

***“A New Walk”* Part 3**

The Family of God

Ephesians 4:17-30

Rev. Jeff Stivason, Ph.D.

April 2, 2021

Jeff: Our Father in heaven, we are thankful for the day and thankful for the time to be together. We're thankful that we can gather and be in Your word. And Lord, we pray that You'll bless us in it. We know that You use it to strengthen our lives and to strengthen our thinking, and Father, we thank You for that.

But Lord, we know that it's not simply a book. We know that it's an inspired book. We know that it's inspired by Your Spirit who also dwells within us. And therefore He takes up this Word which is His, and He uses it in our lives to strengthen us.

Father, as we come we thank You for it, knowing that we do indeed derive comfort and strength from it. We pray that You'll use it in our lives this morning.

We pray that You'll also be with Bruce as he heads into another surgery. And Lord, we ask that Your hand would be upon him for good. We're thankful for His life and for the many ways in which You've used him both in the corporate world and in the military operations in which he has served in Vietnam by establishing an orphanage, through the many Bible studies that he's led through his preaching. All these things have touched people's lives in many and different ways. And we're thankful for this one life that You've used so variously and abundantly. And we pray now that You'll continue to preserve that life even as he goes into this next surgery.

Father, we're thankful for our brother Don. And we are especially thankful for him this morning, and for his continued healing after the accident. We pray, Father, that You'll continue to bless him and clear up his soreness and the stiffness in his fingers. And we pray, Father, that You will minister to him greatly, not only in body but in heart and in mind. And Father, we're thankful for him, praying that You would always bless him.

Lord, we ask now that You'll bless us in this different time of our cultural existence. And Father, we pray that we would love one another, because oftentimes in these days it's tempting to be angry or bitter or disgruntled about any number of things. And so we pray that the peace of Your presence would abide upon us in such a way that we would know it, and that we would then manifest it. And if we don't then let it be to our shame. Father, we pray and ask that You'll sustain us. And more than anything we pray that You would bring glory to Yourself, for we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay, now you can pass that basket. Well let me have us turn to Ephesians. And I'm going to read Ephesians 4, verses 17 to the end of the chapter. And Don, are you interested in reading? Kirk, can you give Don a hand?

Don Maurer: Yes, I can read it if you want.

Jeff: If you would like to read it that would be great. I'll let you get to your seat.

Don: All right.

Jeff: So let me give a little intro and give Don a little opportunity to get to his seat and open the Word. So let me sort of build where we are and where we're going.

Last time we talked together about unity. And we talked about unity from the perspective of unity and diversity. The Bible tells us in this particular section that we

“A New Walk” Part 3

have unity. And then it tells us that we enjoy diversity. And then it tells us that we need to exemplify unity.

And it does that by saying this. You have one God and one faith and one baptism, and so on. Then it says that there are various gifts that will manifest that unity, and that’s the diversity. And then it says that those gifts—and remember, we looked at the gifts last time and noticed that all of those gifts at that particular point were not the multiple and various gifts that we sometimes think about when we think about the whole body serving one another. There were teaching-oriented or revelation-oriented gifts. They were prophets and apostles and preachers and teachers, and those sorts of things. And it was through that administration of diversity that we learn about the unity of the one mind, one Spirit, one baptism, one faith. And so the emphasis was on unity. And it was on the objective aspect of unity.

What do I mean by the objective aspect of unity? now that’s an important question because we’re going to be thinking today about objective and subjective.

When you think about objective and subjective you have a tendency to think about the objective which is concrete, and the subjective as that which is not. So for instance, take an example. If I look over Don’s shoulder and he’s underlining in his Bible. And he’s underlining in his Bible and I say, “Don, that line that you’re drawing underneath your Braille is not straight at all,” right? That would be subjective. Or if I did that to any one of you guys, Like Sig—

Don: Jeff, that would never happen with my Bible.

Jeff: Yes. (*Laughter*) If I did that to Sig and looked over his shoulder and he was underlining, and he wasn’t using anything to do it with; he was just free-handing it, I would look at the line and I would say to him, “Sig, that’s probably the most crooked line I’ve ever seen. So why don’t you take this ruler, this objective standard, and put it underneath the words? And then take your pencil and draw a line across the page underneath those words.” And that would be the objective standard that he would bring so that he would have a straight line.

