

“A New Walk”

The Family of God

Ephesians 4

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Sig Tragard: As far as I know, unless Christ Church says otherwise, we can meet indefinitely. And hopefully we can all get the second vaccine and be more comfortable coming in a larger number.

Jeff: Yes.

Sig: But Jeff, thank you so much for teaching. And you're at the Westminster Conference in September too, aren't you? Aren't you going to speak for that?

Jeff: Oh, that's at the seminary; yes.

Sig: That's in September; we'll have information on that as well. Thank you for coming out, men.

Jeff: You know, I was just down in Greenville, South Carolina. And I was speaking at a conference down there, and it's a totally different world. It's open, and there are still masks. But it's not quite like it is here.

Ted Wood: But it's a good moment for the Amish to put their shops in here.

Jeff: Yeah; it's a lot different.

Ted: Another world.

Jeff: Well, why don't we pray as we start?

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: You know, the only thing that we're missing is Don playing the piano.

Kevin Cohn: I told him to hum.

Jeff: Huh?

Kevin: Don could hum.

Don Maurer: I'll spare you that. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: All right; let's pray. Father in heaven, we do thank You for this day, for the time and for the love that You've given. And Lord, we recognize that we are unworthy sinners saved by grace. And yet because we are saved by grace, because our lives are hidden in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are so thankful. And Father, as we come we recognize that we come to You in Your word, and You have spoken. And that Word has been preserved and kept by Your Spirit, that we might have it to this very day. And so as we open it this morning we realize that we're not opening just an ordinary book; we're opening Your book. And we pray, Father, that we would have ears to hear and hearts to respond. And Father, we ask these things, all of them, in the precious name of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Well, I do want to look at Ephesians today. I think we were somewhere in Chapter 3. And I figured that instead of starting something new and having fifteen or twenty guys with us, that maybe we would just finish out Ephesians. And hopefully by the time we finish out Ephesians we'll have some more continuity and more guys, and then we can start on something all together.

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So let's turn to Ephesians chapter 4. I'm going to be optimistic and just read the whole chapter, and that's fine if we don't get through it. But that's what I'll shoot for. Remember, this was just intended to be a summary of Ephesians anyway, so however much you want to talk about it is fine.

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

*“But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says,
'When He ascended on high,
He led a host of captives,
And He gave gifts to men.'*

“In saying, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that He had also descended into the lower regions of the earth? He who descended is the One who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith, of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the Head—into Christ,—from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped when each part is working properly makes the body grow, so that it builds itself up in love.

“Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of their heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality and greed, and to practice every kind of impurity.

“But that is not the way you learned Christ—assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus—to put off our old self, which belongs to the former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the Spirit of your minds and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God, in true righteousness and holiness.

“Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. 'Be angry and do not sin.' Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.

“Let the thief no longer steal but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up as fits the

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occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.” The word of God.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: Well, let me just talk to you quickly about something that I think is rather important before we do go on to chapter 4, and it’s just by way of summary. I think it’s an important way to think about the gospel. And you find it best illustrated in the book of Ephesians. From chapters 1-3 you find indicatives. And indicatives are simply statements that are. And then in 4-6 you find imperatives. And imperatives are of course commands.

And this is the way to understand the gospel. Why? Because indicative statements are statements that tell us what God has done for us in Christ Jesus.

Imperatives tell us what we are to do as a result of the indicative statements. And so if you have it like this, you find that a pyramid represents a nice way for us to think about the gospel. The indicatives are the foundation of the pyramid. The imperatives are the top.

If you turn this on its head and put the imperatives here,--

Transcriber’s Note: As the foundation.

Jeff: You have a very unstable situation. Why? Because if you put the imperatives here in your presentation of the gospel, then you have a works righteousness. In other words, you get to the indicatives by going through to the imperatives. If you do what God says you get the gift of God.

That’s not the gospel. The gospel is God does this for you; God gives this to you as salvation is earned through Christ, as salvation is distributed by His Spirit.

And this is the way the gospel is. And this is the way it’s presented to us in the book of Ephesians: indicatives and imperatives. In fact, there is only one imperative in the first three chapters of Ephesians. And that imperative is a call for us to remember what God has done for us. So even the imperative, the singular imperative that’s found in those first three chapters, is intended to remind us of God’s work on our behalf.

And I think that’s an important distinction; I think it’s crucial. I think it’s crucial because I think that in its best sense this is Protestantism. And I think that we should not forget that. And so unless you guys have any questions about that I’m just going to go on to chapter 4.

