

**Unity: The Victory of Jesus Christ over Racism,  
Ethnocentrism & Cultural Superiority**  
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**UNITY: THE VICTORY OF JESUS CHRIST OVER RACISM,  
ETHNOCENTRISM & CULTURAL SUPERIORITY**  
**Ephesians 4:1-6**

The Lord Jesus has prayed for this moment, and He is with us. And if you are a Christian He is in you. And if you're not, He is working on you. As I prepared for this message this week, I was overwhelmed as I thought of you, my faith family. I think about your love for the people all over Birmingham and all over the world, and it causes my heart to rejoice. May God continue to show His grace and His peace to you even this morning, and increase that love that it may abound more and more.

I want to share with you a personal story to begin with this morning. The year was 1978. There was a young woman. She was 17 years old. And she recently found out that she was pregnant. There were many challenges that surrounded this pregnancy for her. One of those challenges was the fact that even though she was white, the man that she had gotten pregnant by was black. There were many challenges, and strife and conflicts surrounding it. So much so, a number of people offered to pay for an abortion for her. She didn't know what all that meant. Eventually she was persuaded to go into a clinic.

Being ignorant of so many things that were about to happen, two of her friends took her and encouraged her. Sitting down in that clinic, another woman who had already had her baby, already had her child, came into that clinic and sat down next to her. And for the first time in this young woman's life who lived in a small town in northwest Alabama, it began to click with her that what was inside of her was actually a person. But the doctors called her back and went ahead and gave her the sedation medication and she took it. And he began to go through a questionnaire with her. She told me she could still remember seeing his hands as he went through the questions and marked off the boxes. And he eventually got to this question and he asked her, "Are you sure that you're ready to move forward with this procedure?" And under sedation she got up, said, "No," and exited the office.

The doctor was surprised. Her friends were surprised and angry. They got into the car and went back to this small country town, and she and the man decided that they needed to get away from some of this racial and ethnic strife that surrounded them. And so they decided to move to Birmingham in 1979. Why are you laughing? So they moved to Birmingham and she had that little boy and she loved that little boy. And I'm that little boy.

God is gracious and merciful. And I praise Him this morning for a life, and for a loving mother, and for despite the challenges and difficulties that she faced, despite the fact that I came into this world surrounded by ethnic, and racial, and cultural strife, and have seen it often throughout my days, I've learned to rejoice in my sufferings because the sovereign God of the universe, Who is my Father, has allowed all of them and they have been sifted through His hand. And there is a purpose and an intention that brings me to this point even today; that brings you to this point even today.

All throughout the history of the world there's been suffering related to racism and ethnocentrism. All throughout the history of this country there's been suffering and pain. Some of you even today can still feel the wounds. But maybe it's not suffering related to that. We all enter this world and enter into this morning with pain and challenge. But God's Word addresses issues like these. And we're going to address issues like these today. And I want to address them from a God-centered, Christ-exalting, gospel-saturated way. And I want to do it from Ephesians 4:1-6, so you can turn there. The title of the message is "Unity: The Victory of Jesus Christ over Racism, Ethnocentrism, and Cultural Superiority." Race, of course, is skin color—certain features. Ethnicity is not less than that, but it's more than that; it's belief or language or maybe culture. Ethnocentrism is seeing your ethnicity as greater than other people's. Racism is seeing your race as superior to that of others. But Jesus Christ has been victorious over those sins.

I want to ask you to stand as we read Ephesians 4 together. And as we read it, I want you to think about this of course from the perspective of race and ethnicity, but Paul's intention in writing this under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was much broader than that. So realize this morning that the principles that we're going to apply to this issue are applicable to your friendships and your family, your marriage, your school, your neighborhood, our country, the world. And so see the principles from God's Word this morning as we read this together. Ephesians 4:1-6.

*"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 the 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," (Ephesians 4:1-6).*

This morning I want you to see the source of unity for all people, the source of unity for God's people. I want you to see what unity looks like in the nitty-gritty of life, the heart of unity, and then I want you to see the goal of unity. Would you pray with me?

Father, You are great and "greatly to be praised." And we give You glory even in this moment. Would You teach us from Your Word? "That according to the riches of [Your] glory [You] may grant [us] to be strengthened with power through [Your] Spirit in [our] inner being[s], so that Christ may dwell in [our] hearts through faith—[so that we might be] rooted and grounded in love, [so that we might have the] strength to comprehend with all the saints [throughout history] what is the breadth and length and height and depth, [that we might] know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that [we might] be filled with all the fullness of [You, oh] God." And if there is a person here this morning who does not know You, I pray that You would open their eyes to the glory, and beauty, and majesty of Christ. In His name I pray. Amen.

