unity that's beyond us, it's a unity that comes from outside of us and you only get the capacity, the potential to walk in this kind of spiritual unity if you're born of the Spirit. Does that make sense to you?

And so that's the preference and that's why we have so much difficulty in the churches we mentor and the pastors we mentor with unity and oneness in cooperation, it's because often – not often, almost without exception talking to a pastor that takes over an existing church, I have to tell him, "Well, you've got a congregation and you are to preach the word in the power of the Spirit until you find a church in there somewhere." Are you hearing me? Then what I mean by that, those that are truly born again and can even receive the truth you're preaching. Expect a lot of Baptist and evangelical goats to resist true Bible preaching and certainly true Bible polity, living out the methodologies the Bible prescribes for us to live out.

So that's the foundation stone. Now, once again generally speaking, in chapters 1 through 3 we have doctrine, these are the great doctrines of our salvation; and then in chapters 4 through 6, you have the direct application or exhortations. So Paul instructed in chapters 1 through 3, he gave us some intercession he does for the churches at the end of chapter 1, the end of chapter 3, and now we come to chapter 4 and he gives us this direct exhortation. Of course, by the way this flows and this is common throughout, I guess all the epistles, I don't know if I can say that accurately, but practically all the epistles, that you have the doctrinal foundation that speaks to how God changes us through sovereign grace and then you have how we're supposed to live because of that change and – listen to me – always, always the exhortation of how to live is in the context and within the environs and inter-relationship of a local body of believers. The Bible is not a book written to Christians as to how to live a better life, it's a book written to churches about how to live as a family of God together. You see, everything the Bible writes about your personal walk, your marriage, your work life etc., is always written to you as an extension of your life as a part of the body of Christ. You never ever ever can separate your Christianity from a local church. If you do, it's non-biblical Christianity. Are you hearing me?

So he's writing to a church and when he gets to the direct exhortation section beginning in chapter 4, he goes right to church unity first. Why is that, you think? Because nothing puts God's glory in the present world on the line as the church being a true church, a church acting like a true church, functioning in the unity of the Spirit and the love God has given us for each other. So doctrine, Paul is showing us, must produce practical output. In other words, if the Holy Spirit has changed your heart and has impacted your heart, there will be a corresponding growth in sanctification or an output of application.

Now to get the doctrinal foundation stone just kind of stirred up afresh in your thinking of what Paul, this great foundation he's already laid for them, in chapter 1 and I'm just going to run through this: he's chosen us before the foundation of the world; he's chosen us to be holy and blameless before him in love; he's predestined us to adoption as sons; he's redeemed us by his blood; he's forgiven us of all our transgressions; in riches of grace, he's lavished all of this upon us; in Christ we became believers; we were sealed by the

Holy Spirit; we were made alive while we were even dead in trespasses and sins; we've been raised up and seated with Christ in heavenly places; we are indeed his workmanship, he says; we've been brought near to God by the blood of Christ; Christ is our peace; he's abolished the enmity that was between us and God; he's reconciled us from all of our former enemies, that means the deity that we were are enmity with when we became believers; we have now free access to God; we've been made citizens of God's household; we are now the dwellingplace of the Holy Spirit; we are fellow heirs of Christ and fellow members of the body of Christ and now we have bold and confident access to God. Therefore based on those few little things, get along with each other. Therefore love each other. Therefore get over your little trifling offenses and what bothers you and what offends you and just get over it and love each other anyway. That's what he's getting to here. That's why he does it this way. So he says, "All of this glorious truth of our salvation through the sovereign grace of God now leads us to this point of application." So after this marvelous outline of doctrine, the foundation stone has been set for us to build a house of application and the first thing he talks about, of course again, is church unity.

Now two thoughts here. We'll not be long. I. Unity is encouraged by Paul's example of suffering. He's already said this once but again in chapter 4 he says, look at it, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you." He's using that. He said, "I want you to know I'm in prison for the sake of the church and the glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Can you guys just purpose to get along together? I'm willing to go to prison for the church, would you just be willing to forgive each other and love each other for the sake of the church and the witness of the church in the world?"

