

“A New Walk” Part 2

The Family of God

Ephesians 4

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Jeff: All right, let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank You for this day. We thank You for Christ our Lord. We thank You for the time that we have to be together and in Your word. We pray, Father, that Your hand of blessing would be upon us. We pray that as we look at this Word which is indeed a means of grace, we pray that our lives may be changed and different. We pray, Father, that we would be transformed not just in the reading of it but in the study of it. We pray, Father, that Your Spirit would be in conformity to our lives in this Word. And Father, we ask it in the precious name of Jesus our Lord.

But not only that. We give you thanks today that our brother Don was preserved. We certainly pray and give You thanks that You watch over us always in Your providence, and that even in death we are united to Christ. And yet, Father, we're thankful for the preservation of Don's life. Lord, we pray that You would help Him with the recovery process. We certainly ask that Your hand would be upon Him.

We give You thanks that Dick is back with us. And we ask that You'll continue to bless him and encourage him. And Father, we pray for our time together, that it would be prosperous. We ask, Lord, that You would do this for us in Christ's name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. All right, so the last time we were together we ended up talking about what constitutes being in the church. And remember that we put that list on the board. We actually put a pale on the board and asked what beliefs we need to have in order to be in the church, or to be saved, (not to be in the church necessarily; I'm using that synonymously at this point with being saved.) But we went through that entire list. And we went through that list because what we were looking at in the book of Ephesians talks about the unity of the faith, and how there is *“one body and one Spirit, ... one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father.”* And unless you have any questions that you want to follow up with about that time I'm going to go ahead and read the Scriptures and then move on to the next point. Yes, Don?

Don Maurer: Yes, Jeff; I guess it's a two-pronged question.

Jeff: Okay.

Don: #1, the bottom line. Why is it that we have so many disagreements among ourselves? Is it our sinfulness primarily, or is it something else other than that? And then secondly, knowing that we're in the situation that we're in, what practical steps can we take to at least ensure that we have some semblance of unity?

Jeff: Well let me start with the latter first. I think that when you have God's word, when you have what we believe to be an infallible Word—infallible because it comes from an infallible God—it's inerrant; it doesn't wander from the truth, and it is inerrant because it comes from a true God, and therefore authoritative. And you have this Word which was inspired by the Spirit of God. And that Word, inspired by the Spirit of God who now resides in every believer, right?

Don: Yes.

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Jeff: Will bring conformity of thought to that Word in the life of the believer. And so I think that the answer to the second question is that the Spirit will continually bring practical and intellectual conformity to the lives of believers.

And why is that? Well for instance, in Romans chapter 6 you find what I think to be a really encouraging text. In verse 16 it says, *“But thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart.”*

Now here’s the key phrase: *“to the standard of teaching to which you were committed”*—the standard or the type of teaching, the *tupos* of teaching—*“to which you were delivered.”* And that idea of being delivered into that form of teaching is a divine passive. This is the work of the Spirit.

And so it’s not simply that one is saved by the work of the Spirit in one’s life. But that Spirit is delivering us into a cruciformed life, into a Christlike pattern. And how do we understand that Christlike pattern? That Christlike pattern is revealed to us in the Word. And so the Spirit from the very beginning is moving us into a pattern that conforms to the teaching of His word.

And so I think the answer to your second question is that we can take confidence that we will have uniformity of thought because of the Spirit and the Word at work in us. So I think that’s the hope.

But I think the answer to your first question—why we have so many divisions—well, I think the answer to that is because of human sinfulness, right? For instance, I’ll never forget that I was at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. And I was studying there after I studied for my M.Div. at RPTS. And I was in a class with a guy from Scotland. And he would always come in and he would tell us about the faculty fights that he just got into.

And so he came in this one day and he was telling us about how he was in this faculty fight in the faculty lounge just before he had come in. Actually he got into these fights just before he came to class. And the retailing was all the better because it would include throwing things and a little bit of vulgarity. (*Laughter*) It was just an entertaining kind of thing to listen to.