Ted: Ah, but I’m noticing in chapter 4 that it begins with indicatives, at least at the beginning.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: It starts out with walking worthy of your calling. But then it goes on to talk about *“one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”* There are lots and lots of indicatives. It’s interesting.

Jeff: Absolutely. That’s always the way when you think about it, right? I mean, this is probably the clearest letter that describes this division. And oftentimes you find that in the rest of the letters that it’s not so clear. There are places where it’s clear, but this is the clearest. And I think it’s the best way to think about the gospel in terms of grammar. And I think that when you get to the imperatives you of course will have the indicatives pulled

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up in, right? But when you’re thinking about the gospel in its purest sense—what God has done for me—you think about it just in the indicative; this is what God has done. He has elected; He has redeemed in Christ; He has applied that redemption by the Spirit, that sort of thing.

Ted: But what motivates behavior? Primarily it’s the indicative, not the imperative.

Jeff: Absolutely. I mean, think about it, right? When we think about doing the things that are listed in chapters 4, 5 and 6, the motivation is because of what God has done for us.

Ted: And because of who He is.

Jeff: Because of who He is and because of the activity in us, right?

Ted: Absolutely.

Jeff: If there’s no chapter 2 in Ephesians making us alive in Christ Jesus there’s no desire to do any of this.

Ted: That’s right.

Sig: So you mentioned that this is Protestantism.

Jeff: Yes.

Sig: In contrast to what Catholicism says?

Jeff: Yes. Roman Catholicism is going to say that you are in this thing by grace—the grace of baptism. But you maintain your place in this covenant by what you do. And what you do will lead to your final justification.

Now I think it’s dubious as to whether or not they believe in a gracious initiation into the covenant, and I think that is even by works.

Sig: Yes.

Jeff: It’s the waters of baptism applied. As the saying goes, “*ex opera operato*”—the work is worked out of the work. So it’s the work that’s applied in baptism that gives you the infusion of saving grace so that you can start on a footing now. It’s almost like God has given you a good leg to start on; keep it up. You know, that sort of thing.

Ted: But many Protestants would also believe that, not just Catholics.

Jeff: Well yes, but not good ones. (*Laughter*) I mean not good Protestants, you know?

Ted: Yes.

Jeff: Yeah. Does anybody else want to think about that a little bit? No? Okay. All right, so this is what I’m thinking as far as the outline. I just want to say a brief word of introduction. And then I want us to think about this chapter in terms of walk: *a new walk, lessons in stride, a good gait, and then keeping up the pace.*

Ted: I like it.

Jeff: Yeah. You like that.

Ted: It’s very pithy.

Jeff: So let me show you this and give you at least one thing I’ve changed in the metaphor at this point. Instead of walking I’m starting off with a baby. Have you ever noticed this? I’m sure you have if you’re a parent. You notice that kid has got a top-heavy head.

Ted: Yes.

Jeff: And at one time Nathan wasn’t very old. And I grabbed his hat and I put it on my head. And I realized that his melon was bigger than mine. (*Laughter*) And so I did a little

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looking at this, and I realized that a baby’s head is 40% the size of an adult head. And by age seven his head is 90% the size of an adult head. Nathan was about this age, and apparently his head was 110% the size of an adult head. *(Laughter)* Or at least my melon was a lot smaller.

But the point of this, the lesson of all this, is that we grow up into our head, right? The baby grows up into the size of his head; his head is always bigger at first. And he grows up into that head.

And that’s a good theological lesson when you think about it. Christ is our Head, and we grow up into Christ. And I think that when we grow up into Christ we learn to walk. We learn to do the things that we’re supposed to do, and we mature. And I think that maturity is clarified in Ephesians chapter 4. So I want us to look at this new walk that we’re supposed to be using.

Think about this for just a minute. Think about the kind of walk that we’re supposed to engage in.

I want you to think about an orthodontist. When you think about *ortho-* and *dentist*, they are two words, right? And of course *dentist* means *tooth*. But what does *ortho* mean? *Ortho* means *straight*.

And so when we think about orthodontists we’re thinking about straight teeth. When we think about orthopedics we think about what? We think about straight children, right? *(Laughter)* You know, that girl is using some of the exact things that my son used when he was that age. And so we put AFOs on him so that he can walk straight and so his legs will be straight. And then he was in the walker so his back would be straight.

