

Christmas night, 1776, 247 years ago, George Washington's troops began to cross the Delaware River. The troops were in bad shape. Many of them didn't have shoes. Many of them didn't have the right clothes. Many of them were sick.

The weather was terrible. It was blizzard like conditions outside. And many soldiers were struggling badly. They had to load the ships and as they loaded the boats, they had to load the munitions and the horses and then the soldiers got in and they made their way across the Delaware. It was a moonless night.

The wind was harsh, extremely cold. They all made it across okay. It took 3 hours to get everyone across. And immediately they began the march from there marching in darkness to the camp of Hessian mercenaries that had been hired by England to come and make war against the colonists. They had received some information that the the Hessians would be partying at Christmas and so would be unable to fight very well by the time they arrived at 4 AM in the morning, December 26th.

Washington's 2nd in command fired a cannon into their camp and chaos ensued. The Hessians were routed. Many of them suffered casualties. The colonists only lost 5 men that day. They held together and they were unified for a common purpose, freedom.

And because they were unified that war changed, helped to change the course of history. Unity is highly desired in a business. Unity is powerful in a sports team, but unity is also commanded in scripture for the church. This morning, we're gonna be taking a walk with Jesus in Ephesians chapter 4. Would you please stand with me for the reading of the word?

Ephesians chapter 4 will begin in verse 1. Therefore, I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's falls because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

For there is 1 body and one spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, to some one God and father of all who is overall in all and living through all. Skip down to verse 11, these are the gifts Christ gave to the church, the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and the teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue till we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's son, that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ, then we will no longer be immature like children.

We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way, more and more like Christ who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly and as each part does its own

special work, it helps the other parts grow so that the whole he is healthy and growing and full of love. Let's pray together.

Father, we come to you, the source of our hope, our Lord, our God, we have one faith and we have one father in you. And so this morning, as we come to your word, open our hearts and our minds to understand it. Father, open our wills to apply it and help us to lead this place forever changed because we have been with you in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you.

You can be seated. First three chapters of Ephesians deal with doctrine. It's mainly, all the things we need to know, the truth of our riches in Christ, i.e., the our position because of the grace of God, we are adopted into his family. It's basically all about what God has done for us. In chapter 4, he begins to take a turn and now he says, because of all this, here's what I want you to do and then chapter 4 begins with therefore.

Now, anytime you see a therefore in scripture, you need to know what it's there for. Right? So He begins to say, therefore, because of everything I've just told you in chapters 1-3, because of all that God has done for you, now, therefore, I want you to lead a life worthy of your calling. For you have been called by God. When you receive a call from somebody, you kind of gauge whether you gauge the importance of the call.

Right? You figure if it's a junk call, if you don't know the number, you just kinda let it go to voicemail. If God calls, we pay attention. Sadly, it is possible according to scripture for us to know God, to know Jesus and still live an were the life. Far too many people who call themselves Christians are living lives that looked just like the lives of everybody else around them.

They live lives that are compromised. Those who don't know what they believe, those who don't understand what God's done for them, or maybe they don't realize what God's given to them. They don't live lives of gratitude. They they are confused and they have a terrible time trying to live for Jesus because they don't have any motivation to do so. They are just trying to modify their behavior to be better because they call themselves a Christian.

But those who understand that through faith in Christ, through the grace and mercy of God, that we have been saved, adopted, given riches beyond our comprehension, we are able to live like a beggar who's been plucked off the street by the king, adopted into the king's family, dressed in royal robes and given an inheritance in the kingdom. That beggar has no problem living as royalty, because he understands what's been done. What you believe determines how you behave. And so Paul has spent 3 chapters helping us to understand what we believe and now he says this belief should impact the way you live, the way I live. We all know lying is bad.

Now I'm gonna ask you, how many of you have lied before? Raise your hand. Come on. Those of you who aren't raising your hand, we know you, who you are. Now now you understood from an early age lying was bad and you got you probably got spanked for it, but but yet it persists as a habit.

You know, every once in a while it still pops up in our lives and we find ourselves telling something that's not true. But let me let me say this, it would be a whole lot easier for you to get over lying if somebody in front of you in class told a lie and they burst into flame and disappeared in a puff of smoke. He'd be like, oh, I'm not gonna lie anymore. Why? Because you believed there would be consequences.

