

INTRODUCTION

In the fourth chapter of Ephesians, Paul continues his thought about the unity of the church and how we are to walk straight. Earlier this month, our senior adult choir, traveled to Nashville, Tennessee; on their way, they stopped by Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee to tour the facility. Bellevue is the third largest in the Southern Baptist Convention. They have over 24,000 members. Every Sunday they have 7,000-8,000 who gather. A few years ago they built a totally new facility in Cordova, Tennessee. It is a massive, beautiful building and our seniors that toured it were amazed. They have a beautiful worship center and education center and the foyer of the building is about the size of this room we are in right now if you can imagine that. As you approach this building from the outside, you see there are seven massive white columns supporting the portico of that building. Engraved on those seven columns are these statements: 1) One body, 2) One Spirit; 3) One hope; 4) One Lord; 5) One Faith; 6) One Baptism; 7) One God and Father. Where did they get those concepts? From Ephesians 4:4-6.

“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

I like it the way it says it in the King James Bible, “in you all.” I knew Paul was a Southerner he said “In Y’all.” Those are more than just seven statements that can adorn pillars holding up a church building, because these are seven pillars of belief, seven spiritual affirmations we must affirm if we want our lives to be supported. Last week we talked about how to walk how to walk straight and about your attitude leading to your action. We talked about being gentle that leads to meekness and humility and love, and that’s only one leg. To walk you need two legs. I want you to think in these terms: One of your legs represents your attitude and the way you behave. You need to have that leg firmly supporting you. The other leg—which is just as important if you want to walk correctly—is what you believe truth your affirmations. You can’t have one without the other. One without the other would cause you to be spiritually handicapped. How you act what you believe. If you believe correctly but you don’t act out your faith that’s wrong.

I know some people who believe the truth right down the line. They are so orthodox, but they are like a gun barrel: They are as straight theologically as they can be, but they are just as cold and empty. You can believe correctly and still be mean as a snake. That’s wrong. On the other hand if you are totally Christian in your activities and in your behavior if you love people and you are kind and forgiving, but you believe the wrong thing, then you will be spiritually handicapped as well. You need both. Jesus said, “You must worship God in spirit” that’s your attitude “and in truth” that’s what you believe. That’s what we are talking about spirit and truth. The Bible says the letter, or the truth, kills, but the spirit gives life. Think of it like this: If you have the truth without the spirit, you will dry up. We know a lot of Christians who are as dry as dust, but they believe correctly they just don’t live it. If you have the spirit without the truth, you will blow up, because there is no spiritual foundation but if you have the spirit and the truth, you will grow up and you will be a maturing Christian. I want to say to you this morning you must affirm these seven beliefs Paul lists here. That is the leg upon which we stand our faith. These are the seven pillars of Biblical Christianity.

Pillar #1: There is one body, the Church

Number one, you must believe in one body, which is the church. The Bible says in Romans 12:5, “So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” This is the church we are talking about. Which church is it? Is it the Baptist church? Is it the Methodist Church? Is it the Catholic Church? Is it Green Acres Baptist Church? Is it Marvin Methodist United Church? Is it First Christian Church? What is the “one church”? In the New Testament the word church, *ekklesia*, is used in two different ways. First, it expresses itself as a local body of believers and there are many of those churches (plural). That’s why in the first chapter of Revelation John writes to the churches (plural) in Asia Minor. But that’s not what he is talking about here because he says, “one body” and there are many local congregations as well there should be. Elsewhere the Bible uses the term church in its singular sense and it refers to “all true believers.” That’s why later we are going to see in Ephesians 5, where Paul says, “Husbands love your wives even as Christ loved the church.” (singular) Which church? The Baptist Church, the Presbyterian Church, Green Acres Church, Pollard United Methodist Church? Which church? It’s talking about “the church” the body of Christ.

Someone once asked me, “You’re a Baptist, aren’t you?” I said, “Yes, I am. I am a Christian first and I’m proud to be a Baptist.” He said, “Are you one of those narrow-minded Baptists where you believe only Baptists are going to make it to heaven?” I said, “Listen, friend, I’m more narrow-minded than that. I believe there are a bunch of Baptists who aren’t going to make it to heaven when they die. I’m a lot more broad-minded than that, because I happen to believe there are some Presbyterians who are going to go to heaven there are also some Methodists who are going to go to heaven I even believe there are some Catholics who are going to go to heaven when they die. I believe there are some Pentecostals who are going to heaven if they don’t go past it. I believe they’re all kinds of believers who are going to go to heaven when they die.” All of those believers regardless of their denomination are the church. Salvation is not in a denomination. Salvation is in Jesus Christ and Christ alone so, there is one body the body of Christ.