And when Paul says he's the prisoner of the Lord, it's very likely this was his first Roman imprisonment he's talking about so he's literally writing to them from a Roman prison cell. But he means more than that, I'm convinced, he means he's a prisoner of both the Lord of Rome, and I might even add a third thing, of the Lord's orders. "I am imprisoned to what Christ," or you might say, "to Christ himself and I'm imprisoned to the will of Christ for my life and whatever he wants me to be and whatever he wants me to do. I'm bound to Christ by chains of love. I'm bound to a prison cell out of loyalty to Christ's cause. Now if I'm willing to go to prison for his cause, you at least be willing to live together in forgiveness and lovingkindness and overlooking offenses one toward another."

I remember being in London and we were in Bedford and I don't know geographically exactly where Bedford is, if you'd technically call it a part of London. I supposed it would be something of a suburb of London. But in Bedford was where John Bunyan, author of "Pilgrim's Progress," the Baptist preacher, was imprisoned because he was not part of the Church of England, the Anglican Church, and they didn't like him preaching a Gospel outside of the state church. In other words, you can't go around telling people they can be God's children if they're not part of our state church. And so they locked John Bunyan in the Bedford jail from 1660 to 1672. I saw the plaque in the sidewalk where the Bedford jail was. I got to stand in the pulpit that he preached from and, you know, it

helps you to go back and look at your forefathers in the faith who were courageous and bold and unflinching.

But the story is told that while John Bunyan was in prison, his little baby girl, I don't know, she was just pre-teen, came to her daddy one day to visit him in prison all excited and jumping up and down, "Daddy, daddy, daddy, they've told me that if you will agree to quit preaching the Gospel, they'll let you out." John Bunyan said, "Darling, I cannot do that." And he stayed in jail. John Bunyan was saying, "I'm willing to go to prison for this Gospel." Paul said, "I'm willing to be imprisoned for this Gospel. Would you be willing to overlook offenses? Forgive a brother or sister? Maybe she's being ornery, maybe she doesn't deserve it, but God deserves it. Just get over it and get along. Trust the Holy Spirit to bring them to conviction later on perhaps." Oh, that professing believers would walk in this truth.

You know, we've just been studying peacemaking principles from the word of God in small groups and I thought how fitting that the Providence of God after my trips and things, I come back to Ephesians and, boom, that's what we're on. And as far as I know and some of you may be keeping some secrets and fighting like cats out there somewhere but I don't know of anybody in our church that's at odds with other folks. Now we get our feelings hurt and we get a little aggravated but you seem to be a people and I mean this genuinely as your pastor, you seem to be a people that just get over it and go on for God and that's basically what Paul is saying we ought to do and I commend you for having that kind of heart and having that kind of maturity. And I know many of you and I mean many, I'm not talking about just the elders, we have so very many good men in this church and ladies, of course, who are not elders and you just handle yourselves well. How often I hear a report that somebody gets a little bit off on this, a little off on that, and some brother or sister will go to them and say, "Look, we just don't need to make that a big deal. Let's go on and love the Lord together. Let's get over that." And they get over it and it's over and that's the way we ought to help each other, with kindness and sweetness and compassion but not letting it hurt the unity of the church. That's what's so important.

Now I'll elaborate on this further later but unfortunately in so many Baptist and evangelical churches, what they call the unity in the church is really a toleration of flesh. It's not unity of the Spirit, it's learning to accommodate sin so that we can look like we have a unity but it's not a true unity at all. In other words, we have to deal with unrepented of sin even though from a carnal viewpoint it might look like that's causing a problem, that's actually curing a problem because as long as there's unrepented of sin, the Spirit is quenched and the Spirit is not having his way so that's not unity of the Spirit. We'll get to maybe more of that as we develop verses 1 through 3 as we go along.

So here the Apostle Paul is using his imprisonment there in Rome as a motivation for the church at Ephesus and a motivation for us to go on for God and be peacemakers, if you will, in the church. Paul gladly wore the chains of prison for Christ's sake so you can suffer a little if you've been wrongly treated for Christ's sake. Charles Hodge, the Presbyterian theologian, said, "He glories in his chains more than a king in his diadem."

He glories that he gets to suffer in prison for the sake of the Gospel and the sake of the church.