## **The Source of Unity for All People**

You can be seated. Let's start in verse 6. You ready? Look at it with me. "One God." That's where the source of unity for all people starts—with the one true and living God, Who made every human being in His image and His likeness. Genesis 1:26-27 makes this clear. Humanity is higher than and greater than anything else that God made, whether it be plants, animals, monkeys, fish, or reptiles. Regardless of what anybody else says to you, no

matter how many PhD's or intellectual acumen they have, God says that we were all made in His image. Every human being has dignity and value and worth as compared to everything else that God has made. And by the way, Satan has more PhD's than anyone in this room, and he has more intellectual sophistication and savvy than any sociologist, or anthropologist, or philosopher, or historian. But he is a liar and they are all wrong, because God made the world, and humanity is not equal to any other part of His creation.

And every person belongs to the human race and has the same roots. Listen to Acts 17:26 and look at this later when you get home because it is profound. Acts 17:26 says this: "*And he [that is God] made from one man [that is Adam] every nation of mankind...*" That word "nation" is "ethnos" in the Greek, which means "ethnic groups." God made from one man every ethnic group; every nation. That means this: the different ethnic groups and races are not a result of a curse. Like many theologians in this country have taught throughout its history, and like many scholars have articulated, and like many pastors have voiced, that the different races you see are a result of a curse. And they are wrong. Acts 17:26 said that the races, the ethnicities, are here by the design of God. And in the same way that He created all of His creation with diversity, and beauty, and glory from the top to the bottom, so He created the highest of His creation with diversity.

So we all come from Adam, which means Adam's our daddy. Adam's my daddy and your daddy. And we all have the same roots. So if you want to trace your roots and you want to get back to your ancestors back in the good old days, then you start with Adam. So what color was Adam? What ethnicity was Adam? Was he dark or was he light? I mean, what about Eve? Were they dark or light? Was one dark and one light? I mean, Adam was made from the soil. The soil in Eden was rich. It had to be dark. So he probably looked more like the darkest person you can think of from the Sudan maybe. And Eve, she was made from his rib so certainly she was really stark white and probably looked like a young lady from Ireland. That's not good Bible interpretation by the way. But it's possible. Does even the thought of that offend you? I mean, we don't know what they were. The Bible doesn't say so it's really not that important so we'll just move on.

Human beings were created to know God, to love Him, and to glorify Him. In other words, all human beings were created to worship God, to know God, to have a relationship with God, to love God, to have affection for Him, to delight in Him, to glorify Him, to honor Him, to praise Him. That's why every human being was made. God Himself is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, right? God is one. The Lord our God, He is one, and yet He is three! God is one—unity. God is three—diversity. Of course His creation would reflect that. And they were made to be in relationship with Him. I mean, He's been in a relationship with Himself for eternity, right? The Father has always loved the Son. The Son has always loved the Father. The Spirit has always loved the Father and the Son. Listen. God's design is that we all, amidst unity and diversity, worship Him.

Human beings were created to live in a diverse, loving community with other people. Genesis 2. God made Adam and said it's not good that Adam should be alone. So He made a different type of person—a woman. They were different, distinct, and yet the two would become one. And their descendants would represent the ethnic groups of the world. Point? God made us to live in relationship with people not like us for His glory and by His design. But the reason why we are where we are today is because we all have a common enemy. I don't even have to tell you what the blank is, right? Satan. Genesis 3 makes this clear. Listen. Satan hates God. Satan hates white people. Satan hates black people. Satan hates Asians. He hates Indians. He hates the world. Lucifer 3:16 says this: "Satan so hated the world." And when he sings to his demonic children late at night, this is his tune. Satan hates the little children, all the children of the world—red and yellow, black and white, they are

despicable in his sight. Let's kill them! Let's cause as much racial strife and ethnic genocide as we can! And let's give the people that lead them a lot of leverage, a lot of degrees, a lot of power."

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."* God rescued Satan's victims in Jesus. And the song that we should sing to the children of the world is, "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white—they are precious in His sight." Come to the King.