We think about that in other ways, too. That kind of thing is obvious to us in so many ways, but only when we think about it. For instance, think about our marriage vows and our marriages. If you think about our marriage vows, it’s an objective standard. Somebody says, “What ought you to be as a husband or as a wife?”

You would say, “Well, my marriage vows give me a pretty good idea as to what I ought to be and do.” And then if I were to say to you, “Well, do you always live up to those marriage vows?”, you would have to say to me, “Well, no; I guess I don’t.”

And so subjectively I’m drawing a line that’s more crooked than those marriage vows are drawing for me. The marriage vows are drawing an objective line and I’m drawing a more crooked line. What’s the thing that helps me to bridge the gap then between the objective and the subjective with regard to something like that?

And the answer to that is *faithfulness*. If I have this objective standard of marriage vows, and I have my life which is more crooked than those vows, then what I’m trying to apply is faithfulness in order to bring my life into conformity with those marriage vows. And so faithfulness in some ways becomes my bridge between those two concepts, those two ideas.

“A New Walk” Part 3

Now we talked a lot about objectivity the last time. And when you think about objectivity you think about what Paul said. There’s one God and one Lord and one faith and one baptism, and so on.

And then he went on to say that there are preachers and teachers and so on that will help you to understand what those things are. That’s the diversity of gifts. And then he went on to tell us that these diversities of gifts were given that we might be faithful to the objective standard that we were given early on. So the faithfulness is key and crucial.

Now today we’re going to be leaving that behind. But it’s important for us to think about that as our basic context. We’re going to be leaving that behind because today Paul is going to move us into thinking about the subjective aspect that we need to apply and think about in order to stretch forth in faithfulness to that unity that is objective. And so today we’re going to think about not subjectivity apart from unity, because we can never do that. We can never think about the subjectivity of our marriage vows apart from the objectivity of them; you just can’t. You can’t really think about the objectivity of them unless you’re single. You can’t think about the objectivity of them without thinking about the subjectivity of them. So both of those aspects are going to be in play. But we’re going to be thinking primarily about subjectivity today. So with that, Don, why don’t you take up Ephesians 4:17? And then you can read to the end of the chapter for us.

Don: Okay. *“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*

“But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

“Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak 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 wrath, nor give place to the devil.

“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: All right. Well, let’s think today about three aspects of a good gait—of a good walk, a good stride. And the first one I want us to think about is *unity*. And this goes back to what I already said. There’s a sense in which there’s an objective standard that we have to observe every time we live the Christian life. And that objective standard is the word of God. That objective standard is not just an arbitrary opinion. It is, as I said, the

“A New Walk” Part 3

inspired word of God. It is given to us for our benefit. 2 Timothy 3:16 is very clear about what it’s good for.

Transcriber’s Note: 2 Timothy 3:16, NKJV. *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”*

Jeff: And it’s inspired of God for that purpose. Now when you think about that Word, again that’s the objective aspect. And when you think about orthotics, for instance, remember the illustration of the orthotics that I gave you early on. The orthotics were the braces. And the limb was crooked and you had to put the brace behind the limb. And then with the limb you put some weight on it and you get some exercise for it. Hopefully the limb will at least conform to the orthotic.

And so that’s the way of it with the Word. We put the Word up against our lives and the Holy Spirit brings conformity between our lives and the Word. And remember that the gap that we have to bridge is faithfulness. We have to be faithful to the Word. We won’t be perfect, but we have to be faithful to it. And in faithfulness that’s the Holy Spirit bringing conformity to it.

So we need to think about unity in this subjective way. How is it that I can be faithful to what God has given me to do in His word? And I think the important thing that we have to remember at this point when we think about it in this way is that we must not say that the church must achieve unity, because that’s where you can get all tangled up.

I want you to think about it like this for a minute. If you are thinking about Christ’s prayer in John 17, you know you might come away from that and say to yourselves, “Well, I guess Jesus prayed for unity and His prayer wasn’t answered yet.”

Or you could look at it like this. You could look at it from the perspective of Ephesians chapter 4 early on. There is one faith and there is one church and there is one baptism—you know, that sort of thing. And then you would say to yourself, “Wait a minute. What’s going on here?” Is there a disconnect between Ephesians 4 and John 17?

And you would say no; there’s no disconnect. There’s no disconnect at all because the church in Jesus Christ is united. That’s the objectivity that we talked about. The church is one. It is catholic in the sense that it’s universal. Why is it universal? Not because it’s geographical.