And so all of these things—all of these AFOs, these devices to keep his legs straight and the contraptions that he was in—all of these things were basically standards that his body was to measure up to, to live up to. In other words, when we told him “Walk straight”, for him it wasn’t just “Keep your back straight,” or “Keep your head up.” For him it was “Bring your leg back so that it’s in conformity with the AFO.” The AFO is the standard for him. Go ahead.

Don Maurer: Was your baby an extraterrestrial? Did you say a UFO? *(Laughter)*

Jeff: AFO.

Ted: They don’t need to know any of that.

Jeff: Absolutely, yes. I’m not going to tell that story; it’s on tape. *(Laughter)* So anyway, when you think about this idea of walking, we’re walking according to a standard. And the interesting thing is that this idea of calling—the calling to which you’ve been called—is a passive verb. This is a calling that you’ve been given over to.

And this happens everywhere in the New Testament, and these are called *divine passives*. In other words, this is what God does. He’s the acting agent.

So for instance, in Romans 6:17 we’ve been “*delivered to a form*”, a type “*of doctrine*.” It’s as if God took us and poured us into that form of doctrine.

Now what is that type of doctrine to which we’ve been delivered? Well, it’s a Christomorphic form. In other words, our lives are to be shaped and fashioned after Christ’s life. Our calling is a Christological calling, that is, we are to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. If we need to know what the standard is, if we need to know what the

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AFO—not the UFO, Don!—if we need to know what the AFO of the Christian life is, then it is Christlikeness.

And again this isn't really hard for us to see; we see it in other places. For instance think about a standard, like a flagpole. Let's all meet at the flagpole. The flagpole becomes the rallying point. It becomes the place where we're all going to meet.

Think about another thing, the doctor and the Hippocratic oath. His practice is to be measured by the Hippocratic oath that he takes.

So there are these kinds of standards in all these sorts of loose and more formal ways of life. And we need to realize that it is a standard, the Christian life. And that standard of the Christian life by which we must walk is a Christological one. In fact, it's more than that. When you think about it, it really is a triune form, because it's Father, Son and Holy Spirit who calls us into this relationship with Himself. The standard, therefore, is God Himself—the Triune God Himself who calls us into this standard. So I think we need to keep that in mind when we think about what we're doing today.

Any questions about that? I think that's straightforward when you think about it.

Okay. *A way to walk in terms of the call.* What is this Christological standard? Well, Paul tells us. He defines it for us. He says, “humility, gentleness, patience, love.” Easy, right? (*Laughter*) No worries; no problem at all. And all of these things are typified in Christ in the Gospels. You can find the way in which Christ acts in these very words as you look at them in the Gospels.

And frankly they're difficult, right? I mean, it's difficult.

Ted: Impossible.

Jeff: Yeah, it's—

Ted: Humanly impossible.

Jeff: It's humanly impossible. And yet because of Christ living in me, because of the Spirit taking Christ and basically bringing my life into conformity with His mold, His Christomorphic mold, I am able to do something by His Spirit to bring about conformity in my own life to Christ. I'm not doing it; God is doing it in me.

And I think that what we have to remember as we head into this section is this. Our lives will be transformed.

You know, there's another way to put this to you guys before. But there's another way to think about what Christ does in our lives. And that is the *duplex gratia Dei*.

I think I've said this to you before. And when you think about the *duplex gratia Dei*, you think about the forensic benefits that we have in Christ. We often think about those in terms of justification. We think about those in terms of adoption. But there are also transformative benefits that we possess in Christ. And these transformative benefits that we possess in Him we possess along with the forensic.

Now I'll tell you why I make that point in just a minute. But the transformative benefits are what? Well, regeneration is a transformative benefit. Sanctification is a transformative benefit. Glorification is a transformative benefit. So we possess all of the benefits that we possess in Jesus Christ.

And therefore we can't say, “Well, I've been forgiven all my sins. I just haven't received the transformative blessings from Christ yet. That's the second work of grace that I'm still waiting on.”

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No, no, no, no. That’s not the way we understand it when we read the Bible. On the face of the Scriptures we realize that we possess Ephesians 1³—all of the spiritual blessings that are in Christ—all of them, not just the forensic, but the transformative as well.

In fact, when you think about it, the transformative benefit of regeneration comes logically prior to justification. Why is that? Because without regeneration and its fruit—faith and repentance—without faith I will not receive the benefit of justification. Why? Because justification is by faith alone.

So the point is that all of these benefits that are in Christ are mine in Christ. I can’t say that I have some and not others, and so on.

So when you look at Ephesians 1-3 and then 4-6 we can’t just say, “I’ve got the 1-3 side; I just don’t have the 4-6 side.”