Many of you know that my wife and I are in the process of adoption right now—a little girl from China. We've never met her. We already love her. Her name will be Victoria Grace. And we can't wait to see her. But my wife was having a conversation with a woman this last week. And they were talking and the woman heard that we were adopting. She doesn't go to Brook Hills but she says she's a Christian. They were having a conversation and the woman said, "Oh, so you're adopting?" "Yes." "Are your other three children adopted?" Not the best question to ask, okay, especially when they're right in front of her. She says, "No, they're not." And then the woman says, "Okay. Is this a ministry for you?" She didn't even know what to say to that. And then, this was, "Where are you adopting from?" "China." And listen to what the woman said. "I think we should take care of our own."

Who are our own? Who are your own? Is it your race? Are those your own, your ethnicity, your culture? Is that your own? Our own are the children in Ukraine. Our own are the children in Africa. Our own are the children in Australia. Our own are the children in Canada. Our own are the children in Mexico. Our own are the children in Alabama. In that they're made in the image of God. We have the same roots. We have the same daddy. We were made to worship. Why do we see the distinctions that are so minor and yet important and significant? But why do we see them and separate based on them? Because we have an enemy—Satan.

None of us is without sin. We've all sinned; we've all lied; we've all hated at some point in our lives. We've all worshiped the creation rather than the Creator ultimately. And this came home very clearly recently when I had the opportunity to go to West Africa. And we flew into Ghana, West Africa. And Ghana is amazing. Ghana is structured, and ordered, and sophisticated, and the economy is growing. And you drive down the streets and it looks like a U.S. city. So Africa is so diverse. But then we went to the border country of Togo. And Togo was much different. Ghana is predominately Christian. Togo is predominately Voodoo.

And so we went from pavement to dirt roads for about seven hours in a little bus. And then we got to a village called Togoville. And we pulled up to where the road ended and there was a big lake. And to get to the village you had to go across the lake, so we got into a canoe with an African native who pushed us across the lake at nine-o'clock at night on the opening night of the voodoo festival. And we could hear them singing, and shouting, and dancing. And we get to the other side of the shore and we walk right through the village, and we didn't fit in. And the closest person that looked like them was me, and I don't really look like them, and everybody else didn't look anything like them. And so everybody saw us and we made our way to our house. And oh, what a wonderful time of ministry it was.

But one of the days we went to the voodoo compound. That's where they house all of the false idols—gods, they call them. And so you had a statue with a goddess to the female god, and you had a male god, and you had your ancestor god statues. And of course they would offer up sacrifices and we were told that at times they offer up children as sacrifices. It makes your stomach hurt—children as sacrifices. So the Voodoo witch doctor would say for

god to bless you, you offer up your child, especially maybe if you've done something really bad, and he will show his favor to you. And so, sometimes that happens.

And you know, I thought to myself, "Oh, this is so uncivilized. This culture is so uncivilized. We would never do that in Alabama. We would never offer up children on the altars of false gods." Then I thought, you know, in the Old Testament it talks about the different false gods—Molech, and Asherah, and Chemosh. You know what? Molech, they offered up children as sacrifices to Molech. The Scripture says that they were offering up sacrifices to demons. So they would offer up their children to Molech. And I thought, "This is Molech-worship in Togoville!" And this doesn't happen in Alabama.

But I kept praying and thinking and I looked at the website of Planned Parenthood of Birmingham. And the website was really nice by the way—much nicer than the dirty, filthy, smelly Voodoo compound. Much more sophisticated. And in a very polished, articulate, intellectual way, these people in power, they said their mission is this: "Planned Parenthood of Birmingham believes in the fundamental right of each individual throughout the world to manage his or her fertility. We believe that reproductive, self-determination must be voluntary. We further believe that self-determination will be an enhancement of the quality of life and strong family relationships."

That's good. Self-determination. Quality of life. Self-determination. Self-worship, which by the way is that root of racism and ethnocentrism any way—pride. Self-worship. And so self-determination: "Hey, you can come to this clinic and on the altar of your chosen god (sexual freedom, health, future potential economic and educational attainment) you can have your child and you can offer it up on the sacrifice of one of your gods." We don't call it "Molech-worship." We call it "Planned Parenthood." But I guarantee that we, in this civilized culture of ours, have killed more children than they have in Togo over the last year. Today, black babies, white babies, Hispanic babies, Asian babies will die on the altar.