Remember, early on the church talked about them being catholic, but not because of geography. The church was catholic even when Noah and his family were alone in the world. That was the catholic church. So there’s a sense in which the catholicity of the church has to do with those who belong to God by virtue of their election in Jesus Christ. And so there’s a catholic church.

Now that doesn’t mean that it doesn’t have a visible expression. But that’s where we go when we think of this subjectivity. And the point is that if we start saying that there is no objectivity, then it is upon us to create the unity. But instead what we ought to be saying is that the church is united. And if the church is united, what does this prayer of Jesus mean? It means that the church doesn’t always manifest its unity.

And so what do we have to do? Well, we need to remember to start with the objective. And the objective is simple and straightforward. The church is united. And so we must become what it is that we are.

“A New Walk” Part 3

Now I think somebody may quibble about that and say, “Well, you know, that’s just nuancing; that’s slicing.” And I don’t think that at all. For instance I want you to think about an illustration that I’ve used in another context when we’ve talked about salvation.

I’ve talked about how when you think about a baby, the smallest that a baby is—and I hope there are no doctors here because I don’t know if this is actually the case or not,—but my understanding is that a zygote is the smallest stage of a human being in the mother’s womb. And the question that you have to ask is, how many chromosomes does that zygote have? And the answer is that it has 23 pairs. It has 46 altogether—23 from Mom, 23 from Dad.

And when you think about that you think to yourself, well, it’s got all the genetic information that it needs when it’s 46 years old or 66 years old or 86 years old. It will never have more genetic information than that. It has all that it needs to become what it in fact is.

And so there’s a sense in which we can apply that to the church. The church is as unified as it will ever be in Jesus Christ. In Christ the church is unified. But having acknowledged that, we need to become and grow up into who and what we are.

Remember that a couple of times ago that I showed you that baby with the big head. And I told you that a baby when it’s just really small his head is just 40% the size it will be when he’s an adult. So they actually have to grow up into their head.

And that’s the way of it. We as a church have to grow up into our Head who is Jesus Christ. So we need to start by remembering the objective. There is unity in Jesus Christ. And therefore the subjective element is that we need to become what it is that we re.

How do we do that? Well, we do that by faithfulness. And so that means that a big help is our own expression of unity. It’s a huge help when we are giving expression to the reality that is there.

Let me ask you a question just to make sure that you’re tracking with me. Do you see the difference between somebody saying that the church is not united, and so we need to create and foster unity. And that usually gives expression to any creative idea that comes across one’s mind, right?, because we just need to make this happen, versus somebody that says that there is unity already. And we need to find the way that God wants us to best express that unity that’s already there. Do you see the difference between those two things? And if you don’t let’s talk about it for a minute, and maybe you have a question. Yes, Don?

Don: Jeff, the first example that you gave—achieving unity and doing anything to accomplish it—has resulted in all kinds of bad things over the years, particularly in the last century, where denominations tried to get together with the lowest common denominator, and every conceivable doctrine was thrown out.

Jeff: Yeah. We’ll be coming back to what you’ve just said there, Don. So I’m going to hold off on that. Ted?

Kirk Ellerbusch: Next week I’m going to ask that Don and Ted sit together.
(Laughter) (Laughter)

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Ted Wood: You know, Jeff, I’m tracking with you completely.

Jeff: Okay.

“A New Walk” Part 3

Ted: This is bigger than the issue of unity. I often think about the 28 attributes of God that Bruce Bickel taught about.

Sig Tragard: He actually has more than that; Bruce only knew of 28. *(Laughter)*

Ted: I understand. But here’s the thing. Every attribute of God is an objective reality.

Jeff: Right.

Ted: And it’s ours in Christ and we’re to experience it. So one of the attributes of God was unity. And we are to experience that, using the expression that the experience is subjective. One of His attributes is justice; we’re to experience that. Love; we’re to experience that. When you go through any of those attributes I guess we would have to ask the question. If we are righteousness in Christ (and that would be an attribute, his righteousness), shouldn’t we create or foster righteousness? Should we create or foster love? We’re to encourage it. I mean, we encourage one another to love each other. That’s an attribute of God; it’s objective. The subjective is the encouragement of that. So to me this is a huge, huge point to be made.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: If you end up saying that we have unity because we see it and we experience it, you’re going to fail. **Jeff:** Yeah.