But in this one particular class apparently he had been accused of being Eurocentric in his mindset. And he apparently said to this other professor who was chasing him because of that, *“I am a European! How can I not be Eurocentric in my mindset?”*

And the point that I would make is that not only is there sin, but there is diversity within people, right? And so how can there, just by the extension of who we are as people—fragmented over the face of the earth with different languages as a result of Babel and those kinds of things, which are certainly a result of the Fall—how can we not be different sorts of people with different sorts of mindsets, trying to overcome those things by the study of Scripture? We need to take that into consideration when we look at the fragmentation of belief and practice, and so on. So do you want to chase that down a little bit more, Don, or is that—

Don: Well, there isn’t an awful lot you can say. But Paul seems to be so adamant. You have it here in Ephesians. You have it in 1 Corinthians. And Jesus is adamant in John 17. So I guess I just don’t know how to resolve the tension.

Jeff: Well when you think about it, think about what we talked about last time. For instance, think about your denomination and mine.

Don: Yes.

Jeff: I mean, there’s very little that separates us, right?

Don: Right.

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Jeff: It used to be wine, women and song that separated us.

Sig Tragard: Now it’s just women.

Jeff: Now it’s just women and song, right? *(Laughter)*

Don: Well, unfortunately there are other things—

Jeff: Well I’m not talking about the most recent developments.

Don: Okay, all right.

Jeff: But I’m talking about—

Ted Wood: What were the most recent developments?

Jeff: Well, Don’s in there and things have gone quite awry. *(Laughter)* What I’m talking about is what’s on paper.

Sig: He’s silent.

Jeff: The microphone’s in front of you, Don.

Don: No, go ahead; I don’t have anything to say.

Jeff: I’m just saying that at least in terms of the way the PCA was established that there is very little difference.

Don: Yes.

Jeff: So there’s a lot of agreement, right?

Don: Sure.

Jeff: But even when you think about the transmission of sin and how sin was transmitted, for instance our denominations are going to embrace the Westminster Confession. And the explanation of how that sin is transmitted is really left open. So there are all kinds of details that are even in the general agreements that we have where there is a lot of diversity.

Don: True. And there’s not much more that I can say. Thank you.

Jeff: Yes. I don’t think it’s a cause for discouragement. I think there’s a lot of commonality between us. Are you—okay, I didn’t know.

Sig: I wanted to sidetrack this. You brought up the Tower of Babel and that it means multiple languages. But God chose for them not to have one language, right? Weren’t they trying to form one language seeking some kind of unity, and for some reason God stopped that? I’m not clear on the story. But they couldn’t have one language to spread throughout the world.

Jeff: Well, they did have one language and they were supposed to spread over the face of the earth. That was a commandment of God. And they decided to gather in one place and then build the towered in heaven. And so then God said, “I’m going to thwart your plan and I’m going to spread you over the face of the earth anyway. But I’m going to divide your language.” And so—

Sig: But wasn’t that a divine thing, to change their languages, or no?

Jeff: But not a divine blessing; it was a curse.

Sig: Okay.

Jeff: Yeah.

Don Bishop: And Pentecost is the reversal of that.

Jeff: Yes, Pentecost is really the beautiful reversal of that. Yes?

Ted: Sorry, I have to jump into this.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely.

Ted: It’s impulsive. *(Laughter)* I just commend Don for being concerned about it, because it seems to me that it’s a huge blind spot in Protestantism. And if we’re really kind of growing in grace and the Spirit is leading us to more holy living, with disunity

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there is more of that. That sin has exploded in size. For instance there are tens of millions of Protestants in this country that think that being independent of each other is a good thing. And they're proud of it, and they set up all of their own churches. And they don't care about what else is going on in the Christian faith except as it serves them. So to me it's a huge, huge problem. And the Roman church is right in criticizing us in that we have not tackled that. I mean, in the long run how many Reformed Presbyterians are there in the world? Twenty thousand, thirty thousand? What's the denomination size? Is that about right? I think that's about right. I mean, they are as nothing. And here we've got these little groups—me, me, me, me!—and here they're going after each other, disagreeing. And they count for almost nothing. What do we have? How many billion Christians? There are two billion Christians in the world. Is it actually worth fighting over? Hard as it is, I commend Don. It's a huge problem; it's an unfaced problem. And there you go.

