

Invisible Unity Made Visible

Scripture: Ephesians 4:2

Code: 49-15

But now, this morning, I want you to turn to the fourth chapter of Ephesians. We have been in Ephesians now for the last week or so, and we're going to go back to it; and we're talking about this particular section of verses 1 through 6, so let me read it for you. Ephesians 4:1-6, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."

Now last time we introduced this passage, and I told you at the time that it's a very, very important transitional passage, as indicated by the word *therefore* at the beginning of verse 1. The first three chapters have been doctrinal in their emphasis, as Paul has laid out the divine truth for us related to the gospel and the unity of the church. And now there is a transition from that which is doctrinal to that which has to do with our duty. So therefore, based upon all that doctrine that has been unfolded in the first three chapters, we are told that we are "to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

Now for three chapters Paul has delineated our calling—our divine calling, our calling from heaven, which brought us into God's kingdom, which ushered us out of death into life. We are called, and now we are to live lives worthy of that calling. This is a subject that we introduced last week in the simple terms of sanctification. This is what we are supposed to be obsessed with, in the present time of our spiritual journey. We are to be obsessed with our own sanctification and the sanctification of the people around us, which is just another way to say with walking worthy of our calling and with encouraging and helping others to do the very same.

If you will remember, going back to chapter 1—just to rehearse a little bit—it began with this marvelous statement in verse 3, that we are blessing God, worshiping God, honoring God, thanking God, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, [because He] has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." And then Paul goes from there all the way down to verse 14 to identify and list these incredible spiritual blessings. He mentions being chosen in Him before the foundation of the world for the purpose of eternal glory and holiness and blamelessness before Him. "In love," he says, God predestined us so that we would be adopted "as sons." This is from "the kind intention of His [sovereign] will," so that we would one day be "to the praise of the glory of His grace." He granted us—in verse 7—"redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses," all by the riches of His grace. He lavished all of it on us. And then He granted us wisdom and insight so that we would know "the mystery of His will." And he goes on to unfold everything that we have, including, in verse 11, an eternal inheritance, which is waiting for us, and a guaranteeing and sealing that inheritance, verses 13 and 14, is the gift of "the Holy Spirit of promise."

So Paul summarizes all the blessings, all the promises, all the privileges, all the glories, and all the

graces of our salvation. And then, at the end of chapter 1 he prays that we would understand all of this, that we would have clear knowledge of our possessions, that we would be theologically astute as to all that is ours in Christ. And so Paul prays for that. He mentions in verse 16 that he is praying for these believers. And what is he praying, in particular direction, for? Verse 17, “The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”

Your spiritual life with God, your transformation, began with your calling—divine calling, and consummates in your glorification. And the apostle Paul is praying that God would give all of us a full understanding of everything from election, you might say, to final glorification. He wants us to understand the promises, the realities, the spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ. And all the way through that chapter he mentions, “in Christ, in Christ, in Christ, in Christ,” because they are ours because He is ours, and we are in Him.

The sum of it all is this: Based upon all of those spiritual privileges and things that he further delineates in chapters 2 and 3, as he talks about salvation by grace and the union of Jew and Gentile in the church—all of those glories, all of those promises, all of those expressions of divine power are in place, granted to us to the degree (look at chapter 3, verse 20) that He, being the Lord, “is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.” All of this is simply to say that we have the capacity to exceed our imaginations in things that God will accomplish through us so that, verse 21, “to Him [would] be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”

There is so much in deposit in the life of every believer; there is so much grace, so much power, so much privilege, so much promise deposited in the church of Jesus Christ, that we should be seeing things that we can’t even comprehend or imagine, according to that very power that resides in us, even the power of God, the very power that raised Jesus from the dead, so that there would be glory given to God in what the church declares and what the church does in the world.