And yet the 4-6 side is the Romans 7 side, right? The Romans 7 side is that the things I want to do I don’t always do. In fact I don’t do them, and I hate myself for continuing to do them. But praise be to God that I’m saved in Christ Jesus from the things that even I hate to do and still continue to do at times. In fact I sin in word, thought and deed daily—you know, that sort of thing. But that’s the idea.

So what did I do? I must have gone backwards. So the idea then is that humility, gentleness, patience, love,—these are all things that I’m striving to attain, and motivated to do so because of the Triune God’s work in me. And this becomes for Paul—at least what he holds up for us—as the Christomorphic standard.

Now why unity? That’s a question that I think we have to ask ourselves because he does talk about unity, doesn’t he? He talks about unity and he talks about a theology that binds us together. As we talked about already, he talks about the indicatives being reintroduced here. What is there? Well, “*there is one body and one Spirit. There is one hope, ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father.*” There is a theology that binds us together in unity.

I think the question that we have to ask is a really practical one. And that is well, wait a minute. If there’s a real unity why are there so many denominations? If Jesus prayed in John 17 that we would all be one, then why are there differing denominations?

Ted: Tens of thousands.

Jeff: Tens of thousands.

Ted: There are twenty-some thousand in this country.

Jeff: Absolutely.

Ted: That’s an estimate. And that does not include independent churches.

Jeff: Why is that? I mean, let’s just do a little exercise here, okay? I hate to do this, but it is helpful.

Transcriber’s Note: Jeff writes on the board.

Jeff: All right; here’s the little exercise. That’s why it keeps going backwards; it’s very sensitive. I just have to put it down.

All right, so here’s a little exercise. Here’s a question for you. I’m almost hesitant to do it. I’ll do it like this. If I have a circle, and that circle represents the pale of Christianity, and outside of that circle is outside the pale of Christianity, what things must I believe in order to be inside that pale?

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Bishop Rodgers: Jesus Christ died for my sins.

Jeff: Yes. So instead of doing that, let's do it like this. Would it be okay to say atonement?

Bishop: Sure.

Jeff: So we'll say atonement. I think that's spelled right.

Sig: It looks like he bishop's mumbling under his breath.

Bishop: No, no.

Sig: He says, “As long as you understand what that means.” Is that what you said, Bishop?

Bishop: Yep.

Jeff: You know, I want to tell you one thing just so you know. I lost my hearing. When I got COVID I lost my hearing in my right ear.

Ted: Wow!

Jeff: And so it's funny, because I'm not hearing well; I've got a little bit of a ring there. And I also can't tell where the sound is coming from.

So I was at this conference. And I was walking through the lobby and somebody said, “Dr. Stivason.” And I turned around, and there was a guy standing there. I couldn't tell where it came from. And I just went “Hi.” And he goes, “I didn't call you.” *(Laughter)* It was funny.

Sig: And your right-handed. So you go to the board, and right here is the hand of the bishop.

Jeff: That's right, so you can say anything you want at this point. But I want you guys to know something. Actually the COVID has not been too bad. If you can't taste things you drop the weight. *(Laughter)* If you can't hear you say to your wife, “Honey, I can't hear you.” *(Laughter)* “I've been wanting to hear you so badly.” *(Laughter)* Man, I'm going to be sorry if this comes back. *(Laughter)* Anyway,--

Bishop: Yeah, right.

Jeff: And then if you don't have smell you can eat all the spicy food you want, and you don't offend anybody. *(Laughter)* At least you don't think you do. It's been great. *(Laughter)*

Ted: I wonder what he means by that. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: I think she'll say, “You haven't lost your eyesight. There's a green cloud hanging over you.” *(Laughter)* Okay, so we need a proper atonement theology. What else do we need?

Jim OBrien: I think it's important what is contained in the Apostles' Creed.

Ted: Thank you; what a novel thought! *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Okay. So are you saying that you need to believe in the Triune God?

Jim: Yes.

Jeff: The Trinity would be in this.

Jim: The Incarnation would be in it.

Jeff: The Incarnation would be in this.

Jim: That's right.

Bishop: The indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Don Maurer: How about justification by faith alone?

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Jim: That’s not in it. But you know, it ought to be.

Jeff: Well, that’s what we’re asking. I mean—

Bishop: That’s under atonement.

Jeff: All right.

Don Maurer: But Catholics believe in the Atonement.