Jeff: Let me ask you a question, Ted.

Ted: Yes.

So out of the Reformation you have the principle of the private interpretation of Scripture. When Luther did this the medieval church said, “You're going to have fragmentation all over the place because everybody is going to have the Bible.”

And Luther said, “I'd rather have that than to have medieval Catholicism.” And I agree with Luther. Now I realize that there's a problem. But to say, “Look at you Reformed Presbyterians; there are only twenty thousand of you.” Yes, that's true. But when you look at the Reformed church—not evangelicalism at this point—but when you look at the Reformed church there is unanimity on the way of salvation, on authority, on many of the primary things. There isn't unanimity on some of the secondary doctrines. But the fact of the matter is that whether or not we have formal ties with one another is in one sense neither here nor there, because we have plenty of informal ties with these churches wherein we disagree.

And I personally think that's where denominationalism is a good thing, because when two denominations are willing to critique one another and listen to one another's arguments and perhaps change, that's what I think iron sharpening iron in a denominational context is all about. It's when you have separatism where a denomination says, “I'm not going to talk to you because we're really the remnant.”

But when you have a denomination that says, “You know what? We're not the remnant; we're not the only ones. But we do hold these distinctives, and let's talk.” And every denomination should be open to that sort of thing.

And so that's the Protestantism that is not ideal. But I think it's certainly better than the medieval Catholicism that turns into Roman Catholicism, because that's just as fragmented as the Protestant church. It's just under one head.

Jim O'Brien: Amen.

Jeff: And you know, when you think about their recent moves, there is just as much division there, but it's just under the Pope.

Ted: But in the end they do come together. And—

Jeff: We'll see.

Ted: Well, we'll see. I mean, Catholicism is in crisis right now, and for reasons besides this priest scandal. I mean—

Jeff: Oh yeah; I'm not talking about that.

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Ted: Sure, it’s a much bigger issue. But I hear this argument. We’re really one in spirit, and we don’t have to be one formally. It would be like saying that I’m one with my wife, but just not formally. I mean, all human relationships end up being formalized. And to dismiss the Reformed (I expressed it the wrong way; I apologize), but I think that formality is one important step in spiritual reality; it’s incarnate. We have to incarnate that unity.

Don Maurer: How do we do that though, Ted?

Ted: Well, I mean, to me it’s almost like the toothpaste is out of the tube. And I’m saying that it’s just—

Jeff: Yeah, but the toothpaste got out of the tube a long time ago. You know what I’m saying?

Ted: Yes.

Jeff: I mean, you could say that the toothpaste got out of the tube at the time of the Reformation. But it was really out of the tube before that in medieval Catholicism. There was a really big muddy stream that was rolling through. The Eastern church had broken off. And there was a big Western stream that encompassed a lot of stuff, and there were things going on within that stream.

But here’s the thing. Well anyway, I’ll let you talk.

Ted: I’ll just end my talk right there. That’s fine; it’s a good discussion. I think it’s important. I think we have lots of sins we’re worried about. We’re not worried about the sin of disunity. I just think that’s kind of one of our blind spots.

Jeff: Yeah, but why do you think that? I mean, I’m really curious, because for instance, right now I’m writing three separate articles for three different publications that are concerned with the unity of our different denominations. And so the articles are all about sore of how we can have more involvement with one another in discussions about doctrine and participation one with another and real fellowship, partnering in the gospel and that sort of thing. How can we do that sort of thing?

And you may look at it and say, “Well, yes. But those are just three or four small denominations.” But it’s where I live. It’s sort of like my professor saying, “I am Eurocentric.” Well, I am an RP; that’s who I am.