That is the ideal picture of the church: that the church would be inexplicable on any human level, that no one would reduce us to a political lobby group or a right-wing conservative organization, but rather that we would manifest the glory of Christ in the church, generation after generation after generation. We have all that is necessary for that, and to do exceeding, abundantly above and beyond all of that which we could even imagine. So based upon all that has been given to us and activated in us by the presence of the triune God—we have all these possessions, we have all this power—we should be only explained on a supernatural level.

And yet sadly, the church struggles to have that kind of presence in the world. And the problem is that the church doesn’t always live up to what it is. And that’s why chapter 4, verse 1, says, “I . . . implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.” You’ve got to start acting like the church. We looked at that last time, and we said Paul is obsessed with sanctification.

A lot of people are obsessed with a lot of different things. But for the apostle Paul and for every believer, our obsession should be sanctification. We love to look at the doctrine of election, predestination. We love to look at the doctrine of divine sovereignty, divine intention, divine will, divine providence. We love to think about the doctrine of glorification—what is to come. But our real

obsession as believers and the zone in which we live, between justification and glorification, is this sanctification process: The Spirit of God is working out in us in the world, so that the glory of Christ can be seen in the church because the church manifests that glory through its own sanctification.

This is Paul's passion. We said it last time; he is obsessed with sanctification, and this should be every believer's obsession. He says to the Galatians that "I'm in birth pains until Christ is fully formed in you." In other words, "I suffer pain until you're Christlike." And that is the ultimate goal of salvation, the goal of sanctification.

The apostle Paul also makes it very, very clear at the end of the first chapter of Colossians that what he works for, what he sweats and toils for, what he agonizes for, is that every believer would be made complete in Christ. Later on in chapter 4 we'll see that he says the church is structured with leaders so that the church may grow up into the fullness of Christ.

So sanctification is his obsession, and it must be the obsession of the church. And I would venture to say, it appears in the church in our world today, for many local congregations, it's far down the line, if it even appears in the top ten. But for the apostle Paul, sanctification is the objective of the church in the world, and therefore every believer's obsession.

Now Paul is very strong about this, and you'll notice in verse 1 he says, "I implore you, I implore you." That's just a word that means "to beg," "plead." So we would say Paul is a beggar here. He is begging believers to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which they have been called. And what exactly does he mean by that calling? Go back to Romans chapter 8. It's unmistakable. It's not just an invitation; it's far more than that.

Listen to Romans 8:28, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." So whatever that calling is, it is a calling that results in people loving God and God causing all things to work together for good according to His purpose. This is a saving call; this isn't an invitation. This is a call that awakens the dead sinner. This is a call to life.

Verse 29 then says, "For those whom He foreknew"—that is, He predetermined to know savingly—"He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son." So you have divine sovereignty and election in the term *foreknow*; you have predestination, and the predestination reaches all the way to conformity to the image of His Son, which is glorification, when we're like Christ and when we see Him as He is. But notice what he says in verse 30, "Whomever He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." So this is not an invitation, this is an actual calling to life. They are predestined, they are called, therefore they are justified, therefore they are glorified; and no one is left out of that process once that process is set in motion in eternity past.

So we are the called. This is to say that we have been called to life in Christ. You know, you might think of it this way, although perhaps you don't: You think about the conversion of the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus. And we all remember the story. He was persecuting Christians. He was a hater of the gospel and a hater of Christ. He had known about Christ but had been hostile to the truth of the gospel. And he had papers from the authorities to do whatever persecuting work he wanted to do on behalf of Judaism, that was hostile toward Christianity.

But what happened to him on the Damascus Road was extremely dramatic. He's going along. All of a sudden, he's struck blind, and the Lord gives him life, awakens him from his spiritual death, and calls him to be an apostle. And you might look at that and say, "You know, that is just so dramatic; that is just so dynamic; that is just so rare." But I would just encourage you with this: That is how every conversion happens. There's not always a Damascus Road, there's not always a light in the sky. But every conversion is a divine calling that turns somebody's life completely in the other direction, and it is an operation of God the Holy Spirit. It is a divine work of God.