Ted: It’s the same way with righteousness. Some people say, “Well, we need to act out our Christian faith because that’s how people will know we’re Christians. And they’ll come to know Jesus because of our witness, and the only Bible that somebody may read is you.” I have problems with that because the experience is so paltry and anemic compared to the reality. But nonetheless I don’t have any joy or satisfaction or hope or anything without the objective reality.

to **Jeff:** Yeah. That’s really helpful. And I’m glad you set it up with the attributes of God. Let me use that as sort of a Segway into something else here that you said.

When you think about God we oftentimes think about Him in terms of His attributes, right? And you can name them. You can name His attributes whether they’re communicable or incommunicable, right? Holiness, goodness, justice and truth, and all of these things, right? And we always have a tendency to think about God in His attributes.

But one of the things that we forget about today is something called *the simplicity of God*. And the simplicity of God basically says that God is not a God of parts. The simplicity of God says that God is simple and can’t be divided. And the reason He is divided in terms of attributes is because of us, right?

Ted: Yeah.

Jeff: Because creation, and the way that He’s made us, demands that we understand the Infinite in an accommodated way. It would be impossible for us to contemplate God in His simplicity. We can and we must and we need to acknowledge it. And that, for instance, is why we say that God is not a God of parts or passions, but is simple.

And yet God manifests Himself. He demonstrates or teaches us about Himself in ways that seem as if He’s made up of parts. And so I would say to you that that’s a great example that reminds us that there’s a unity in God called simplicity that means that God is His essence, and that there are no parts in Him. But as He acts in creation we say, “Oh, that’s His justice,” or “That’s His holiness.” Do you get it?

And my point is that we see in that fragmented way. And by necessity we see in that way.

“A New Walk” Part 3

So now bring that into the church. And I’m going to start with the lowest common denominator. Like Ted said, if we say “I see the unity of the church here or there,” let’s say that I can see the unity of the church in my own congregation. There is a sense in which that’s true. And yet if I claim that that approximates the unity of the church of Christ then I have a very small view of the unity of the church, very small.

It’s just like if I were to say, “Oh yes; I get the simplicity of God,” right? Well, as soon as I begin to talk about God I begin to talk about Him in parts, because I know this is true because of what the Bible says. But I’m built in such a way that, for instance, let’s say that I talk about the eternity of God. I say that I’ve got the eternity of God; I have it grasped.

“Oh, you do?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, explain for me the eternal generation of the Son without using temporal language in order to do it.” (*Laughter*)

“Oh, I guess I can’t do that,” right? There’s a sense in which we’ve got to take on board that the finite cannot contain the Infinite. I cannot give full expression. So I need always to be careful when I talk about larger concepts that I must admit are there, and yet that I’m trying to approximate.

So let’s bring it into the church, men. Let’s take a lowest common denominator issue. Let’s take Romans 14 and 15. Romans 14 and 15 have to do with what we call *adiaphora*, or things that are indifferent. These are things that divide us. These things that are indifferent divide us. They’re nonessential issues.

Don: Like Good Friday?

Jeff: Things like-- Don! (*Laughter*) Are you preaching? Are you preaching today? (*Laughter*)

Don: Yes.

Jeff: Look at him! Look at him! That’s recorded, I want you to know. You’re going to have to transcribe what you just said. (*Laughter*)

Don: (*nonchalant*): I know. (*Laughter*) So *adiaphora*. How about instead of using that one, Don, let’s use the one Paul uses. Let’s use food sacrificed to idols.

Don: Okay.

Jeff: All right.

Don: Well, he does mention one day being—

Jeff: I’m harassing you, Don. So let’s use food sacrificed to idols. In Romans 14 and 15 Paul says that this divides the church.

Now think about it. This is one of the smallest things. We talk about essential doctrines and we talk about nonessential doctrines. And then we talk about *adiaphora*. And Paul says that this divides the church. One person says, “You can’t eat that meat.” Another person says, “Oh yes, you can.” We have division over a thing that is indifferent and doesn’t matter.

And yet Paul would come along and say this to us. He would say, “You guys have unity.”

Now if the person who doesn’t eat meat sacrificed to idols forms a group and calls it “we, the no meat eaters to pagan gods”—you know, something like that; it’s the We

“A New Walk” Part 3

Group. If he says, “We have unity,” they have a very small view of unity, don’t they? Very small.

And so the point is that we need to understand that unity is much larger. This kind of goes back to the person who sort of goes to every church he can find and finds a problem with every church he enters, and then withdraws and says, “I’m the only one.” Wow! I mean, forget about everything else and just imagine the ego that it takes to say, “I guess I’m the last one that God has reserved to be faithful in this world.”