Well, Paul is trying to tell us there are consequences for the way we live. And he said, because God has already done this. For the Jews, God said, if you behave, I'll bless you. For the Christian, God says, I'm blessing you because I've blessed you. Behave.

And so he changes this around. You've already received the blessings. Do we truly believe there are no to disobeying the Lord. Because sometimes we live that way, don't we? The oneness of believers is already a spiritual reality.

You and I are 1 in Christ. We have to guard that that unity, that love, I got a firsthand example of what happens when part of your body doesn't cooperate with cooperate with the rest of your body. It caused chaos, it caused confusion, it caused pain and when part of our body of Christ doesn't get along with the rest. It causes pain. It causes heartache.

Now the world substitutes, and I don't want you to get confused with uniformity. Okay. Uniformity is what the world does. Uniformity says you will up, you will do this and you will look like this and you will be like this and if you don't we will pound you some more. The world demands in the name of Diversity and inclusiveness that we all think the same.

Right? Which is weird. The world will silence any voice that disagrees and Satan has created a mold and it wants everyone forced into that mold. That is uniformity. Unity comes from within.

Uniformity comes from pressure outside. Uniformity or unity comes from motivation inside. Verse 2, he says, be humble, putting Christ first and others before ourselves. Then he calls us to be gentle or meek and is not weak. Gentle or meek is power under control.

Jesus embodied that all the time. And then we have everyone's favorite, be patient with each other. How many of you pray for patience? Okay, few of you. You hadn't learned any better have you?

The way we display that patience is allowing love to cover over the faults of others. Patience isn't when everyone acts correctly. Patience is when we allow love have to cover over their mistakes instead of allowing our frustration to boil over. In verse 3 he said, make every effort, do everything possible to keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit. The verb used is a present participle.

It's and he says, keep doing everything you can to stay together, to be unified. It is the job of every believer and it's usually when things are going well that Satan tries to sneak in and cause

trouble. Biblical unity, however, can only be built on biblical truth. And so he gives us some more truth. He says in verse 4, you are part of 1 body.

You are part of a body and that body is not yours. It belongs to Jesus. You are part of his body. We have the same Holy Spirit. We have the same hope that Jesus who saved us is coming back to claim us and bring us home, to reign and rule with him forever and ever.

Verse 5 says, we have one Lord Jesus, one faith, one baptism in the Holy Spirit. Verse 6 says, you have one God, not many gods. In verse 7, he says, you're all you're all given gifts from Jesus Christ. God has given every person in here a gift and he wants you to use it to be a part of this body, to bless the body. He said in verse 11, God gave leaders to establish and build up the church from those early to pastors and teachers today that it is our job to build up the body so that we are all mature.

Why is that maturity important? Because in verse 14, look at the then in verse 14, because when we are mature, then we are protected from the lies. Sadly, almost all the cults, get their people from weak Christians. Christians who don't understand what they truly believe and so when those clever lies come up, they're easily deceived because they don't know what they should believe. They're fooled into being attracted to exciting new teachings or or emotions or their wallet.

Whatever it is that those cults appeal to, it sounds good because they use clever lies that sound like the truth. They use the same language. They even use some scripture to talk to you and try to convince you that their way is the right way, that everybody else has got it wrong except for them. As a result, people are led to worship a different God. They're led to worship a different Jesus.

They're led to worship on a broad road that feels good and it sounds good, but it's really the road to hell. But they think they're on the right road. God said, this is why we all protect our unity and we protect the truth, so that we are mature and we are protected from those type of lies. I want to tell you any doctrine or teaching that contradicts the Word of God, is a cult. It is a lie.

It's a clever lie, but it is a lie. That includes Mormonism, that includes Islam, it includes other cults and religions that try to substitute some other teaching, that try to come in and and give you a clever lie that sounds like the truth. I want, there is only one holy book in the world and that is the Word of God. Everything else is a clever lie. And yes Facebook, I know you're probably gonna cancel me are saying that.