You know, typically the broader churches are going to listen to my concerns about distinctives in doctrine. So—

Ted: I agree with you. There is a real concern for unity now; I really agree with that.

Jeff: Yes. You’re not going to say anything.

Ted: No. To me it’s an important discussion. But it’s not going to consume the class, and I apologize.

Jeff: Well, it’s in the text and I’m okay with it.

Ted: No, no; that’s fine.

Jeff: Okay. Anybody else?

Jim: the apostle Paul expected a certain amount of unity within diversity. Some people think differently with false teaching.

Jeff: Yeah.

Jim: But I think that we need to expect that there’s going to be some amount of diversity. I think that your point about natural regional differences is exactly on target. No one is saying that there has to be one church with one organized body at the top. Jesus didn’t leave us an apostle, unlike the Roman conviction.

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And Rome isn't at all united. I mean, they have all of the liberal doctrines we have and more. They have all kinds of subsets and groups that keep it together. They have the Mass, and as you say, the Pope. But in the end it all depends on the Spirit. And the Spirit has been pleased to allow the church to live in weakness that God's glory may be seen. I'm not terribly concerned about Baptists starting a feud over local congregational polity and starting independent churches. I think they are legitimate associations. You know, the Roman Catholic apologist who was a Protestant and studied under Gerstner, whoever he is,--

Jeff: Scott Hahn.

Jim: Yeah. That name should never be spoken. *(Laughter)* You know, they say there are two thousand Protestant denominations being founded every day. Praise God that there are two thousand Baptist churches being founded every day. But even there you're starting to see more Reformed guys raised up like Al Mohler and the folks at Southern Seminary, and you have Reformed theology working its way through there. And now you have Presbyterians and Baptists and others working together with the TGC, or whatever that's called.

So I think we do see unity in many things, but in the midst of weakness. And unless you're post-mil, I don't know how you'd ever expect it to be any different. *(Unclear)*

Jeff: Yes; I totally agree.

Don Maurer: One more thing. Last week we talked about what you must believe in order to be a Christian. And of course, for example, we didn't touch on what someone believes about salvation versus reprobation, heaven and hell. Universalism is creeping into a lot of Protestantism. There's the whole issue of morality; I'm not even going to get into that—what constitutes marriage, or whatever—a lot of different things.

Jeff: Yeah, absolutely; there's no doubt. But I think that part of that is not necessarily anything other than that the church has decided not to discipline its members, either informally or formally. And when that happens then what begins to happen is license, right?

So you know, I realize that the marks of the church are oftentimes said to be preaching, the sacraments and discipline, right? But oftentimes what you find is that I think even the Westminster Confession doesn't include discipline as a mark of the church, as a sign of the church's health or lack of health, because they knew that not all churches were practicing discipline. And to make that a mark of the church I think they would have known that they were excluding other churches. So I think that when churches fail to discipline I think that creates the problem of practice that you're mentioning. Someone behind me there.

Brave Man: Yes; I have a comment. Discipline in the church is similar to that in your family. *(Unclear)*

Jeff: When you think about Protestantism, when you think about discipline, I think that all of these accusations as to the fragmentation of it are fair, and they'll manifest themselves most in discipline. So for instance, you know, an evangelical church down the road will take somebody who has been disciplined at another church and sort of welcome them, you know, as sort of the white knight rescuing the poor abused congregant, when in fact maybe that congregant is under a right discipline.

I've noticed that the Reformed church—at least some of the Reformed churches—that the Reformed churches have a fairly small group of men in evangelicalism. But in the Reformed church there are Reformed churches that work with one another. And the ideal

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is that you honor each other’s discipline. So for instance, if the RPCNA would discipline the OPC would honor that discipline in their churches. That’s why church transfers are important from one church to the next. That has even gone by the wayside in Protestantism.

So church transfers are important. Why? Because when you transfer a person he’s transferred with discipline. And so this is why charges are appended to the transfer. And that only works if another denomination is willing to uphold that discipline. And like I said, in a small segment of the Reformed world there are churches that are trying to do that.