In verse 1, he uses a phrase there, the New American Standard uses the word "I implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you've been called." The imploring there could actually be translated, "I beg you. I'm in prison for the Gospel and I'm asking you, the local church, I beg you do this." The power in that. There is a motivation in that. So maintaining the unity of the church family requires that we have an attitude of putting others first. It requires us to sometimes be willing to suffer. It requires us to sometimes be willing to sacrifice. And again, I don't see this spirit but if you had a spirit of folks who are always going around measuring what other folks do compared to what they do, "Well, he don't do enough or she don't do enough. He may not give enough." Or whatever. Don't worry about it. Do what God wants you to do. Just be faithful. Preserve the unity of the Spirit. So Paul is using his position to motivate them or his situation, rather, to motivate them, and if Paul could rejoice in prison for Christ, then surely I can forgive others and maintain a oneness and unity in his local church. So he uses his situation there of imprisonment to challenge and motivate them.

Secondly, notice he tells them that walking worthily of our calling mandates that we maintain unity in the church. You've been called to be something that mandates you walk in a certain way. So many organizations, maybe athletic teams or whatever, that you might be a part of and your coach or the leader might say, "Look, when you became a part of us, we expected this level of conduct. We expected this kind of character out of you." That's where Paul is. When you became a called one of God, a saved one, one of God's special children through the merits of the blood and the sacrifice of his Son, that's a high calling. You can't act like other folks act. You can't be as petty as other folks might be petty. You can't be about defending your rights the way other folks go around "defending their rights." You've got a higher calling than that.

He said to walk in a manner, there, verse 1, worthy of that calling. I think one of the things we need to say here is we ought to live a life worthy of our new position in Christ. Your practice must equal the weight of your doctrine. Now if you think about, remember all those things I listed a while ago? It was 21 separate statements about the glorious doctrinal truth about our salvation, now he says walk in a way that shows that you esteem that and you're grateful for that and you are, indeed, the recipient of that.

So you must give equal weight to doctrine and to practice. There are those sometimes who say they love doctrine but they never put much application to it. It's one of the things I'm troubled with about the modern reformation in the church. I'm thankful for return to good Baptist or good Bible doctrine; I hope it's always Baptist doctrine but good Bible doctrine about the things like: what is evangelism; what is the true Gospel; what is true conversion? But I find too many people that always want to articulate, intellectually study, discuss, study systematic theologies, go to conferences, but they don't want to work very hard at the application of church life because that's messy and hard, that's difficult. Sheep can be difficult at times. It's a lot easier just to write blogs and go to conferences or write books and be a good speaker about it.

So we don't want to just have a love for sound doctrine but not a love for application. We must not crave application also and neglect doctrine. Both are in error. Notice Paul, three chapters, weighty doctrine, now several more chapters, weighty application. He balances well. Doctrine without practice or application leads to cold, dry, even bitter orthodoxy, and practice or application without doctrine leads to only emotionalism. Emotionalism or experientialism means experience is the final authority. Somebody will say, "Well, I feel this so strongly! Oh, my heart was just so moved and I feel we must do this for Christ!" Well, what does the book say? We've got to always check your emotions, my emotions, by this book. So emotions are important but they always follow truth and must be made to follow truth.

I wrote this down some years ago: religious feelings, emotions you might say, without the guardrails of doctrine are prone to run off the road of truth and you can really get stuck in the ditch of emotionalism. Let me say that again: religious feelings or emotions without the guardrails of Bible doctrine, let's say, are prone to run off the road of truth and then you can really get stuck in a ditch of emotionalism. How often have you seen or heard or experienced somebody talking about a revival or a move of God or the Spirit was moving in something and you hear very little about scriptural truth but a whole lot about the emotions of the moment in the church service?

We had a man who was a member of our church many years ago and he has since had some struggles in his life and all and my heart goes out to him, but he said something real important. He got converted out of a rock-n-roll band and a church nearby wanted him to come and play and give a testimony and they were really into a big revved up music service and he sang for them and played for them and they had an exciting – nothing wrong with that – had an exciting service and at the end of the service, people began to be "slain in the Spirit." Have you heard of that? I've seen Benny Hinn take his coat and just slay thousands at one time. He'd just swing his coat and thousands of people would fall over. Now, I'm not thinking that anything happened from God but people did seem like something happened.