You can join a local body and you should. I think any true Christian will want to join a local church and be involved in that church. When you join a local church, your name is written down on some church roll, but please, do not assume because your name is written down on a church roll somewhere you will go to heaven when you die. Jesus said, “There are many, many religious people who think they are going to heaven, but they have never truly been born again.” So, when you think you stand before God and he says, “Why should I let you into heaven?” Don’t you dare say, “Because my name is on the roll down there at Green Acres Baptist Church.” There is another list with the name of everybody who is in the church. It is the list the Bible says is written down in the Lamb’s Book of Life in heaven. When you are born again, you become a part of the Church. You can’t join the church. You can join *this* church, but you can’t join the Church you become a part of it when you become a Christian and your name appears in the Lamb’s Book of Life in heaven. Those are the ones who are going to make it into heaven.

Pillar #2: There is one Spirit, the Holy Spirit

Number two: There is one Spirit, and that is the Holy Spirit. There are many spirits, because the

Bible says there are evil spirits and angelic spirits, but there is one Spirit that really ministers to us and that is the Holy Spirit. What does the Holy Spirit do? He convicts us of sin. It is the Holy Spirit that draws us to Jesus and then when we receive Christ, it is the Holy Spirit who comes to take up residence in our life.

You have a spirit. The Bible says you are a body, you are a soul and you are a spirit. These cannot be separated as long as you are alive. When you die, your spirit and your soul are separated from your body, but until then they can't be separated. Sometimes people say, "I'm not going to be in church Sunday, but I'll be there in spirit." Sometimes it's kind of spooky up here preaching to a bunch of spirits. *You can't do that.* You can't say, "I'll be somewhere in spirit." You might say, "I'll pray for you and I'll be there in my prayers." but your spirit is where you are. The Bible says your spirit is dead until the Holy Spirit comes in and gives it life, energizing your spirit. Then, God's Holy Spirit and your holy spirit interact. That's why the Bible says right here in Romans 8:16, "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." That means you can know for certain you are a Christian. You don't have to *hope* you are saved; you don't have to *wish* you are saved: You can know for certain. It is the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. It's like God's Holy Spirit reaches out and shakes hands with your spirit and says, "You are a child of God." It's kind of interesting. One spirit, the Spirit of God in me can even interact with the Spirit of God in other Christians.

Last Sunday afternoon I got on a plane here in Tyler, to fly to Alabama to start a Sunday through Wednesday Revival. When I was in the lobby at Pounds Field, there were four guys whom I suspected were members of a rock group (you know you can just kind of pick out rock group members.) They were carrying their guitars and their hair was a little long and they looked kind of "spacey." Of course I was jumping to conclusions like I sometimes do and it just so happened when we got on the little airplane; I was sitting right next to one of them. I said to myself, "I'm going to witness to this guy, because I figure all rock musicians are lost and they need the Lord." So I thought, "I'm going to witness to this guy and before we get to Dallas, this guy is going to be saved." Boy was I wrong! It turns out this guy was part of a Christian group out of Canada called, "Hocus Pick." They had been here at Youth with a Mission's "Go Fest," and they were on their way back to British Columbia. I started talking to this guy about spiritual things and I picked up immediately that he loved the Lord. He really put me in the shade. He shamed me, because of his spiritual intuition. I thought he was lost and he said, "The moment you sat down beside me, I knew you were a believer. It was as if my spirit testified with your spirit that you were a believer." We had great fellowship there. That's what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit in me and the Holy Spirit in you can even bear witness to each other. There is one body there is one Spirit.

Pillar #3: There is one hope, the return of Jesus

Number three: There is one hope one hope. I believe this one hope is the return of Jesus. Look up "hope" in Webster's Dictionary and it will say something like "desire with expectation" but, the secular definition of the word "hope" has the idea of "maybe it will happen maybe it won't." or "I'm wishing it would happen I'm really hoping it will happen, but I'm just not real sure." It's like the "hope chests" young girls get and they start putting things in it, hoping one day Mr. Right will come along and they would have this hope chest full of things for their wedding and

for their marriage. "I don't know for sure, but I am really hoping I will get married someday." There is an idea of wishing but not knowing whether or not it will come true. Have you ever stood in front of a wishing well, taken a penny out of your pocket and thrown that penny in that wishing well and wished for something to come true? I heard about a couple that was always at each other's throats. They were standing by a wishing well and the guy tossed a penny in and his wife bent over to look in and lost her balance and fell headfirst into the well. He said, "What do you know? Those things really do work."

When the Bible uses the word "hope," it's not talking about something in the future that may or may not happen. In the Bible, the word "hope" means a rock-rib certainty; it is something you can bank your entire future on. Titus 2:13 says, "While we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ." Jesus is going to come back. One of the problems in America today is it seems we are wandering hopelessly, helplessly and people are afraid about what's going to happen in the future. This bombing in Oklahoma City exacerbated the problem. It's made people even more fearful. "Are we going to get bombed? What's going to happen in the future?" America is so sick! Sometimes it takes a tragedy like this just to see how sick America really is. When CNN began broadcasting the news, they received thousands of calls from viewers who said, "We want our O.J. trial back." Thousands! That's indicative of the nature of our nation today. We are wandering hopelessly, helplessly. As a Christian, you don't have to wonder or worry about what's going to happen in the future. I don't know everything that is going to happen. I don't know who's going to win the NBA playoffs. I don't know what the stock market is going to do next month. I don't know who's going to win the World Series or even if there will be a World Series but I do know what's going to happen in the future and that is Jesus Christ is coming back to Planet Earth. For that reason there is not a sense of hopelessness in my life. Something's going to happen I'm looking forward to. I know it sounds trite and you've heard it before I don't know what the future holds, but I do know who holds the future Jesus Christ is going to come back. And you must believe in that "hope" of the return of Jesus.