But think about that with regard to small groups. That’s why every denomination that’s faithful to Christ has to have the idea and the view that unity doesn’t reside in them alone; that unity is in Christ. And they may be trying within their own circle to give visible expression to unity. But there’s always the need, there’s always the must to grow into the unity with other believers that is already there. All right?

Now I give you this because this in my mind parallels thinking this way. Let’s say for instance that somebody says, “The main attribute of God is.” You know, you oftentimes hear that. And I don’t think for instance that R. C. Sproul would say that the main overarching attribute is holiness, even though it’s mentioned three times. He would come back and say no. You can’t say that when you think about the simplicity of God. It is the attribute that is emphasized most in the Scripture. But it doesn’t have preeminence. Or love, or any one of those things. No, the simplicity of God demands that we don’t see God in terms of parts. We see God in this way because this is the way we have to see Him because of who we are as human beings.

But by the same token we do see divisions within the church, I think, because we’re fragmented and sinful people. And it’s a stretch for us to see beyond the fragmentation. We even have trouble over nonessentials, or what we call nonessentials. And then we get up to essentials, and then remember that we listed them on the board. Okay, what are the essentials? What does a person have to believe in order to be a Christian? And we put all these up on the board. And we still had to say that well, I guess a person can come to saving faith and then learn about these things. And that’s what I want to throw up in front of you now.

The unity of the faith is something he talks about in connection with the knowledge of the Son of God. Now why is that important? Well, I shouldn’t have erased this. Let me put this back up; I want to stay with this just for a minute.

What’s the issue with *adiaphora*? The issue with *adiaphora* is that some have a weak conscience and some have a strong conscience. Now what is conscience? Well, it’s made up of prefix and a word. If you take off the prefix you have the word *science*. And the word *science* means knowledge, right? And the prefix means *with*.

When you act in conscience you act with or according to knowledge. Now Disney has this all screwed up for us. (*Laughter*) Because Disney says that your conscience is too little people that live inside of you. And one has wings and one has a horn. And the one with the horn is always whispering and telling you to do the thing that you probably ought not to be doing. And the one with the halo and the wings is telling you in a very sweet voice, “No; don’t don’t!”

And then you know how this works out in Disney. The little devil comes over and kicks the slop out of the angel on the other side of the shoulder. And the guy does what he’s not supposed to do.

“A New Walk” Part 3

That is not conscience. Conscience is acting with or according to the level of knowledge that you have at the current moment. That is why Paul gives every indication that we are not to beat people up who have a different conscience. Why? Because that could be destructive to them, because when a person acts against the knowledge that he has, when they act against the knowledge that they have, they will do irreparable damage to themselves.

So Paul talks about how we ought to educate and help one another. And he does this in an interesting way. Actually, he does it in a subtle way. I’ll just show it to you briefly in Romans chapter 15.

In verse 4 he says, *“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”* Do you see how he slips that in at the end?

Now he says, “Now how is the weak person, how is the weak conscience going to gain more knowledge?” Well hey, there are these Scriptures that are written for our instruction so that we might grow in knowledge.

But all along Paul is telling the strong. He says, “Now do not force your brother to eat this meat because that will be destructive to him.” But to the weak he says, “You know, there are these Scriptures. And these Scriptures teach us and they educate us and they form our conscience.” And the more informed in our consciences we become, the less we have a problem with things that aren’t really a problem.

And then guess what begins to happen? We can have more unity with the brothers, because when the strong doesn’t beat up on the weak, but actually talks to them, and when the weak actually read their Scriptures and allow the Spirit to conform their thinking to them, what begins to happen is that weak and strong begin to grow together and manifest a unity that is actually there.

And so knowledge becomes an enormous factor not just in terms of bringing people together in regard to *adiaphora* issues. But knowledge becomes a crucial factor when it comes to bringing people together across the board.

Now I know that this is where we get into the difficulty. As soon as we step into the nonessential realm we’re going to talk about the same kind of things. The nonessential realm is also going to have knowledge as its basis for unity. Why? Because the Scriptures are God’s objective word that brings unity to our thinking and practice. And as soon as we step into those nonessentials what begins to happen? Well, you know, what immediately comes to mind is baptism—believer baptism or pedo-baptism? Who’s right?