Jeff: Okay, Don; this is what I’m looking for right here. So we were doing really well. And all of a sudden we’ve got our first hitch.

Don Maurer: Yeah.

Ted: Thanks a lot, Don.

Jeff: No, this is great. This is what I’m looking for, because all of a sudden this becomes a really difficult question. How much does one have to believe in order to be a Christian?

Ted: Right.

Jeff: Right? And that’s not an easy question to answer, because I know some people who would say, “Wait a minute! I know a lot of people who don’t have the Trinity worked out in their thinking.” How much Trinitarian theology does a person need to have worked out before he’s saved? They believe that Jesus saved them from their sins. But they didn’t have their Trinitarianism worked out. They couldn’t have expressed anything related to it. Go ahead.

Kirk Ellerbusch: I wanted to say that from the standpoint that there might be certain issues where it could just be the understanding that a person has of Biblical truth. It’s something that you’ve talked about. For example, you know, Jehovah’s Witnesses say that Jesus is a god, and not the God. That would make a great difference. And that may be something where you might want to talk to somebody and explain to him. I don’t know everything about the Trinity. And I’ve struggled with that sometimes too, wrapping my mind around the whole thing.

Jeff: So are we saying then that we can be saved even when our theology might be bad?

Sig: A-men! Absolutely.

Jeff: Okay.

Kirk: But if you’re proclaiming that Jesus is a god and not the God, there’s a problem there—a big problem.

Jeff: Okay. But now you’re getting into why we have denominations, because denominations are proclaiming certain things, right? They are proclaiming what one must believe in order to be saved. And I think that now we’re getting into why there are different denominations.

Kirk: But is that a denomination? I wouldn’t consider Jehovah’s Witnesses a denomination.

Jeff: No, I wouldn’t either. Jehovah’s Witnesses are heretics from the third century, right? They’re Arians, really. So—

Sig: But Ted says there are ten billion.

Ted: There are 22,000.

Sig: That’s one of them.

Brave Man: No.

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Ted: The *Book of Religions* is full of this kind of stuff. But let me say that Jehovah’s Witnesses cannot say The Apostles’ Creed with a straight face.

Jeff: Sure.

Ted: Neither can the Mormons.

Jeff: That’s right.

Ted: Roman Catholics can say the Apostles’ Creed.

Right. But now we’re back to Don. We’re back to justification by faith alone.

Ted: I’ve had these discussions with a very knowledgeable Catholic priest. And he said, “We believe in salvation by grace through faith.

Don Maurer: But not alone.

Ted: Listen to what they say though. It comes very close to what we say.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: But you have to show it. But we say the same thing. (*Jeff starts to speak.*) Just a second. If you’re saved, if you’re truly regenerate, it’s going to be displayed in your life.

Jeff: Let me ask this question. Don would probably believe that the Roman Catholic Church is not a true church. Am I right, Don?

Don Maurer: I would have to say yes.

Jeff: Okay. But let me ask you this. Don, do you believe that a person could be saved in the pew of a Roman Catholic church under the hearing and the reading of God’s word?

Don Maurer: Sure. God can work any way He wants.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bishop Rodgers: Luther said that too.

Ted: Yeah, and Luther was there. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: So will that person at the moment of his salvation have his theology of salvation worked out?

Don Maurer: No.

Bishop Rodgers: No.

Jeff: No, of course not. But my point is that I’ll never forget this. When we talk about a liberal theologian, (and I’m not making a comment on this guy’s salvation; I’m just simply using him as an example.) But I remember reading Charles Hodge’s *Systematic Theology* at one point. You know what I’m talking about. Hodge had spent some time in Germany. And there at the bottom of the page he gave a footnote. And he talked about how Friedrich Schleiermacher would gather his children around and sing hymns to Jesus.

And it was sort of this very positive comment from a guy that we would think is the father of liberal theology after Immanuel Kant. And that struck me.

And then I got to reading this. I got to thinking this. I got to thinking to myself that a man can be better than his theology, right? A man can be saved in spite of his theology, thankfully.

Sig: Amen!

Jeff: The only person who can’t be better than his theology is a Calvinist. But I digress. (*Laughter*) But my point is this. Let’s now take the guy out of the initial stage and let’s put him into the moment of discipleship. And he goes into a church, right? He goes into a church, and the church says to him that Jesus Christ is the second Person of the Trinity.

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And he says, “No, He’s not. You know the Jehovah’s Witnesses. They came to my door. They told me that if I had a King James that was close enough; I could read it.”