Somewhere along the line, if you're a Christian, you were stopped dead in your tracks, and the Lord opened your mind, awakened your heart; you repented, and you believed the gospel because He granted you repentance, and He granted you faith. So it is not an anomaly to conversion to see the conversion of Paul on the Damascus Road; it is how it happens. And his life was completely transformed. And that is what conversion is: It is a complete transformation that sends somebody going in the opposite direction.

So Paul had that calling, and he knew that God was continually calling people out of darkness into light. He was continually calling and justifying and setting them for eternal glory. That was God's work and God's business, and Paul would always be faithful to preach the gospel so that the call could be activated, because the only way the call can be activated is if you hear and believe the gospel. The Spirit can only enable you to believe the gospel if you have heard the gospel. So Paul preached the gospel. But when it came to the church, his burden was sanctification. That's why, in verse 1, he says, "I beg you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called."

We saw last week that the calling of God is a high calling—it is a holy calling; it is a heavenly calling. We have been called into the kingdom of God. We have been called to become sons of God. We have been called to become children of God. We have been called out of death into life, out of darkness into light, out of deception into truth. And you know all those realities. And now that that has happened, we ought to live lives that are consistent with that new identity. We are in Christ, and we should walk in a manner worthy of that reality.

Now notice that Paul does use the word *implore* or *beg*, and I would just remind you that there's an element of Christian ministry that pushes us all, including you as well as me, into being a beggar. We are beggars. But we're not begging for ourselves; we're begging for people to reach out and take what God is offering them.

I think sometimes we may look at our evangelistic opportunity as some kind of a cold, calculating, straight-up conversation, and if it doesn't go anywhere you just say, "Well, there wasn't any interest." That wouldn't work with the apostle Paul. Paul was a beggar, and he was used to pleading and begging with sinners. And that's what the original verb there means. And he uses this verb and a few others all throughout the New Testament to describe this aspect of begging. Let me give you some examples.

In Acts 26 and verse 3, he begged Agrippa to listen to him patiently and hear the story of his conversion. He begged this man who was a civil authority. In Romans 12:1, he begged Christian believers to present their bodies as sacrifice to God, living, holy, and pleasing to Him. In 2

Corinthians 2:8, he begged Christians to reaffirm their love for him. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, you remember he begged sinners to be reconciled to God. Second Corinthians 6:1, he begged sinners not to reject the gospel. Galatians 4:12, he begged Christian brothers to follow his example away from legalism. In Philemon, verses 9 and 10, he begged for the church to love a repentant son of the faith. He was always begging.

Just summing up what I said, he begged for people to listen to the gospel, he begged for people to be saved, he begged for them not to reject it. He begged for people to follow his example, to love others, to live in the freedom Christ had given them; and he begged believers to walk in a worthy way, consistent with their identity in Christ. This is a matter of what our Lord said when He said that “you are to be holy,” way back in the book of Leviticus, “as I am holy.” And Peter picks that up, doesn’t he, in his epistle—“Be holy, for I am holy.” This is how we are to live. We are the children of God. We are to manifest the very nature of God planted within us.

So we looked at that verse last time, and we looked at it from the vantage point of the call to the worthy walk; and it was a divine call from God Himself. Now I want to take it a little further—not very much further, but a little further. Look at verse 2. It says, “With all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Now, you will remember, if you’ve been with us, that all through the second half of chapter 2, all through chapter 3, unity was the issue. The apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is calling for the church to be one, to manifest its unity. Unity that it already possesses spiritually needs to manifest in terms of its conduct and behavior. So we’re going to look in verses 2, 3 at how we get to that kind of manifest unity; and it all starts with this, verse 2. Here’s the beginning: “With all humility.” So if you’re going to walk in a worthy way, you start “with all humility,” “with all humility.”