You know, in our particular congregation, if somebody comes to us having left another Reformed denomination, or having left another Reformed church within ours, of course, and within another denomination, even if it’s not within that circle of Reformed churches wherein we work, you know, we’ll ask. Have you left that church because of some disciplinary charge or because of, you know, whatever? So we try to honor that.

But that only happens if you’re willing to honor it. I mean, right now churches are in this mindset that we’re losing members at this time. We need to grow. And so what do you do? You collect all the people, and you don’t really care if they’re under discipline or gravitating to another church or not.

I think where Protestantism’s warts sort of come out are not necessarily in our belief system, but in our practice of discipline and behavior as a result. I mean, think about it this way. When you have apologists in early Rome like Justin Martyr, you have them saying, “Look at our lives. Our lives are different from your lives.” You know, this is an apologetic argument, that Christianity is transformative and it makes us different.

I mean, what apologist is going to stand up today and say, “Look at our lives.” I think that if an apologist did stand up and say that the immediate response would be, “Yeah, look at you guys.” By now there are certain things in the church in terms of things that the church has viewed as sins which actually rise above the current percentages happening in the world, you know. It’s not really a strong apologetic argument.

Brave Man: It’s rare that you hear of a church disciplining itself.

Jeff: Yes.

Brave Man: It’s not a subject that is publicly discussed, even in the church.

Jeff: Yes.

Brave Man: And I think that maybe the church should be more open about specific details of what’s been done to a member and why. But we don’t hear about that.

Jeff: No.

Brave Man: I know some things that happened in my church where a person was disciplined. They wouldn’t marry them. It’s unbelievable. They never thought about it.

Jeff: Yeah.

Brave Man: There needs to be more discipline and more of an explanation of what’s going on.

Jeff: My guess is that there is probably a lot of informal shepherding going on, a lot of informal discipline going on, like the person where they refused to marry them, and so on. That probably is actively happening and you don’t know about it. I think where there’s a dearth in formal discipline, for instance, is in excommunication or formal rebukes, or suspension from the Table—you know, somebody who is not permitted to come to the Table and commune—those kinds of things.

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You know, you just don’t hear about those kinds of acts of discipline, and you shouldn’t always hear about them. But sometimes it’s necessary for you to hear about them. I mean, we just had a situation happen in our congregation where we had incorrect teaching that was going through our church. So we sent out a letter to all of our members, correcting the teaching that had been propagated. And in that letter we mentioned a formal rebuke that had been given. We didn’t go into the details or anything. We just said that this person has been rebuked, and here’s the correction to that teaching.

And so I think that kind of thing needs to happen. And it needs to happen in order for there to be some semblance of a church that actually practices the law of God. Okay?

Roger Myers: Jeff, dare we say that liberal theology is another religion, like Machin, as far as religion goes? It’s another religion; it’s not Christianity.

Jeff: No, and that’s the problem. I mean, all you have to do is listen to Christian radio and listen to the Christian artists on there who represent Christianity. And they believe heresy and they sing about heresy. And I’m not just getting down on Christian music, but it’s there. I mean, I don’t know how many times I’ve heard a false view of God on the radio, a heretical view of God on the radio. It’s not only where a singer is being interviewed and not disciplined by her church. But think about all the numbers of people who will sing along with her—you know, a modalistic view of God, or a view of God that’s Marcian in character. The God of the Old Testament was mean and nasty; the God of the New Testament is love, and so on and so forth. You get the idea; it’s there.

Well, somebody actually said something that I think gets us into the next part of this lesson. And what I want you to notice is that there is unity in diversity. I think it might have been Jim who said this. There is unity in diversity. And if you look at this passage, you notice that there’s unity in diversity.

For instance, in the first six verses we find that unity. And that’s really what we talked about the last time. And then in verses 7-12, notice that you find the diversity. The diversity is in the giving of gifts. And then in verses 13-16 you find more unity. And this unity is the result of the diversity.