And that’s true. They’ll oftentimes say that you can read the King James; the King James is close enough.

“I read the King James Bible, and I came away saved. The Lord saved me. That’s why I’m here in this church.”

And then the minister says to him, “Well, you know that Jesus Christ is the second Person of the Trinity.”

And this guy says, “Wait a minute! I don’t believe that.”

So the minister says, “Well, let’s talk about it, son.” And so he leads him through discipleship on why it is that the Scriptures teach that Jesus is the second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God, and why it is that the Arians were wrong, and why it is that history bears this out and what the Scriptures say in the church. And the guy gets to the end and says, “Okay, I believe it. Wow, the Lord is gracious! I was through the prompting of the Jehovah’s Witnesses reading the King James Bible. God saved me, wonderfully so. And now He has deliver me from the false understanding of Christ.” You know, he’s seeing his theology catching up to his person.

But what about the guy who at the end of that process says, “Wait a minute; I think this is just all washed up. I still believe that Jesus is a creature that God used to redeem.” And he gets to the end and we say, “Brother, you’re no longer a brother if you keep believing that. I had hope for you when you first came because you were expressing that God had done something in your life. And now after explaining this to you and discipling you and trying to help you understand what Scripture really says, you reject it. We can no longer call you a brother. You’re not inside the pale of Christianity.” Would you agree with that? Is that—

Bishop Rodgers: Yes, I do.

Jeff: All right; okay.

Sig: What would God call it?

Jeff: If he has rejected—

Bishop Rodgers: Dead in trespasses and sins.

Jeff: Yes. If he has rejected the Son after having been taught through the Word, and he has rejected who the Son is after being taught by the Word, he can’t. I mean, that’s what 1 John says.

But the point is that this is why we have different denominations. And it’s not because of the majors. I’m just thinking about my own views in my own circle. My own circle is the Reformed circle, right? And so you have all kinds of churches. You have the PCA. You have the ARP. You have the RPC. You have all kinds of different Reformed churches. What’s the difference between all of us?

We all believe in the triune God. We all believe in justification by faith alone. We all believe in a lot of things. We all hold to the Westminster Confession of Faith as our subordinate standard. What’s the difference between us all?

Well, the difference between us all can be summed up in this. It used to be this. It used to be wine, women and song. (*Laughter*) It used to be wine, women and song; those were the differences.

“A New Walk”

Now the RPCNA has gotten a bit more Biblical with wine. So it used to be that the RPCNA allowed no minister to put the fruit of the vine to his lips. Yes?

Sig: You mean even in Communion?

Jeff: Yeah; alcohol was off limits.

Sig: Even in Communion? You couldn't have wine in Communion?

Jeff: Brother, we use Welch's. (*Laughter*) And since we've changed this there's a movement in our denomination to use wine in Communion. But I think this comes out of the Second Great Awakening, where there was the whole thing about drinking and abstinence—you know, that sort of thing, whatever it was.

Women. We still have women deacons; these other denominations don't. And *song.* We use the Psalms exclusively; they don't. So these are the differences.

Now somebody will come along and say, “Wait a minute! Do you think that your brothers in the PCA are going to hell because you hold these things and they don't?” And we would say “No, of course not.”

Then they would say this. They would say, “Well then, why do you remain apart from them?”

And we would say—and I think they would say too—that this worship issue is a pretty big issue, not because of salvation but because of the practicality of it. I mean, it becomes really difficult if you're convinced that the only thing that you should be singing in worship are the Psalms, and others aren't. That's a huge practical difference. And so there's division because of that.

Now here's the question that we all need to ask ourselves. And this is whether it's in the Reformed churches or in other communions. I know that the Anglican Church has a number of different communions these days. And so we're all asking this kind of question, right? And the question that we have to ask ourselves is are we open to talking with our brothers in a godly manner, in a humble manner, in a gentle manner? And it's sort of iron sharpening iron so that we can all come to conformity of thought in the Scriptures, because we all have to admit that the Spirit brings uniformity of thought. And if the Spirit brings uniformity of thought and uniformity of theology, then, you know, in this life there's sin and so on, and sin keeps us apart. But we ought to have the expectation of more and more conformity. Go ahead.

Don Bishop: You know, I believe in denominations. What about (*Unclear*) Are we willing—

Jeff: Would you say what you said again?

Don: I believe in denominational unity, and so forth. But then I see that it doesn't apply at the local level. How much are we willing to work with local churches, even though they don't believe the same things in the same manner?