## **The Source of Unity for God's People**

But there is grace and there is forgiveness. There is a solution to the dilemma that all of us are in, and this solution is the source of unity for God's people. And that solution is the gospel—the good news of Jesus Christ. For people in Togoville and Birmingham. For me and for you. The gospel that God sent His Son to die for sinners like me and like you; to die for racists; to die for rebels. And Jesus lived the perfect life of holiness, and righteousness, and justice, and love. And He did not deserve to die, but He died in the place of sinners. And when He was crucified, He said, "It is finished." It is done. And that was enough to make us one. Jesus' finished work on the cross, where He took upon Himself the wrath, and the fury, and the judgment that you and I deserve. And as our substitute, He was crushed for our iniquities, and He was raised from the death, victorious over death and hell and racism, and ethnocentrism, and cultural superiority. And Jesus Christ is victorious over them all. And He loves you, sinner.

No matter what you've done, the cross is enough for you. Every Christian knows the one true God as Father. Look at verse 6 again. I know we've only gotten four words in, but look at it. "*One God and Father.*" Christians know God not only as Creator, but as Father. Look at Ephesians 1:4-5. Turn back. Ephesians 1:4-5. We learn this about the Father. "*Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us...*" God the Father chose us. He predestined us. He loved us. And we are part of His perfect plan. Look at Ephesians 1:10. His perfect plan. "As

*a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."*

God's eternal plan is to unite all things in Christ. And our Father loves us deeply. My daughter, who is now four, at the time she was two. One of things that we do is that we tell secrets to each other at night when she's going to bed. And one of my favorite times is our theology lessons. And I'll whisper to her, "God is love." And she'll giggle and say back to me, "God is love." And I'll say, "God is Father." And she'll laugh and then she'll answer back to me, "God is Father." Well one night, she was about two, I said something like, "God is gracious." And she said, "God is pink." And I thought for a minute, "This is idolatry. Her walls are pink. Her sheets are pink. Her pajamas are pink. God is pink?" But she's two. Okay, so I'm going to be patient. God the Father has been patient with me. I'm going to be patient with her. So God, what do I say? You're not pink. But "He's better than pink." He is better than anything that you can imagine. You think pink is the best? God is better!

He is Father to the fatherless, and He loves us deeply. And our Father calls us personally. When He calls someone into His family, He calls them by name. "Joe, come to me. Duane, come to me. Eduardo, come to Me. Susan, come to Me." He calls us personally. Notice in Ephesians 4:1 this calling that is referenced. *"I therefore, [Paul says] a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner [what?] worthy of the calling to which you have been called."* In light of the fact that God has loved you and called you, walk worthy of that. Your life should demonstrate the Father's love.

Our Father is the sovereign ruler over the universe. Ephesians 1:11 says, well, look at it with me. Ephesians 1:11 says that *"In him [in Christ] we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works [notice this word—some things—no] all things according to the counsel of his will."* God works all things according to the counsel of His will. There is not a maverick molecule in the universe. He is sovereign and He is our Father. And He is on the throne.

The Father's diverse people are ultimately citizens of one kingdom and one city. Look back with me at Ephesians 2:13-22 and notice this good theology. And by the way, the first three chapters of Ephesians are really good theology. They're really good doctrine. In fact the first three chapters are theology. The last two chapters are practice. The first three chapters of Ephesians are doctrine and the last two chapters are duty. The first three chapters are indicatives of what God has done. The last two chapters are imperatives—what we ought to do in light of what God has done.

Notice what He's done in Ephesians 2:13.

*"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself [watch this] one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer [here it is] strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are*

*being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit," (Ephesians 2:13-22).*

Let's talk about that for a second. Philippians 3:20 says, "Christian, you are a citizen of heaven." Abraham in Hebrews 11:10, it says that he was looking forward by faith to a city whose architect and builder is God. Our ultimate citizenship is not Birmingham or any other city on this earth if you are a Christian. Our citizenship is in heaven. It's in the New Jerusalem. It's in the Kingdom of God.

The Father's diverse people are ultimately members of one family. You saw that in Ephesians 2. One household; one family. Christ has broken down the wall that divided all ethnic groups and all races. And when He broke it down, he brought them together into one family. And now, by His blood, guess what? They are blood brothers. I hope you never became blood brothers with anybody when you were little. If you did, that wasn't wise. Oh, but in Christ we become brothers and sisters by blood. Not ours—His. And that's really safe. So stop calling people of your race your brother and diminishing the fact that people who are not your race are even more significantly and profoundly your brothers than those who look like you. Don't diminish what God has done in the cross, Christian. Your brothers and sisters live all over the world and they look very different. And they're part of your family.