Pride is the default position of every human being who is fallen. Pride is natural. It is probably our most natural sin. Because we are by nature as sinners, we tend to protect ourselves, defend ourselves, justify ourselves, satisfy ourselves. That is why all sin can be categorized this way: Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life. Lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life. “It’s what I see, I want; it’s what I feel, I want; it’s what satisfies me, and I’m the most important person.” That is the character of all fallen sinners. So they default to being proud. And therefore, in history and ethnology (the study of people groups), you will find that most societies basically turn pride into a virtue. They turn pride into a virtue.

Just, perhaps a good illustration of that is to make a very simple statement that will explain it clearly: “Gay”—what?—“pride.” Why would you ever attach pride, a wretched sin, with another sin, and therefore somehow make it noble, when it is the most ignoble possible? But that is what sinners do. They’re proud about their deviations; they’re proud about their wretchedness. That’s the default position of all sinners.

So when you have been called by God, and you have been awakened and granted eternal life, there will be in your heart a completely new impulse, generated by the Spirit of God, validated by the Word of God, and set into motion in your new nature, toward humbling yourself. And it will happen from the very beginning of your salvation, because you wouldn’t have been saved if you didn’t humble yourself, right?

What did Jesus say? “Unless you become as this little child, you can’t even enter the kingdom of heaven.” So you came in humble. “What do you mean by that?” You came in not offering anything that you had done as meriting your salvation. You came in not having achieved anything which God would accept as sufficient enough to have Him accept you. You came bankrupt, dead in your trespasses and sin, you offered Him absolutely nothing, and that is as humble as you can get. You have nothing to offer God at the point of your salvation, and you start at that point of lowliness and humility, and frankly, you stay there. You start there in salvation; you stay there in sanctification.

Now we know that pride is the original sin because if you go back to the fall of Satan, which is described in Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28—you have two passages where we find Satan, who is the anointed cherub, who was in the garden with God; and he decides he wants to elevate himself and he wants to take over for God. And so he says, “I will, I will, I will, I will, I will,” and tries to elevate himself; and that was the fall of Satan and the demons that went with him. In the garden, it was Eve’s desire to be godlike that caused her to disobey God.

It’s always the sinner’s pride that keeps him from God. In the end, the sinner wants to hold on to what he wants, what he desires, what he lusts for, and what he finds satisfying. So pride is always the default position. So it’s not surprising that you have to humble yourself to be saved, nor is it surprising that you have to be marked, as a believer being sanctified, by all humility. So let me just see if I can’t talk about that for a little bit.

Proverbs 16:5 says, “Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.” “Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord.” Verse 18 of Proverbs 16, “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Proverbs 21:4, “A high look, and a proud heart . . . is sin.” Isaiah 2:11, “The proud look of man will be abased”—“will be abased”—and that man “will be humbled.” Malachi 4:1, “The day is coming” when the arrogant will be set on fire, set on fire. God opposes the proud and gives grace to—whom?—to the humble, James 4:6.

Proverbs 15:33 says, “Before honor is humility.” Proverbs 22:4, “By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life.” Proverbs 27, verse 2, “Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth.” “Humble yourselves in the presence of [God],” James 4:10, “and He will lift you up.”

So when we’re thinking about this idea of walking worthy, when we’re thinking about sanctification, here’s where you start, OK, here’s where you start: You start with all humility. That’s the beginning. In other words, the worthy walk is a walk that demands, at the very outset, humility. This is a major reality in the believer’s life and a major factor in the unity of the church, and I want to show you that in the highest way that I can show you.

In John 17—I want you to look at it, John 17. We’re going to look at the gospel of John in a few places to illustrate this. But in John 17, our Lord prays for those who are His disciples and those who will be His disciples in the future. But I want you to notice His prayer down in verse 21. He prays, “That they may all be one,” “That they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that you sent Me.” This is amazing. He’s praying that we would all be one in the same way that the Son and the Father are one.

So in what way are the Son and the Father one? In nature, right? In essence. So He is praying here,

not for some external unity, not for some association, not for some get-along effort; He is praying that there will be a spiritual unity in the church that is like the spiritual union in the Trinity. "That they may . . . be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me." The power of the church to demonstrate to the world that Christ is the Savior is when the church has the same kind of unity that the Father and the Son share.