Well, that’s not a nonessential. If Paul walked into the door and said to us today, “Now who’s baptizing who? Are all of your children baptized?” I’m going to say it because I’m a Presbyterian. “Are all your children baptized?”

And some of you say, “No, no, no. Our children are not baptized.”

And he’s going to say, “What?” And you’re going to say, “Wait a minute! That’s a nonessential!”

And Paul is going to say, “Who said that baptism is a nonessential?”

And we say, “Well, we say it’s a nonessential because we don’t want to create an unnecessary division with regard to salvation between this brother and myself, and so we talk about it being a nonessential. But we know it’s essential.” And he says, “It’s essential!” (*Laughter*) That sort of thing, right?

“A New Walk” Part 3

And so we have to understand that as soon as we step outside of eating meat sacrificed to idols we are in a quagmire. But we have to remember what it is that will bring unity. It is God’s word and His Spirit that will bring a basis for knowledge just like it did here for unity between the brothers.

Now as soon as I say that, that looks whew! But I would say to you that the Word is the objective standard. I am my own subjective individual or denomination. And there needs to be faithfulness exemplified in order to bring me or my denomination into conformity with the objective standard. And I realize that we’re all going to say—every last one of us is going to say, “You’re a Presbyterian. You think all of those Baptists ought to be baptizing their babies.”

And then Baptists are going to say, “Those Presbyterians are not doing the right thing by baptizing those babies.” And I realize that it looks like a mess. And yet I’m telling you what I think the Scriptures say. The Scriptures tell us that the Word and Spirit is the mechanism for unity, despite how it looks. Go ahead, Don.

Don: Jeff, just for the sake of the transcript, what do you mean by “This looks whew!” What does that mean? (*Laughter*)

Jeff: This looks whew! What did I say?

Don: I think you were talking about unity. You said, “Now I realize that somebody is going to say that this looks whew!”

Jeff: Oh yes; we don’t look very unified.

Don: Oh, all right.

Jeff: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sig: He sounded just like Paul, didn’t he?” (*Laughter*)

Jeff: So again this takes us back to the objective and the subjective. And I give this example of the pledge and the soldier. But let me give you another example that I think is important for today. I want to give you a practical cultural example that we are now facing as a nation. And it’s going to cause huge disunity for us as a nation.

We have people who have been taught for years and years and years to think not in terms of absolute and relative. There’s a philosopher by the name of Richard Rorty. He died several years ago. But he taught at the University of Virginia. He’s a dangerous man because he’s so winsome and he writes so well. But he said that we need to start talking to each other in persuasive ways, and forget about this talk about absolutes and relativism.

And I think what he means is that he’s pulling up a guy by the name of Wittgenstein. And I think that Wittgenstein is a guy that you may or may not know in philosophy. But Wittgenstein is the guy that you probably had experienced, because Wittgenstein is famous for what we know of as *language games*.

Now let me put it to you in a simple way. A language game is this. Over here I am working on a construction site. And somebody says over her, just at random, “Board!”

Don: B-o-r-e-d, or—

Jeff: Well, I don’t know. That’s the question, right? And it immediately gets us into a quagmire because is it b-o-r-e-d, or is he yelling b-o-a-r-d? And the question is one that proves that Don is an outsider to the construction world. Don does not operate in the sphere of the construction world. If Don operated in the sphere of the construction world,

“A New Walk” Part 3

Don’s going to interrupt me right now and say, “Oh no; I get it. This is a noun. This describes a piece of wood.”

And I’m going to say, “No. It may describe a piece of wood. But if I’m in the construction world, board may be an imperative. It may be a command to my helper.” In other words, “Bring me another board,” right?

So what Wittgenstein would say is, look. It all depends on the sphere. And you have to live in that sphere to understand that language.

So for instance, we can have a sphere of science. And we have a different language. Or we have the sphere of the church. And in the church we have a language. We talk about resurrection in the sphere of the church. But we don’t talk about resurrection in the sphere of science. And this is why so many kids today can go to public school and be so comfortable with what they’re learning in the realm of science, and then come into the church and be so comfortable with what they’re learning in the church. And the two world never meet.

And then what happens is that when there is no absolute truth but there is just persuasion on the basis of language games, you have what Alexander Macintyre calls “*emotivism*” in his book *After Virtue*. *And emotivism is that I need to be true to myself.*

So today we have trans-genderism. And people say, “I need to be true to me.”