Do you know how serious this is? In Galatians 2, the Apostle Peter was sitting down and he was eating with the Gentiles. And some of the Judaizers, they came to the city of Antioch. That was a very diverse church, by the way, with even diverse leadership in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. But some Judaizers came and Peter got up from the table and he went to sit with them because he was scared of what they would think. Peter! And Paul went to Peter and he said, "What are you doing?" Here's what he said. You go look at it. "Your conduct, Peter, is not in step with the gospel."

So listen. Racism and ethnocentrism is a gospel issue. It is a blood issue. Every Christian has gotten to know Jesus Christ as the Son of God in a personal way. We have a personal Savior. We're not born into the family of God. We're saved through Christ. We have one Lord. You saw that in chapter 4:6. One Lord, one Master, one King, one faith, one body of doctrine, one gospel, one Old Testament, one New Testament, one faith. And Jesus is our Prince of Peace. We saw that too—that He has made peace. Now, because there's peace there's neither Jew nor Greek. Galatians 3:28 says, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*" A new people; a new race.

It's a bond of peace that we have, and Jesus is the unifier that all of our hearts long for. Genesis 11—the Tower of Babel; a united people, but not united for God—united in pride. But Jesus comes on the scene and very differently from Babel, when God scattered them and confused their languages, it says "languages." It doesn't say anything else. It confused their languages. But when Jesus came and when Peter preached in Acts 2, he brought a diverse group of people together, praising God in the same language. People heard Peter preaching in their own language and they praised God, and they came into the church, which was diverse from the very beginning.

Jesus Christ has reconciled us to God and to each other. And reconciliation is much deeper than diversity. The world says, "diversity." Christians say, "reconciliation." That's relational. That's personal. We know God relationally. We want to know each other relationally and love each other relationally.

Jesus Christ is the Cornerstone of the holy temple that we're being built into. We read that in chapter 2. He is the Cornerstone—the very foundational block—that we are being built

into this holy temple of the Lord by the Spirit. But not only is He the foundational building block—the Cornerstone—He’s also the Head. He’s the Head of what? The body—the body that people from every race and ethnicity make up; the diverse body that was designed to be diverse so that we would grow up into our Head, Who is Christ.

So the diversity of gifts will be used to complement each other so there would be harmony; so there would be unity; so there’d be oneness to the glory of God. We are each members of the diverse body of Christ, and we are also a multi-colored, multi-racial, and multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural bride of Christ. Did you know that? Did you know that the bride of Jesus is multi-colored, multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-cultural? And she is beautiful. She is clothed in white. And she is His bride, and He’s coming to get her. Revelation 19. You go read it. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb. He’s going to sit down with her, and He is going to be all her hopes and dreams have longed for.

And so I want to address one of the sacred cows of the church in the South. You ready? She’s a fat cow, too. One of the sacred cows of the church in the South is mixed marriages. I’ve talked to so many godly, Christ-loving Christian couples who God, in His sovereignty and His design, has brought together of different races, only to be met with opposition by their Christian parents. Purely, and that’s the key word—listen—purely on the grounds of skin color, or culture, or ethnicity. Now, in every marriage there’s a lot to talk about before you get married, no doubt. But to come against someone purely on the ground of race, ethnicity, or culture is—listen—is satanic. You think your race is superior to any other? You think your ethnicity, your culture, is superior?

When the Bible says, "*Do not be unequally yoked,*" it does not mean in terms of race. It’s Christian, non-Christian. When the Old Testament talks about inter-racial marriage, it’s not talking about...When the Old Testament talks about mixed races it’s not talking about a race or ethnicity; it’s talking about God’s people and God’s “not people.” I mean, think about Numbers 12. The person who wrote the Pentateuch under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was Moses, right? Moses was in a mixed marriage. Numbers 12. He married a Kushite woman. The term “Kush” in the Old Testament refers to black Africans. Moses was married to a black African, and he wrote those texts. That’s not what they mean!

So if you oppose two Christians who are different races, purely on the grounds of race, then that’s terrible. Listen. This goes for cross-cultural and cross-racial adoption as well. I recently heard of a couple who is adopting a child that’s not their race, and their Christian parents disowned them. Oh, this makes sense. You ready? There are children all over the world who will be raised without a family, in poverty, in institutional care. They will be abused and neglected. Many of them will be sold into sex-slavery. “But if they’re not our race then they’re not coming to our house for Thanksgiving.” For Thanksgiving. We want to give God thanks, but no thanks. “Well, they’re not coming to our house for Christmas where we celebrate the birth of Christ.” That sounds more like Lucifer 3:16 to me.