But anyway, that service was over and he said, "These people were laying all over the floor," now this is a brand new Christian and he had never seen anything like this, and some of them were convulsing kind of like the Spirit was doing stuff in them. Then he said, "All of a sudden they stopped, sang two verses and everybody went to the fellowship hall and ate hot dogs." He said, "It was just...I mean, in five minutes." And I said, "Well, if you saw all of that, how did you decide, you know...." I don't think and I'm not trying to judge all those people, I'm just saying this is what he said and I generally agree. He said, "If God's Spirit were moving that deeply in people's hearts, you couldn't just get up and eat a hot dog five minutes later." That's a 100% true experiential statement. But that's what happens when you let experience be the guide instead of truth.

I don't find enough in Scripture for me to turn this service over to people having convulsions in the aisle. I don't find enough in the book for that. Now look, I'll take a, "Hallelujah!" every now and then. I'll take a hearty, "Amen!" every now and then. I'll

take a, "Praise God!" every now and then. I'll take weeping and shouting. I'm okay with all of that but also I'll take a quiet broken weeping before God too. As a matter of fact, some of the greatest moves of the Spirit I think I've ever seen, there was almost a total hush. Now there can be a shouting and praising too. I'm not saying which one has it. Here's what I am saying and here's what Paul is saying by giving us this sound doctrine and then experiential application: you've got to make sure you have the guardrails of truth for emotional experiences or you will run off the road of truth and find yourself stuck in a ditch of emotionalism. And a lot of times, pastors and, ladies, I'm not down on women, don't misunderstand that, but women are more emotional. God made women that way. And I've seen pastors that were enslaved to some emotional, strong-willed women. They were just very outspoken and they were very loud and they were very, "God's doing this and God's doing that and God's on me and God's telling me this and that." What the pastor needs to do is say, "Well, when I find it in the book, we'll do it." If somebody in the church felt like they had a word from the Spirit or a word of knowledge or a word of tongues, the elders would get, 2 or 3 of them would get together and hear what they feel like God was telling them and then we would pass judgment on whether or not it is something God wants to share with the church. What are we saying? Check it by the truth. Check it by the truth.

Well anyway, I'm kind of getting off track a little bit here but there is a lot to say about emotionalism and not letting that be the final authority, but it has to be doctrine with experience, doctrine with application, a proper balance. Here's one way to look at it: we want to understand doctrine with the mind, we want to rejoice over that doctrine with the emotions, and we want to apply that doctrine with the will. Understand it with the mind. Rejoice over it with the emotions. And apply it with the will. John Owen, the Puritan, wrote, "Pour your emotions into the mold created by sound doctrine." Isn't that good?

All this silly nonsense about, "Well, you know, I've fallen out of love with my wife. Well, I've fallen out of love. I just don't love him anymore." So? You made a commitment. This isn't about your emotions, it's about truth, and you need to pray that God gives you some emotions to back up the truth. Can I get an amen right there? "I don't feel like I love my parents anymore." I don't care. God says to submit to your parents and honor them. You keep submitting and honoring them, you'll begin to love them more. You love your wife the way you're supposed to and you'll start feeling love for her more. You love and honor and submit to your husband, ladies, the way you're supposed to, you'll start feeling more honor and more love for him. Have you learned that emotions follow commitments to truth? It's almost always in that order.

Isn't that a great way to live? Isn't that simple? That's just a great way to live. I like what Jay Adams says about couples. They say, "Well, I just don't, you know, they're just extraordinarily difficult and mean and unkind." And the Bible says to love your enemies so love them like an enemy for a while if that's where you are. You made a vow. You made a commitment. Don't follow your emotions, follow truth. Let your emotions catch up with truth and with your convictions. This is so easy. Just basic stuff. It's easy. Now, I'm not saying it's easy to live out sometimes, we all struggle, but we all have to live it out.