Now what we would say is this, and I’m not being crass at this point. But I need to say this in order for you to understand the difference between the objective and the subjective. We would want to say to them, no, there is objective truth. And all you have to do is take off your clothes and look in the mirror, and biology will tell you what you are.

That’s the objective standard that you need to look at. And you need to bring your subjective thinking into conformity with it. The trouble is that despite the fact that God has made this world and said that He reveals Himself in it, we suppress it in unrighteousness so that when somebody like a judge is being confirmed, and they ask him about natural law, and he believes it, and they say to him, “We don’t believe it. No one believes in natural law anymore.” Why is it that they don’t believe in natural law anymore? Because if you believe in natural law, the person who stands in front of the mirror and sees what biology tells them has to see that as an objective standard.

But if you no longer believe in natural law, then my biology is no longer an absolute standard for me. And you see, the point that I’m making is this. The point that I’m making is, there is an objective standard. There is a subjective person or denomination. And the bridge that gets us between the subjective and the objective is faithfulness—faithfulness to the objective.

You say, “Well, how does that work out with the trans-gender person?” I’ll tell you how it works out. They may not be able to come to grips with who they are subjectively. They’ve been instructed and taught that they need to be true to themselves for so long that they’re struggling with it.

But what do you say to them? You tell them this. You say, look. The objective standard is still objective and it’s true. And I want to acknowledge your subjective feelings. But you need to work to bring yourself into conformity with the objective. And as you do your thinking will change.

This is not any different than what I tell a man or a woman who sits in front of me with their husbands or their wives and say to me, “I don’t love him anymore.” Do you

“A New Walk” Part 3

know what I tell them to do? I tell them, “Well, act like you love him.” And oftentimes when you act like you love him, the feelings will follow, because you’ll be acting according to your objective standard; that would be your wedding vows. And the more you act according to the standard the more your feelings will be brought in line, because that’s the way we are.

Our feelings are meant to follow our thinking. The trouble is that we oftentimes demand that our thinking must follow our feelings. But we’re not created that way. We’re created so that we can be thinking, rational human beings. And our feelings in the best sense will follow our thinking.

So that’s one aspect of a good gait. (*Laughter*) We didn’t get to the next two yet. I’m going to stand right in front of you.

Transcriber’s Note: Referring to Sig.

Jeff: I just noticed that.

Sig: Well you could move your board.

Jeff: Any last questions or thoughts before we wind it up? Go ahead, Ted.

Ted: I can talk louder. Can everybody hear me? I’m dealing with this at work now, where the primary nonprofit organizing body in the area where I do a lot of work is now promoting very heavily. I have no idea where it came from. I’m stunned that it’s become so prominent.

Jeff: Okay.

Ted: And if I were to go and speak up and say, “I don’t agree with that,” I would not get another job at that point.

Jeff: Oh yeah.

Ted: This is where it’s coming down to. It’s a very interesting discussion. And the point is that we used to fear big government. The government was going to take over our lives. It’s not big government.

Jeff: No.

Ted: It’s corporate; it’s big corporations.

Jeff: That’s it.

Ted: They’re buying it lock, stock and barrel. Brothers, this is where the persecution is going to come from in the future.

Jeff: You’re right.

Ted: And the comment was that we as Christians are fearful of job security.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: And that’s exactly what you’re going to see.

Jeff: You’re exactly right. And it’s not just the corporate world. It’s the tech side of it—you know, . The Internet, Twitter, Facebook. They’ll cancel you off of there.

So it’s like this. I just met with a lawyer from Pa. family, and I asked him. I said, “Give it to me straight. What do you think is going to happen?” And he said the exact same thing. He said that the church is going to become like the KKK. The KKK is allowed to exist. They’re allowed to publish; they’re allowed to say hateful and terrible things, right? But big tech is not going to promote their stuff. They’re going to take their stuff off the Internet, and so forth. No corporation is going to hire them or have them do any kind of contract work once they find out there in the KKK.

“A New Walk” Part 3

Now the KKK is a terrible organization. But the point is that this will be the way of it with the church, right? It won't be big government that cancels out the church. It will be corporations and technology that cancel out the church.

Ted: And they're out for your livelihood.

Jeff: That's right. And so here's what I would say, Ted. And let me say this really quickly. Here's what I would say. I'm not in danger of losing my job as a result of this at this point.

Ted: You're not.