But there’s good news because Psalm 27:10 says this, "*For [your] father and [your] mother have forsaken [you], but the LORD will take [you] in.*" Whether you are an orphan, the Lord will take you in. Or whether you’ve been orphaned because of taking in an orphan that’s not your race, the Lord will take you in. We have one unshakable hope because of what Christ has done. Every Christian has one Spirit of God living in them. We’ve experienced one baptism. We’ve been regenerated. We’ve been born again the same way as everybody else.

We have the power to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Look at Ephesians 4:3. Ephesians 4:3 says this: that we ought to be "*eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*" The Holy Spirit has given us unity and we ought to be



eager to maintain that unity. True unity is work from the inside out through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. This is the Holy Spirit's work. It's impossible in our own strength. The flesh and the carnal mind hates this, but the Spirit of God loves this. Only the Spirit of God can bring us together. Only the Spirit-filled people will live in unity amidst diversity that God has called us to. Which brings me to the heart of unity.

## **The Heart of Unity**

Look at chapter 4:2. "*With all humility...*" Here's how you walk in unity. With all humility, which is the opposite of pride, which is what racism and ethnocentrism is rooted in. "*With all humility and gentleness...*" Meekness, not weakness. Meekness—power under control. Humility, gentleness, "*with patience, bearing with one another in love.*" Jesus said you will know who His people are by the love that they have for each other. How in the world, John says in 1 John, can you say that you love God and yet hate your brother? You can't. We must be clothed in humility. We must learn to relate to one another in a spirit of gentleness. We must be very patient with each other because, yes, the ethnic groups are different, and sometimes the races are different, and sometimes the cultures are different, so you have to be really patient, like God has been with you.

We must walk in forbearance. In other words, we're going to be provoked, we're going to be sinned against, there's going to be challenges. Christians are going to fail. There's going to be tensions and conflicts, but you've got to bear with one another in love. We've got to be rooted in love. The love here is "agape." It's supernatural. It's supernatural. "God, help me to love. Help me to love beyond my own capacity. Help me to love in light of the Holy Spirit that lives within me. Help me to bear the fruit of the Spirit." If you don't bear the fruit of the Spirit, you can't be patient, and gentle, and humble and loving by trying really hard. No. You bear the fruit of the Spirit by walking with God, by abiding in Christ, by depending on the Father, by walking in step with the Spirit. "*Do not get drunk with wine,*" Ephesians 5 says, "*but be filled with the Spirit.*" And guess what happens? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness.

We must be grounded in love and maintain the unity of Spirit and the bond of peace will take intentional and passionate commitment from us all. We must be eager to do it and committed to it. This maintenance work will result in unity among all of God's people. It is maintenance work. You may have gotten your hair cut yesterday. You may have put on deodorant yesterday. You may have brushed your teeth yesterday. But if you don't do it today, the person next to you is going to be in bad shape. And if you don't do it for the rest of the year, woe to you! Okay? Because your physical body has to be maintained.

And that's what Paul is saying. "Maintain the unity that the Spirit has already given you in the bond of peace." In other words, we already have this unity positionally. We are commanded to maintain this unity visually so that the world can see and believe that God the Father sent the Son. That's what John 17 said. "We are commanded to maintain this unity practically, Peter. So eat with the Gentiles, Peter."

## **The Goal of Unity**

We're commanded to maintain this unity continually and the goal of the unity is this: that the church will experience great joy and great growth. Happy, holy. Growing in holiness, growing and growing as people come to faith because of the unity. The lost will be saved through faith in Jesus Christ. They'll see the oneness and they'll believe that the Father sent the Son. And then the One True God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Who Himself is a loving unity amidst diversity will receive the glory that He alone deserves forever and ever. God in Creation—we are one. God in redemption—we are one. God in consummation will bring people from every tribe, and tongue, and nation and unite all things in Christ, and they will praise Him and worship Him and give Him glory. And they will do it from every tribe, and tongue, and nation, every color and every shade. And if you oppose that, you are opposing the very God of the universe and His plan from beginning to eternity.

That's not wise. And when Christ returns, Revelation 7:17 says this: that the tears that have been falling from multi-colored eyes down multi-colored cheeks—multi-shaped eyes, multi-shaped cheeks—that fall into the mouths of people all over the world that taste the same—salty. That He will take His finger and the finger of "*God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*" And He will make all things new. And there will be no more racial strife, and ethnocentrism, and cultural superiority, because Jesus has been victorious over them all.

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