That's okay. Verse 15, God says, instead we should speak the truth in love. We should grow up to become more and more like Jesus. That every one of us has gotten the gift. We used that gift to build up the body and God talks about this body, the local church.

He talks about this all the time because it's his plan, it's his purpose. In the Bible, you will not find a Christian who is not part of a local church. They didn't list. People didn't just become

Christians and stay by themselves and live a life and I'm fine, just me and God is okay. No, it's not.

If you find a kidney laying on the ground, that kidney is not okay. And whoever's missing the kidney is probably not okay either. You are part of a body, we only function properly in the body. God created us and called us to unity and Paul gives a picture of this later. In Acts chapter 27, Paul is a prisoner aboard a ship and as he is in this ship this great storm breaks out and and God warns Paul, don't let the men jump ship, because if they do, everyone's going to die.

And so Paul goes to the commander and he said that the the that sailors are wanting to abandon ship, they're wanting to put down the lifeboats and Paul said, you cannot let them. We all stay together or we all perish. The temptation in hard times is to abandon ship. The temptation when things go hard in a marriage is to just walk away. The temptation when things are difficult in a relationship is to abandon the relationship.

The temptation in a job or or any other area of our life is easier to walk away than it is to fix it. And the same is true in church. Sometimes it's easier to just disappear or separate yourself or or just come up with an excused to not be part of a body, because when you're not part of a body you are alone. And the problem is when we're alone, we're alone with ourselves. And when we're alone, our human nature wants us to retreat to a place where we can lock the doors and be alone with our thoughts.

And if you've ever heard your thoughts, you know that's not a good thing to be alone with, isolated. We start to sink into some depression and we allow our thoughts to get way out of line with what God wants us to do. Even in churches, it can happen. It is easier to abandon ship and to go it alone, to feel like you can save yourself, but don't. God said, here's the plan.

You stick together, stay together guard this unity because he created it. Lock arms, stay close, hold on to the people who love you and let God guide you. You need the presence of God's people surrounding you when the bottom drops out of your life. Acts 4:32 says, all the believers were united in heart and mind and they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and God's great blessing was on them all.

What happens when unity comes? Unity brings focus. We understand we have one Lord. We we have of 1 baptism. We have 1 savior.

They had unity and that unity was full to fulfill the great commission in their generation. It is the same direction that God's given us to fulfill the great commission, to reach people, to tell the people in our lives about Jesus Christ and to disciple them, to make them understand, help them understand. They were family. We are family. In Russia, when I was over there, the church would peed a phrase all the time.

We are family. They would say it to each other all the time until I finally learned it, which if you know me, it takes a lot for me to learn something. They repeated that because it was something they had to understand because outside their church was the KGB. They had to understand that they were facing an enemy and that enemy is all around us. It is the same spiritual enemy.

We walk together. Our life here extends far beyond just gathering together to worship. We walk together, we share burdens, we share cares, we share prayers, we are concerned for each other. We cry together. We laugh together.

When I was sick, really sick a few weeks ago, I got lots of calls and lots of texts and a few people brought some food over and I want to tell you that did a whole lot more than just feed my body. It fed my heart to know that people care when we stick together, we have an amazing blessing from the Lord. Chuck Swindoll wrote this. He said, churches need to be less like untouchable cathedrals and more like well used spittles. Places to bleed in rather than monuments to look at.

Places where you can take your mask off and let your hair down. I didn't like that phrase very much, a place where you can have your wounds dressed. We are called to care for and love each other. God has a task for Calvary Baptist Church. It is to reach people.

It is to love people, to teach them about the incredible love that God has for them. I read not too long ago, a little girl was lost in a large open field, huge field and it was grass about waist high and so when she walked in, she just disappeared and after a while the family realized they couldn't find her and so they scattered out. They still couldn't find her. So they called family and friends to come in and they didn't know how far This little girl had gone and so everybody still scattered out and they came back together and finally one of the kids said, you know, what if we just all hold hands and walk through the field? And when they all held hands and they walked through the field like Annette.

They finally found the little girl. We are a group of people from all different backgrounds, all different places. You've come from all over. But we come together to form a family And that family's purpose is to reach out beyond these walls, to love people. We need to link arms together and walk through the world God's given us until we find those who are lost.