Now, he continues on and he says, "I want you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling." I think the King James says "worthy of the vocation." That's an okay translation, I think, but "vocation" more has the idea of what you've chosen. If you just read it that way with that word in today's context, "walk worthy of what you've chosen to be and do," that's not what he's saying. He's saying, "walk worthy of those 21 sovereign grace doctrines that made you what you are in Christ, not what you chose to be in Christ." He called you to something worthy and high and glorious. You didn't do it, he did it. You didn't choose him, he chose you. You didn't call God, God called you. You didn't predestine you, God predestined you. You didn't elect you, God elected you. You didn't foreknow you from the foundation of the world, God foreknew you from the foundation of the world. Here's the point: that's glorious; that's of God; that's a divine power; that's a divine work. You're on a higher level than the rest of the world so, church, live like it. Walk worthy of that calling.

The calling has the same idea, ekklesia, of the church family as a family of called out ones, and that's a great responsibility churches have is to make sure those that are added are God's called out ones, true born again believers in Jesus Christ, because they'll come in and they don't get the book like we get it; they don't have the Spirit; they're not enabled to.

So all of this connects back to those glorious truths. Just looking at it real quick, look at chapter 1, verses 4 and 5, and I'm talking about us being the called ones so we ought to live on a higher plane, "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love," verse 5, "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will." I love that phrase "according to the kind intention," you could say the kind purpose of his will, you could say, "Well, why did God do that? Why did he choose before the foundation of the world? Why did he choose before the foundation of the world to make us holy and blameless before him in love? Why did he predestine us to adoption?" Because he just wanted to. It was the kind purpose of his will to do that.

Now here's the thing: if you don't submit to sovereign grace, you don't get any of the application if you don't get chapter 4, verse 1, if you don't get sovereign grace. You've got to swallow your pride and die before a sovereign God who called you to himself for salvation and say, "I'm so grateful for that. I'm so humbled by that. I'm so obligated. I have such a duty now back to him because of that." So Paul says, "Well, you ought to realize that. You ought to feel that way." And therefore you ought to walk in this forbearing, longsuffering, forgiving, tolerating, that's not a good word, accommodating maybe one another in the church to keep this unity because you're called to a higher level than the world.

So as the special, unique, called out ones of God, and I want to add this too: you cannot, don't do it, you'll make me mad if you do this, you cannot say, "I'm called to salvation but not called to local church life." Let me say that again: you cannot say, "I'm called to salvation but not called to local church life." You don't get to do that. You didn't get to be

born into a family and not be a child in that family. You don't get to be born into the kingdom of God without also being born into the family of God. The calling includes your unity, your cooperation, your service, your belonging. By the way, it's not what church you attend. That's not a good way to say it. "What church do you attend?" What does he mean? You can't attend a church. You can't attend a church, you can attend a church meeting. It's not what church do you attend, it's where do you belong. Where do you belong? Nobody asks me, "What marriage do you attend?" No, I belong to one woman and she belongs to me and it's done. When you're called to salvation, you're called to local church life and if you don't get that, you're not going to understand the New Testament because it's always assuming that. Everything, the purposes and the glory of God are centered in the local church. There is no Lone Ranger Christianity. No such thing.

1 John 3:16 reminds us, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." It has to mean the brethren of the local church. You see, when he says, "we ought to lay down our lives," it means we owe an obligation because of this glorious calling we have of sovereign grace. The Christian must strive with suffering sometimes, with sacrifice if necessary, to preserve the unity of Christ's church and if we walk worthy of our calling, we will walk in that type of manner.

Two quick closing thoughts. 1. Try to cultivate memories of former sacrificial servants of the Lord. Cultivate memories. Read biographies of some great servants of the Lord who suffered for the sake of the Gospel; who died to themselves. I was so greatly helped being a pastor and especially in those early years when there was severe and difficult warfare in our church family, and I would read of Charles Simeon. Remember Charles Simeon? I've mentioned him many times. He pastored the church there in Cambridge right at Cambridge University, and he was a staunch Bible believing, evangelical pastor and the Church of England didn't like those kind of guys, so he was a rogue, if you will, in their system and he was hated. That was back in the days when the people owned their pews and every pew had a door and a lock on it. Now I don't know where they got that from but that's what they did. And they literally, all the families would lock their pews and not show up at church. If anybody came to hear Charles Simeon preach, they had to stand in the aisles or sit in the aisles and hear him preach. And that's just one of many things he endured and I remember reading about Charles Simeon and he said somebody asked him one time...I understand that went on for 12 years. Twelve years people came to church and the pews were locked. He just kept preaching. He kept studying and preaching to whoever was there.