Look at verse 22, "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one." You can tell He's not talking about something external; He's talking about something internal, something profound here. Just as the Father and the Son are one in nature and being, so He prays that the church would have that same spiritual common life.

Verse 23 goes further, "I in them and You in Me." "And if You're in Me and I am in them, then we're all one in Him"—"that they may be perfected in unity." In other words, it's a unity of essence; it's a unity of real life. It's the unity of the eternal life, which is God, which dwells in the believer in the presence of God the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit "so that the world," as He says it for the second time, "may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."

How is the world going to know that Christ is the true Redeemer; how is the world going to know that God loves them? When they see this unity of life in the church. This is a very profound thing. This is not organizational; this is not external in any sense. This is a spiritual union.

So do you think that the Father answered that prayer? Are we not one with Christ? Are we not indwelt by the Father? Are we not indwelt by the Son? Are we not indwelt by the Spirit? Are we not one with each other? "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." We're one with Him and therefore one with each other. This is our common eternal life; we share the same life.

So Jesus is actually praying for unity in the church that is essential, that is like the very unity of the Trinity. And I'll give you an illustration of it. Look at John chapter 5, John chapter 5. The Jews had confronted Jesus and were highly disturbed because He had broken their Sabbath, and this brought up the issue of why did He have a right to break the Sabbath. And Jesus gives them an answer that goes way beyond that. But what He does here is He talks about how He and the Father are one. The whole conversation, starting in chapter 5 at verse 16 and going on through that chapter and even beyond, defines the way in which the Father and the Son are one. So let's look at it.

Verse 15—let's start at verse 16: "The Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing things on the Sabbath"—which you're not supposed to do. "But He answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.'" The Sabbath was never for Jesus; the Sabbath was made for man. It was never for Jesus.

He and the Father were one in rights. The Sabbath put no limitation on the Father, then it couldn't put a limitation on the Son. They are one in rights: "Whatever the Father has a right to do, I have a right to do." And this catapulted them into verse 18, where they're seeking "to kill Him because He was not only breaking the Sabbath, but . . . calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God." They got it. He actually said, "I have the same rights as God." That's Trinitarian unity. The Son and Father have the same rights.

Look at verse 19, they have the same purpose: "Therefore Jesus answered and was saying to them,

‘Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.’” They have the same purpose, they have the same rights, and they have the same objectives, the same goals, the same purpose; thus, they do the same things.

Not only are they equal in rights and in purpose, but look at verse 21: “Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.” They are one in power, they are one in power. The Father and the Son have the same divine power to raise the dead in this case.

Verse 23, they are one in honor: “So that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who doesn’t honor the Son doesn’t honor the Father who sent Him.” One in rights, one in purpose, one in power, one in honor.

Go down to verse 26: “For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son to have life in Himself.” They are one in being the source of life. They are one in being the source of life.

In verse 27, “And He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.” They’re one in authority. Whatever the Father has a right to do, the Son has the authority to do as well.

They’re one in will; look at verse 30 of chapter 5, “I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” This is a stunning portion of Scripture, where the Son saying, “I and the Father are one in rights and purpose and power and honor, in the ability to give life in authority and in will.”

Down in verse 36, “The testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.” They are equal in work. They are one in works.

Down in verse 43, they are one in name: “I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him.” “I am one in name with the Father”; that is to say, “We come from the same eternal, divine, everlasting Godhead.”

If you go over to chapter 7 of John’s gospel and verse 16, Jesus says, “My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.” They’re one in doctrine, one in doctrine.

Over in chapter 12 of John’s gospel and verse 44, “Jesus cried out and said, ‘He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me.’” They are one in being the objects of saving faith; they are one in salvation.

And then over to John 17 and verse 1, Jesus says, “lifting up His eyes to heaven . . . ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.’” “Glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.” They’re one in glory.