Jeff: Yes. So the point is that I would say this to you. And I got this from Carl Truman. The point is that I would say that the people who aren't in jeopardy of losing their jobs need to be speaking out for the people who may well lose their jobs if they speak up. Go ahead.

Ted: I agree. Did you want to say something?

Kirk: Yes. Kind of going back to the church for a second, if I'm hearing you correctly, and also with what Paul teaches there in Ephesians, you know, about “apostles, evangelists, pastors, teachers, for the equipping of the saints,” there's an importance for people in your position to be as unified as much as possible, because you're teaching the lay person. As lay persons we're called to be faithful to the truth of God's word. You're going to be held accountable for what you teach and what you preach. And a lot of times the disunity among believers comes down to what they're being taught or not being taught.

Jeff: Well, it can be; it's interesting. That very well could be the case, right? But it's really interesting because if you do a study on the mainline Presbyterian church, when they started giving up the Lord's Day it was actually grass roots. The grass roots had given up the Lord's Day to the extent that the leadership in the church basically said, “We're not going to win this battle; let's just let it go.” So actually, in that instance, it was the grass roots that influenced the higher-ups if you will—you know, the teachers of the church.

But you're right. There's a sense in which that if you teach something week after week after week after week, the people will grab on to that, right? Now I would say to you that even though the previous example I gave you with grass roots and the leaders, the elders, the sessions of churches, I mean obviously there was sort of an absence of shepherding to allow that to happen the way it did, right? If there's active shepherding going on, it's that sort of faithfulness between hey, this is the teaching and this is the behavior. Let's see if we can bring some faithfulness between the two, because obviously there was an absence of that. And I think there's an absence of that oftentimes because people get driven. You know, they want success in the ministry. They want to be well liked. They don't want to lose their jobs, and so on.

And you know, the thing about it is that within the pastorate—and I would just say this—you have to be the kind of a person who wants to love everyone that you come across, and yet be unswerving in your commitment to what you believe. And those two things are sometimes going to meet head-on and they're going to cause some problems.

But you know, it's the person who acts as if he can't stand every person and they're all unfaithful, and he's got the truth. That's the person who deserves to get tossed out on his ear. But it's also the person who says that there's no standard; let's just love each other.

“A New Walk” Part 3

That’s the person who needs to get tossed out on his ear. The person who needs to be in these positions that Paul is talking about is the person who says, “This is the Word, and I love you. And I want to help you bring your life into conformity to it. And how can we do that?” That sort of thing, right?

Kirk: So on the part of the lay person I’m just going to make that comment.

Jeff: Yeah.

Kirk: True unity within a church comes when we as individuals through the power of the Holy Spirit practice these things and do these things for one another, not to force them on somebody else, but to be examples of what God is doing in us. And then when everybody begins to take that faithful step, whether it be the person who’s weak in eating meat or the other one who is strong and says that you can’t eat that meat, both are going to be faithful to God and do what’s good for the body, and not force one perspective or the other perspective, but strive for the ultimate goal of being conformed to Christlikeness.

Jeff: Yes and no. That’s a good comment. The only thing I would say is that for instance, when you get into the essentials, you know, if somebody denies something essential you can’t just say, “I’m not going to enforce this,” right? At that point you have to say, “Look, the Scriptures also teach excommunication and dis-fellowshipping for holding this kind of thing.” And so it raises all kinds of issues.

But I love your point. And for instance, if you have a family that’s fragmented, and you just say, “You know, I can at least send birthday cards, right?”--something like that—to my nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles,. Whatever. And you just start doing that quietly, right? You’re just taking a step in the right direction to express a biological family unity that ought to be manifested in so many other ways.

So we shouldn’t despise the small things, because it’s the small things that will restore the bigger things. And so that’s what I love about your comment. Anybody else?

No? All right; why don’t we pray? Father in heaven, thank You for this day and for the time that You’ve given us to think about such an important topic as this. We ask that You’ll bless us; we need it. And we pray that You’ll bring continual expressions of unity to our lives that will manifest what Christ has done for us. In the meantime, Father, we do pray for those who face our culture and are in difficult situations and bad ways, and in jeopardy of losing jobs for their faithfulness. So Father, we pray that You’ll preserve them. We pray that they will be wise in the midst of a world that seeks their very vocational life. And we pray, Father,. For the courage for others to stand up and to speak boldly and winsomely and lovingly into a world that has obviously departed from your truth. And so, Father, we pray that You’ll bless us in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)