Jeff: Yes, and that's a great question. So this is another great question between the Presbyterians and the Baptists. I know Baptists—Mark Deaver, for instance, a more famous one. Mark Deaver says that if you have baptized your infant, I will not permit you to come to the Communion table.

So he and Ligon Duncan once had a debate. And Mark Deaver said, “I would not permit Ligon Duncan to come to the Communion table at my church.” And Ligon Duncan responded by saying, “Well, OI would permit Mark Deaver at mine.”

“A New Walk”

Ted: Yes.

Jeff: And I mean, for instance, just for instance, if Mark Deaver came to the congregation I serve, I would permit Mark Deaver who is a Baptist to come to the Communion table. But if Mark Deaver moved into my area and said, “Hey, I want to join your church as a Baptist,” I would say, “Hey brother, you can’t do that. If you did that, what you would have to do is to submit your children for baptism, and you’re unwilling to do that. And I believe that your children are not little vipers; I believe they are covenant children. And that’s a huge difference. So you’d probably better look for a Baptist church and join it.”

I think at this point that we have to be willing to say that kind of stuff. Now you know, two people can work together in a conciliatory manner, right?, in a way that two denominations or an individual or a family in a denomination can’t.

So for instance I had a family come to my congregation once and say, “Look, Pastor Jeff, we’re Baptists and we want to join the church.” And I said the very thing that I just said to you. And they said, “Well, what if we submit our consciences to the denomination’s way of doing things and we give our children over for Baptism? Even though we don’t believe it, we’re willing to submit to the church in this teaching. Would that be okay with you guys?”

I said, “That would be okay with us.” And they did that. As Baptists they said, “Here are the children. Baptize the children.” They promised not to stir up foment in the congregation, and they didn’t. And they were wonderful people while we had them. They had to move and were doing another job elsewhere. But the point is that two individuals can oftentimes work together in a way that two denominations or a denomination and individuals can’t.

Don Bishop: I’m not talking about joining the church together. I’m talking about outreach and evangelism.

Jeff: Yes. Go ahead.

Don: I think the churches themselves could be working together.

Jeff: I think that—

Don: In western New York there’s a movement going on called “The Church of Western New York,” where they raise money to plant churches, no matter what denomination, to lead people to Christ.

Jeff: Yes. I think that’s okay. You can get involved with evangelistic endeavors with other churches that are not like you. But I think for instance that the pale nowadays is so big that that becomes quite difficult.

Here’s why I say that. I was asked to serve on a board of a pro-life organization. And I looked down through the by-laws and all that jazz, you know. And I saw in there where they said that we are not permitted to evangelize Roman Catholics.

And so I went to the board and I said, “Look, I’m good with all of this, but I have one problem with this. I’m going to evangelize Roman Catholics. I mean, this is the whole point of the Reformation. The point of the Reformation is that we differ on salvation and authority, at least on those things. And so if I run into a Roman Catholic as a board member, I’m evangelizing.”

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And that raised a 30-minute heated kind of discussion between board members who were both Protestant and Roman Catholic. It was funny. There was another guy who was being asked to join the board at that point, and he must not have read the documents. He said, “If I had known that, I would never have—“ That was terrible.

Anyway, it ended up with me saying, “Look. We’re still going to give you money. But I’m going to withdraw from being considered as a board member, because I will obviously be a distraction as things are going here. But we’ll continue to support the ministry.”

But this is the thing that I’ve run into with pro-life. You know, it’s almost like we’ve got to save every baby from abortion. But it doesn’t matter where people go eternally. And I just have a big problem with that. I think you can save every baby. But if we don’t care about the way of salvation then we’re in big trouble.

So you know, it depends on that organization. If they’re willing to say “Hey, we’re willing to plant Anglican churches. We’re willing to plant Presbyterian churches. We’re willing to plant Baptist churches.” I’m willing to say “Amen!” But if they say, “Now we’re going to plant Roman Catholic churches,” I’m going to say, “Wait a minute; I can’t support that,” right?

Don Bishop: No.

Jeff: So again, this is the question. Who’s inside the pale and who’s outside the pale? And denominations are going to be struggling over this.

Kirk: Isn’t one of the problems though with joining different denominations together is that we lay our doctrinal differences aside? And it usually comes down to that the one who believes the word of God is who ends up being attacked as a fool.

Jeff: Yeah.

Kirk: And we supposedly reduce ourselves to love.

Jeff: Yeah.

Kirk: Everything else is out the door.

Jeff: Absolutely.

Kirk: And therein lies a big problem.