And so you have to remember that there is unity and there is diversity within the one church. And you know, I’ve probably shared this. It is interesting. Well, I’ll leave it to you to ask.

But diversity of what?, one asks. In other words, is there a diversity of doctrine? In other words, is one permitted to have his own view of God while someone else has another view of God? In other words, really and truly the question becomes Is it okay to have a view of Christ that He is *homo usios* with the Father—of the same substance—and another to have the view that Christ is *homoi usios*, of a similar substance to the Father? In other words, do those two understandings of Christ find one place within the Christian church?

And the answer to that is no. No, that may be the case. You remember what I said before, the last time we were together. That may be the case in the beginning. Let’s say that somebody is being educated by a Jehovah’s Witness and reading the King James Bible because the Jehovah’s Witness is saying, “The King James closely approximates the Green Dragon of ours. Just use that until we get you a Green Dragon.” (*Laughter*)

And in the reading of the King James the Spirit brings life and brings them to saving faith. And so all of a sudden they start to realize that “I don’t think Jehovah’s Witnesses are right, but I don’t know what’s right.” And so they go to the church and they say to the

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pastor, “Look, I’ve been disciple by a Jehovah’s Witness. I don’t know what’s right and what’s wrong.”

“Well, let me begin to ask you some questions. Do you believe that Jesus is God?”

He says, “Of course not. I don’t believe that Jesus is God.”

And the minister says, “Okay, we need to do some educating. This is what the Bible says.”

And the man says, “Ah, I get it now!”, right? You see, his thought is being brought into conformity with what the Holy Spirit has done to him. And the Holy Spirit through leading him away from the Jehovah’s Witnesses and into a church where true doctrine is taught brings conformity to his thinking.

So we’re not talking about diversity of theology. We’re not talking about one believing orthodoxy and another believing heresy and being in the same church, and that’s the diversity we’re all excited about. No, that’s not what we’re talking about. The diversity that we’re talking about is a diversity of gifts.

Remember, I said to you that I’m not going to go into this a great deal. But I want you to remember that this is a victorious King who is leading captives out of captivity and giving gifts along the way. And the point is that when you come to this passage, this part of the text in Ephesians, we find that Christ is giving His people gifts.

And you know, if I could approximate this in some way, I remember Sinclair Ferguson telling the story about when he was a little boy and there was a change in the royal throne, how Elizabeth gave gifts to all the children in every town. Every town received a gift, and every child in every town received a gift. And that’s kind of the approximation of it, right? So Christ is victorious. And in His victorious ascension to the throne He distributes these gifts to all His people. And so that’s the idea.

Now what gifts are we talking about? This is really the question. And if you look at this text you find that it’s different than the Romans 12 text. It’s different than the 1 Corinthians 12 text again.

It is different. Why? Because look at the list of gifts: it’s apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers. And when you look at that gift list you don’t see a lot of other things. You don’t see any of the other things that you see in those other lists.

What is he saying by listing these gifts? Well, what he’s saying is this. He’s saying that we need to put the premium on, or at least right now in terms of his argument, we need to emphasize the gifts that are given to those who handle the revelation of God. So you have apostles and prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. And the common denominator is those who preach and teach, those who handle the word of God.

And why is that important? Well, that’s important because when you think about the argument he just made, you have to remember what he said in chapter 2. In chapter 2 he talks about what? If I can put my eye on it, which I never can, verse 17. “*And He,*” (that is Christ), “*came and preached peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near.*”

Now the question that you have to ask yourself is, when did Jesus Christ ever come to Asia Minor and preach to the Ephesians? And the answer is that He did not. So when did He ever come to Ephesus and preach to those who are far and near?

And the answer that Paul gives in chapter 3. He set himself up as an apostle who came preaching and teaching. But the point is that those who hear Christ hear Him in the teaching of those who are gifted to handle the revelation of God. And I think that’s a clear teaching from the Scriptures.