Somebody asked him, "How did you endure that, Charles?" And he said, "Well, you know, if I'm going through a thick hedge, if I get my head and my shoulders through, I figure the rest of me is going to get through too." And so his point was, "I've gotten part of the way through, I figure I'm going the rest of the way through this thing." As a matter of fact, the end of his ministry was blessed and glorious and with peace in the church and I feel I can relate to that a little bit. Reading those helps you. Read those testimonies of those people who endured hardships but it turned out good for them.

Charles Spurgeon, I was going to say Dr. Spurgeon. He didn't even have a college education but he was a genius, no question about it. His mind was beyond comprehension how brilliant he was. But Charles Spurgeon was attacked relentlessly from the Arminians on one side, the hyper-Calvinists on the other. The press just would make cartoons buffooning him all the time and Charles Spurgeon was faithful all the way to the end. It brought him to an early grave. I'm convinced of that. As a matter of fact, the last half of his ministry, he stayed on the French Riviera. His church took care of him but he was just so sick he couldn't preach and it was overwhelmingly, I'm sure, because of the stress and the load of what he faced. But he was faithful.

Jonathan Edwards, the great early American intellectual who was a strong congregationalist, Bible preacher. You know, he preached the sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," and used to, you couldn't take an English class without studying Jonathan Edwards' sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," and literally was an instrument God used to bring a great awakening in the 13 colonies, and after he had been at his church 25 years, they fired him. They voted him out over a technical view on baptism. He was trying to bring them to a more biblical view and they hung with tradition and they fired him. You don't fire Jonathan Edwards. You don't do that. But he got fired and so you realize, sometimes people have to go through things who are standing on the truth.

And for you ladies, find some ladies who stood for God in the midst of all the worldliness. And you ladies are so viciously unrelentingly attacked by the spirit of this age. The curve balls, the lies, the burden Satan is putting on you with some of these lies, it really burdens me for our ladies. Find the testimonies of godly women who stood for truth.

And I'll tell you what I like too, I find some of these women and I read some of their testimonies, women of ages past, and I find where everything they stood for the world would say would cause them to be a beat-down wallflower and they were not. They were joyous. They were ebullient in spirit. They were sweet and kind and they died with a sweet countenance for Christ. Don't you want to end that way?

Let's walk in a manner worthy of our calling and I think cultivating some of these things. John MacArthur who personally let me meet with him a few times, was such an encouragement, find those that you can look to to encourage you to go on for God in tough and sacrificial circumstances.

Then, of course, cultivate an appetite for sound doctrine and that's one of the things we did with our studies on expository listening where we're learning to get ourselves ready to take on the discipline of hearing the preaching of the word. Your hearing the word is just as important as my preparing and as I've said to you before, I work hard to prepare my sermons, I want you to work hard to hear them. There is some work in this on both sides.

Cultivate an appetite for sound doctrine. Never equate dry heartless preaching with good doctrinal preaching. Doctrinal preaching shouldn't be dry and that's been going around for

ages that, "Well, you know, he's deep and he's rich in doctrine but he's a little boring. He's hard to listen to." How can you study this doctrine and it not put a fire in your bones? How can you do that? I don't understand that. Now maybe you'd say, "Well, that's just your personality." Well, it is my personality, I guess, but if anything stirs you, these rich doctrines, those 21 things I just shared with you about our sovereign grace salvation, how can you read that and not something stir in your bones? What I'm saying is cold intellectualism is not the equivalent of good doctrinal preaching and shallow doctrine-less preaching that's all emotion is not good either. There is a balance to everything, isn't there?

If you left this church, do you think you would be mature enough to pick another church that professes and practices sound doctrine? Do you think you'd get it and do you think you could see through some of the errors that are out there today? Well, Paul says grasp what you have in Christ, this great calling, and walk in a manner worthy of that and he says, the first thing is make sure you do whatever is necessary to keep the church unified in the Spirit.