This is understanding the Trinity by the very words of Jesus: one in rights, one in purpose, one in

power, one in honor, one in life-giving, one in authority, one in will, one in works, one in name, one in doctrine, one in salvation, and one in glory. And obviously we could go one step further: one in holiness.

You say, “What is this all leading to?” It’s this: Jesus prays in John 17 that we may be one as the Son and the Father are one. It’s not talking about a superficial kind of unity; it’s talking about this profound spiritual reality, where we are one with the very communion of the divine nature. Peter puts it this way: We are “partakers of the divine nature.” God lives in us; He dwells in us. This is the prayer our Lord is praying. And if that manifests itself the way it manifested itself in the Lord Jesus, then the world will know that God has sent us. Unity is very important. Being of one mind, one heart, one will, one purpose, we all partake of the divine nature. We are one in Christ. It doesn’t always show up—that’s the sad thing.

What’s the path to make it visible, to get it from the invisible reality to the visible reality? And the answer—go back to Ephesians. The answer starts “with all humility.” If you want to walk in a manner—and walk means daily conduct—worthy of your divine calling and this incredible spiritual union with the Trinity—if you want to walk worthy, then start “with all humility.”

It’s a high calling with a lowly walk. That may seem a little bit counterintuitive. It’s typically human to think that if you have some kind of elevated calling, then you should perhaps make sure everybody else elevates you to the place where you belong. But the opposite is what the Bible calls for. We are elevated; we are the sons of God. God is alive within us; the Trinity lives within us. We have all things that pertain to life and godliness; we have all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. And so in response to this high, heavenly, holy calling, we are to be lowly.

Sanctification starts with humbling yourself. “All humility, all humility,” and the *humility* word here, it’s made up of two Greek words. One means “to think or judge,” the other means “low”—it could be “poor,” “insignificant,” “unimportant,” “ignoble,” “cowardly.” Think of yourself in a lowly way. This is the irony of being a child of God. You are so elevated as to have the Trinity alive in you, and yet you have to think of yourself as lowly.

By the way this word that is used here, a combination Greek word, *tapeinophrosunē* [tap-i-nof-ros-oo'-nay] [???], a combined Greek word, appears nowhere in classical Greek. Can’t find it in classical Greek. The only where it’s ever been found is in the New Testament, because the classical Greeks saw humility as a weakness, not something noble. John Wesley wrote, “Neither the Romans nor the Greeks had a word for ‘humility.’”

In secular literature, first couple of centuries AD, *humility*, if it does appear anywhere in culture, appears as a weakness: to think lowly, to be weak, to be cowardly, to be fainthearted. One lexicon says, “To have a servile mind.” Pagans, as we would expect because this is the default position of all fallen sinners, look on humility as a weak virtue, if a virtue at all. It’s pitiful, pitiful. And that’s why there’s no word in classical Greek that would in any sense elevate humility. But God elevates it and calls not just for occasional humility, or perhaps one or another kind of humility, but “all humility,” “all humility”—total humility, nothing but humility. It’s the basic position, the default position of sanctification. Start by humbling yourself.

Now, we have an incredible model for this, and not surprisingly. Turn to Philippians 2. You might be

saying to yourself, “I thought we were supposed to think of ourselves as significant children of God, kings and priests and all of that.” All of that is true. And one day you will be exalted, but that’s for the Lord to do in His good time. For now, even though you have a high calling, you are called to a lowly walk, and your example is Jesus.

Notice how Paul’s concern for unity comes out in chapter 1 of Philippians, verse 27. And he speaks as if he were talking to the Ephesians; it’s the same emphasis. “Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ,” worthy of your calling, “so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you”—this is what Paul wants; this is his passion and his obsession—“I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” This, again, is his passion for the sanctification of his people, which sanctification is manifest to the world when it is one, when unity is its result.