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For instance, let me take you to the book of Romans just for a minute. In the book of Romans, chapter 10, you find this. And I’m going to read this in two ways. I’m going to read it the way the ESV has it, and then I’m going to read it the right way. (*Laughter*) I like the ESV; don’t get me wrong. But I just don’t think that it’s right here.

Listen to what it says. This is Romans 10, verse 14. “*How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him*”—and here’s the way the ESV has it,—“*of whom they have never heard?*” In other words, how are they to hear about Him?

Now let me read it another way. “*And how are they to believe in Him whom they have never heard?*” In other words, the one way says that you hear about Him. And the other way says that you hear Him. And all you have to do is take out the *of*. And I think you should take out the *of*, because I think that when it’s an accusative the *of* is not demanded. It shouldn’t be placed in there, although I know that you can translate it either way.

And yet the point is that I think that, as oftentimes is the case, grammar never settles the theological issue. Grammar is helpful. Grammar is helpful. And if you don’t know the grammar then you’re not going to approximate the theological issues. But grammar rarely solves the theological issue, and in this case it doesn’t.

And I think that what you have to understand is that you have to understand that what we’re hearing here is Paul telling us that when the person who is gifted to handle the revelation of God faithfully speaks the word of God, the people are hearing the voice of Christ in that voice of the apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher.

Now this is a list. And obviously we could pause here and rest on this for a while. The question would be well, what about the apostles? Are there any other apostles? And I think we have to answer that by saying no. I know there are churches that certainly believe that there are. But I think they are sincerely wrong. And I think you have to remind yourself that when we talk about the church as apostolic we don’t mean that the apostolic line continues, but that the apostolic teaching continues.

And then you have to ask yourself, for instance, well what about prophets? And somebody is going to say well, wait a minute. What about prophets? Don’t we have prophets today? And I’m going to say no. That’s an office that ceased.

And you’re going to say to me, “Well, wait a minute. That’s in the Scriptures.” And I’m going to say, “Wait a minute; so is the apostle. And yet we just talked about that office having ceased.” And so I think this about the apostles and the prophets.

Some believe the evangelists have ceased. I don’t have a strong opinion on that either way. But certainly you have pastors and teachers. And I think that really what you have is that you have this progression of offices that are useful in the unfolding of the progress of redemption and the unfolding plan of redemptive history. And I think that really what you’re left with is evangelists, pastors and teachers, or perhaps just pastors and teachers.

But that’s the diversity in the unity. And the question you have to ask is, for what purpose? For what purpose is there this diversity of gifts?

And the answer is given in the unity section. And what is that answer? Well, in verse 12. It’s for “*the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.*” In other words, when you think about it you have this diversity of gifts to handle the revelation of God, that the people of God might be built up into one body which is under the head of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so that’s the idea that we’re teaching here.

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And the question then becomes (and it demands it, doesn't it?), what then is the importance of the Bible? And if you think about this in terms of the diversity of gifts given to handle the revelation of God, that they might teach the people of God so that the people of God might be built up in the body of Christ under the one head of Christ, then the question becomes as to the importance of the Bible. What is it?

And the importance of the Bible is in 2 Timothy 3:16; I think I have it up here. *“All Scripture is God-breathed out, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”*

A couple of interesting things about that. Notice that *“all Scripture is God-breathed out.”* And this translation is trying to express the idea behind the word *theopneustos*. It's trying to capture this idea that it's not simply this person sitting and watching the landscape and seeing the sunset, and being so inspired that he himself paints a replica of it. No, that's not inspiration, not according to the Biblical understanding of inspiration.

The biblical understanding of inspiration is that God expires or breathes out these words by His Holy Spirit. And His Holy Spirit who inspired this individual to write writes. And that inspiration is immediate. In other words, it's an immediate act by the Spirit of God upon the writer of Scripture, such that not only are his thoughts influenced by the Spirit, but his use of language is, so that the actual product is from God Himself.