We are in the life saving business. Jesus in John 17, he was facing a terrible trial. He was facing beatings, mockings, scorning. He was facing a scourging that would rip the flesh off of his body and a crucifixion. In facing all those things, just hours before that, that he prayed this prayer.

John 17:20, I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their message, which includes us, may they all be 1 as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be 1 in us, so the world may believe you sent me. I am in them and you are in me. May they be made completely 1, so the world may know you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me. Hours before his death, Jesus prayed for us that we would be 1.

He didn't pray for our safety. He didn't pray for our prosperity. He prayed that we would be so united, so loving each other that the world would see us and know him. They would see our love and know his love. That was what was on the heart of Jesus before he went to his crucifixion.

Unity matters to God. It matters so much that he has repeated it over and over and over. It begins with understanding God's love for us in responding with love not only for God, but for each other. I personally believe our church excels at this. And so it is a joy to preach this because I already see you living it out all the time and I know this coming year we're going to be able to welcome a lot of new people in.

People who need to know that love and that the power that God has for them. The forgiveness, the grace, the mercy being adopted into his family and then we welcome them into ours. Let's pray that God would give us an incredible new year and thank him for the old year and look forward to the amazing things he's going to do. Can ask you to bow your heads and close your eyes for just a moment. Some of you in this room, You're thinking right now, I'm I'm I don't feel unity.

Maybe there's somebody in this room that has hurt your feelings or you hurt somebody's feelings. Maybe things didn't go your way and your feelings separated in your heart. I want to tell you, love covers a multitude of sins and sometimes love is all it takes for us to get over it. But if there's something in your heart you need to go to somebody, please go to them. Fix it.

Don't let Satan have a single thought for a single person in this room. You go and you, you guard that unity, you guard that love and you go to that person, you make it right. And that may be right now in this, in this invitation that you do that, don't hesitate. Don't don't take a minute to think about it. Just obey.

For some of you it is reaching out to somebody that God's put on your heart. It maybe he's you've been thinking about them and praying for them, but you've not talked to them. For some of you, it's going to be looking around the room and saying, God, who do you want me to love? Who can I reach out to? There's somebody in this room.

There's a gift you have. A class you could teach. A place you could serve. Find where God wants you to be in this body And then let's pour ourselves out for the king. But can I ask you this morning, Do you know Jesus?

Are you sure you're part of the body? Have you put your trust and your faith in him? Because if it's been really hard to not be bad, that maybe you need your heart changed, your nature changed and that is through faith in Jesus Christ. See, when you believe God gives you a new nature. And so I want to ask you, have you put your trust and your faith in Jesus Christ?

Are you following him? And if you're not, would you would you stop this morning and do that with me right now? Right where you are, right where you're sitting, would you pray with me to

put your faith and trust in Jesus? And if you would, let's do that right now. Dear God, thank you for loving me.

Would you please forgive me of the things I have done. God I know your son Jesus came to die on the cross for me. He paid my price. Jesus, thank you for saving me. God, would you help me live for you every day of my life until I stand before you face to face.

Heads bowed and eyes closed. If you put your trust and faith in Jesus this morning, right now, then you are part of the family and you have been adopted by God in that moment of faith. When you trust in Jesus, you belong to him. And that's something to celebrate. So if you've done that this morning, would you just raise your hand and say, hey, pastor.

I prayed that with you this morning. I put my trust and my faith in Jesus. And if you would raise your hand a little higher than the pew in front of you. Thanks. Awesome.

Fantastic. Fantastic. That is a good way to end the end the old year and it's a great way to start the new year. Church, we have a chance to do something will bring glory to Jesus Christ. And it's something that's not hard.

It's loving each other. We should be the best in the world. Father, give us courage. Give us humility, give us patience to love each other, to love the people in this room like you loved them. Father, to love them like you love us, to have the same patience and and and peace in our hearts towards them that you have for us, to give them the same grace that we desire to have from you and I pray that as we do, you would shine in this place and create a a place where Jesus Christ is not only glorified and lifted up, but a place where others come to know him as well.

We pray these things in Jesus name.