So Paul wants to hear the church is united in one mind and one spirit, standing together for the faith of the gospel. But how do you do that? Chapter 2, “Therefore if there’s any encouragement in Christ”—and there certainly is—“if there’s any comfort of love”—and there is—“if there’s any fellowship of the Spirit”—and there is—“if [there’s] any affection and compassion” within the framework of spiritual life, and there is, Paul says, “make my joy complete.” I want to stop right there.

This is all he asks. His joy is complete at this point; he’s not asking for a laundry list of things. “Make my joy complete”; this will do it: “[Be] of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.” In other words, live in the world in a way that reflects the image of God that you see even in the Trinity. The Father and the Son and the Spirit have the same mind, maintain the same love, are united and intent on one purpose. This is how the church is to live in the world: Let that invisible unity be visible.

Now, that’s a challenge for us, so Paul comes back at us in verse 3 and tells us we have to say no to certain things. “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” Selflessness. This genuine spiritual unity cannot be made manifest unless we decide that we are going to be of the same mind, the same love, the same spirit, the same purpose. In other words, we get our theology together, and then that we live utterly selfless and unselfish lives.

Somebody might say, “Well, for those of us who are elevated in Christ, this seems like going down pretty far.” Well, I’ll help you with that if you go to verse 5. Here’s your model: “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the *morphē* [mor-fay] [???] of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped”—the eternal Son in the presence of the eternal Father, equal in every sense eternally, did not hold on to that—verse 7, “but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

So if you’re thinking it might be beneath you to humble yourself, you have to look at Jesus and see what He did. It is the greatest condescension, obviously, of all condescensions. It is incomprehensible to us to understand how far down He came because we can’t comprehend how high He was. But He didn’t hold on to it. He emptied Himself. He took on the form of a slave, made in the likeness of men, humbled Himself by being obedient, then humbled Himself to death, and then

humbled Himself to the kind of death—even crucifixion—most ignominious; brutal kind of death.

So Jesus is your example of humility. For the purposes of God and to accomplish God's will, He humbled Himself. And then, verse 9, "For this reason also, God highly exalted Him." Leave the exaltation to God, right? Isn't that what we know from what Scripture says? "Humble yourselves, and the Lord will"—what?—"exalt you, lift you up."

Jesus was an example of humility. He was acquainted with grief. He was hated without a cause. He had nowhere to lay His head. He was persecuted, betrayed, condemned, delivered up, despised, lifted up on a cross, mocked, numbered with criminals, killed. He did it all because it was the will of God, and left Himself in God's hands, and God highly exalted Him, and gave Him a name above every name, that at the name *Lord* every knee would bow.

Sanctification is a battle for humility. You might even remember John the Baptist. About him—Jesus said he was the greatest man that ever lived. And yet he said about his Lord he wasn't worthy to unstrap His sandal. And he said, "I must decrease, and He must increase."

So sanctification—the pathway to sanctification is down, is down. Humble yourself, and the Lord will lift you up. And where His church is humble, it is united, and its love is manifest, and the world can see the power of Christ and the gospel. If the world is to believe that the Father sent the Son, it's going to be because the church manifests that power of the Father and the Son and the Spirit in making visible its invisible spiritual unity. Let's pray.

Father, we are again grateful for the privilege of accessing the truth of heaven through Your Word. There is no confusion about what it calls for, what it demands of us. And we know that the path to exaltation is a path of humility. The apostle Paul said that he would never judge himself, but he would wait until the secrets of the hearts were known; and then every man would have his praise from God. Help us not to seek the praise of men, but to humble ourselves in love toward one another, that we may make manifest the true spiritual unity in a visible way by the love and unity in the life of the church.

Thank You, Lord, that You have shown us this, and You have led us to this truth through the years. And we want this church to be a testimony to the true God and the true Redeemer and true salvation and the true gospel, by the manifestation of its unity: one mind, one love, as there is one Lord, one faith, and one God and Father who is over all and in us all. Be pleased, Lord, to put Yourself on display in that way, we ask in the Savior's name. Amen.

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