Jeff: Sure. And it goes back to how I initiated this.

Kirk: Yes.

Jeff: There’s a standard. And the standard is the gospel, the Word. Practically speaking it’s the cruciformed life. So all of this becomes our standard. And the question is then, does a denomination—let alone an individual—but does a denomination match up with the standard?

If in gospel ways the church matches up to the standard, then fine. In secondary ways it may not, right?

For instance, with regard to the RPCNA posture with regard to wine many years ago, I would have said that’s an unbiblical requirement of the church, right? That’s where it didn’t match up to the standard. And so—

Bishop Rodgers: What we’re illustrating is that in the circle you have to have the Scriptures as the word of God, because otherwise there’s no basis for saying this or talking about this thing at all.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

“A New Walk”

Bishop: And that’s what’s happened. And that’s why we had to leave the Episcopal Church. It no longer really consults the Scriptures.

Jeff: You have a mustache now; I like that. That’s nice; that’s good. Wait a minute; hold on.

Sig: Oh! How did he get it?

Bishop: It was under my mask. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: You just grew it this morning. Let me just say this really quickly. I would say to you that if anyone raised this to the level of gospel importance and said for instance that if you drink wine you can’t be a Christian—that sort of thing—then all of a sudden that secondary or tertiary issue is raised to a level of privacy. That’s where we—

Bishop: That’s unconscionable.

Jeff: That’s where we have problems. And you’re right. So the Bible is in here. But here’s the question. The question is what Bible? Because when we think about the nature of the Bible, think about it. I mean, I’ve heard R. C. Sproul say that people who do not hold to inerrancy and infallibility can still be believers. They’re just on a slippery slope.

But you see, that becomes the question. The bishop says that we need this in here so that we can determine what the standard is. But the fact of the matter is that if you don’t share a view of inerrancy and infallibility today, I think that the phenomena of Scripture—for instance, the cultural aspects of Scripture—can creep in and subvert the doctrinal aspects of Scripture, right?

Bishop: Yes.

Jeff: So there’s always the question of even this. Yes, the Bible. But what do we understand the Bible to be? Ted?

Ted: Wow! Wine, women and song. That is a discussion with small denominations, and not reflective of the historic church.

Jeff: Well see, I don’t agree with that.

Ted: Absolutely. Wine has been accepted throughout the whole church.

Jeff: Of course.

Ted: There has always been a role of some kinds of women.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: Not in leadership historically, but as deacons or other instances.

Jeff: Sure.

Ted: With song, every area historically has had different ways of singing. It’s not just Bible inerrancy.

Jeff: Yes, but you’ve just illustrated that all three of those have historic—

Ted: Yes.

Jeff: Maybe the application is—

Ted: I would say to the Reformed Presbyterians, what’s the issue about wine? Your denomination has decided that’s so important that you can’t get together with others. And you’ve said—

Jeff: Joining denominationally, not informally. You know, we’ll have—

Ted: But it prevents you. The singing of the Psalms prevents you from joining with the other Reformed groups.

Jeff: Only formally, not informally.

“A New Walk”

Ted: Oh of course. But in the end it’s kind of like saying, “Honey, we’re married informally but not formally.”

Brave Men: A collective sigh.

Jeff: But think about it, Ted. I mean, those are not any different than Baptism m, right?

Ted: Well that comes down to what the church has taught historically. The Baptists came along five hundred years ago and they said—

Jeff: Yeah, I know what you’re saying. But I’m going to argue that, for instance with song, that for the first four hundred years of the church that the church sang the Psalter. And so four hundred years later—

Ted: But that’s simply not true.

Jeff: I know you think that, but I don’t think that. And that’s the way a Baptist is going to respond to you. They’re going to say, “Look, I know you think that about us. But we were there back in the book of Acts.”

Ted: Well, that’s fine. (*Unclear*)

Jeff: You know, here’s the thing. Ted and I talked about this a long time ago. And what we talked about was that when we get to a place like Ephesians chapter 5, we would be having a time where we interact together about that text. And so maybe we ought to—

Ted: I apologize.

Jeff: No, don’t apologize. I think that would be a fun thing for us to do. Anyway, you get the idea. We’re really over time, so we’ll pick back up with our second point the next time. So—

Sig: Are we using the same outline?

Jeff: Yeah. We didn’t get very far into it. Okay, let’s pray. Father in heaven, thank You for this day, for the time You’ve given us, for the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts, for Your word. And Father, thank You for your blessing upon us. We pray it in Christ’s name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)