You know, there was a time early on in the late nineteenth century or early twentieth century where inspiration was sort of a doctrine that was banded about. But there wasn't really a whole lot of construction done with regard to it. So the word *inspiration* was used in some haphazard way. And so B. B. Warfield and A. A. Hodge come along and they say, look. This is a mess, what we have here in terms of the use of inspiration. So we're going to basically give it a definition. And we're going to use that definition every time we write a book, every time we write an article, and so on.

And I think that's constructive theology. And that's what the old Princetonians did. Of course the liberals chafed against that because it really did solidify in many ways our understanding today of what inspiration is. But the idea was that this is God-breathed out.

And it wasn't just this. For instance, even some good guys back in those days said, “How does this work?” Well, the Spirit influences the thought life. Shedd said this, for instance. Shedd said that the Spirit influences the thought life. But inspiration, well that's another thing. So the mind receives revelation. But the inspiration is not a knowledge factor.

So how does inspiration come about? Well, it comes about by the connection between cognition and linguistic theory. And so there's this tight connection. But there's not an influence of the divine upon the choice of words. That happens in the influence of thought.

And so what happens is, the person writes but the product isn't as tightly controlled immediately as is the thought life. And B. B. Warfield and Hodge came along and they said, “You know what? We've got to rethink this and bring this more in line with what the Bible says the Scriptures are, that is the word of God.” So it's not only the thought life that's inspired, but it's actually the words themselves, the verbal clarity aspect of inspiration. All of these words are God's words, and not just the thoughts behind these words.

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And so I think that when we have “all Scripture is God-breathed out,” that captures it. And it is His word. Again we talk about it being an infallible Word. Infallibility means that it’s a true Word. And it’s a true Word that doesn’t wander from the truth.

Do you remember the Knight Errant, the knight who wanders about? Well, this is an inerrant Word. It doesn’t wander. It doesn’t wander from what? It doesn’t wander from the truth.

And therefore it’s good for these things: *“for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”* And the point is, notice that these kinds of words also bring into purview the idea of discipline. These words talk about correction. And so we shouldn’t shy away from that. And so when we think about the importance of Scripture, that’s it.

Well, that leads to the next point. And I’m not going to do that because I have a doctor’s appointment. And hopefully he’s going to wave his magic wand over my ear and I’ll get my hearing back. But hey, one point at a time is pretty good. *(Laughter)*

Jim: When you say “God-breathed out,” is that the same thing as saying that God spoke or speaks?

Jeff: Yes.

Jim: Because I’m breathing out now—perhaps germs!

Jeff: Yeah. *(Laughter)*

Jim: As I’m speaking, simply by breathing out.

Jeff: Yeah.

Jim: As opposed to God spoke the Scriptures.

Jeff: The verbal, plenary view of inspiration. It’s Him breathing out words. And all the words that are there are His, absolutely. Thanks for that clarification. All right. Let me pray and then we’ll get out of here.

Sig: Jeff, before you pray and leave us, are you okay teaching us on Good Friday, next Friday?

Jeff: I’m okay teaching on bad Fridays too. *(Laughter)* That’s a Presbyterian joke.

Sig: I was going to say. Do you even honor Easter? I know you don’t have Ash Wednesday. Easter’s not even a holiday.

Ted: Presbyterians have no liturgy at all.

Jeff: See that! Never mind: I’m not going to do it.

Don Maurer: Jeff was at my church on Good Friday when I preached two years ago.

Jeff: That’s only because of my love for you, Don. *(Laughter)*

Sig: So we can expect you here next Friday?

Jeff: Yeah.

Sig: Excellent. And we’ll start with Iv?

Jeff: Yeah. I may make a new outline and take those previous ones out.

Sig: We’ll be here next Friday, men.

Don Maurer: Jeff, can we pray that your hearing will come back?

Jeff: Yes, please; pray for that. I’m happy for that to happen.

Don Maurer: Father, we pray that in Your goodness and Your mercy, Lord, that You would be pleased to restore the hearing in Jeff’s ear today. And I pray, Father, that You would give the doctor wisdom to know how to proceed in that direction. We pray in Christ’s name. Amen.

Jeff: Amen. Thank you, Don. *(Applause)*