You may not believe exactly as I do about it. There are a lot of nuances of belief about His return. The Book of Revelation says there is going to be a millennial reign, and if you believe Jesus is coming back before that, you are called a "pre-millennialist." If you believe He is coming back after that you are called a "post-millennialist." If you believe millennium is figurative and it is not going to happen at all, you are an "a-millennialist." Some don't understand that; they think it's all going to pan out in the end. They're "pan-millennialists." Others don't understand it but are all for it, so they're a "pro-millennialist." Whether you are a "pre-, post-, a-, pan-, pro-, or whatever, you don't have to agree on the details, as long as you believe for sure Jesus is going to come back. Personally, I am a "pre-millennialist." I am a "pre-tribulationist." In other words, I believe Jesus Christ is going to come back and rapture the church. That's the very next thing; it could happen at any moment. And then there will be a seven-year period of tribulation. After the battle of Armageddon, there will be a thousand-year millennial reign of Christ on the earth. That's what I believe. But if you don't believe the same way I do about it, that's all right you have a right to be wrong. (just kidding) If you don't believe the way I believe about it, I can still love you, I can still fellowship with you as long as we both believe Jesus is going to come back.

Now are you looking forward to that? Does that kind of truth bring hope to your heart, or does it create a little fear? When Paul is writing the last words he ever wrote in II Timothy 4, he talks about the prize laid up for him and says not for him only, "but for all those who love his appearing." Do you love the appearing of Jesus? Do you love the second coming? I'm not asking, "Do you love Jesus?" Do you love the second coming?

When I was about 5 years old living in South Alabama, I fully demonstrated the doctrine of total depravity or the sinfulness of men. A kid who lived across the street was an only child and had tons of toys, and the rest of us kids had brothers and sisters. We were so jealous of this kid and all of his toys! One day we walked over to see him and knocked on his door. Nobody came out and we were standing in his garage so, we just decided we would steal all of his toys and we did. About three of us started carting off every one of his toys; took them across the road into this lot that had not been built on yet with high grass on it. That's where we hid our cache. We put it all in there. We stole everything in that garage you could think of. We just kept going back. We stole their ice cream maker, their barbecue grill we just got everything! We were just rotten sinners. While we were getting the last load, here comes his mother drove up and caught us red-handed! She went to each of our houses, dropped us off, and in great detail told our parents or our moms what we had done. My mother was so angry with me! She did something she seldom ever did: she called my dad at work. (you KNOW it's serious when they call your dad to come home from work right then and deal with you) That was the longest twenty minutes of my life. I became a praying Christian right then. "Oh, God, please don't let him kill me!" This is what I am trying to say I love my Dad but I did not love his appearing. You may love Jesus but do you love his appearing? Can you say, "I am looking forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ.?" That is our one hope!

Pillar #4: There is one Lord: Jesus Christ

Number four: There is one Lord one Lord and His name is Jesus! Acts 4:12 says, "There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Please write down these three words and let's talk about them: Lord Jesus Christ, because we throw those around all the time. The Lord Jesus Christ. Circle the word "Christ" and write the word "title." That is His title. He is "the Christ," which means "the Messiah," "the Anointed One." Sometimes people misunderstand and say, "I believe in Christ." You are actually saying you believe in *the title* of the Messiah. There are Jews standing at the Wailing Wall today in Jerusalem who don't believe in Jesus, but they would quickly affirm, "I believe in Christ." They just don't believe Jesus is the Christ. What makes us different? We believe Jesus is the Christ Jesus is his name. His title is Christ, Jesus is his name. That's why it's very important to believe Jesus is the Christ. The word "Lord" is His position. That means "ruler," it means the one totally in charge. For you to become a Christian you must believe on the name of the Lord! His name is Jesus Christ is his title his position is Lord.

For Paul to say, "There is only one Lord" is saying something that may not relate to many of us today, but it certainly related to First Century Christians. The reason the gospel could spread so easily during this time is because the Roman Empire established what historians call the Pax Romana, the Peace of Rome, and the Romans were very tolerant, religiously. When they conquered a nation, they would learn what the nation's gods were, what their religions were and

quickly embraced those gods and the religion. “We have plenty of room for your gods. We have plenty of room for your religion in Rome.” There was a building in Rome called the Pantheon *pan* meaning “all” *theos*, meaning gods. This building has been excavated. You can see it today. In the walls of the Pantheon you can see many alcoves, niches. In each of these niches was a different god or a representation of all the different gods. There may be a statue there may be an icon there may be something else. There was a niche for Zeus, a niche for Mercury, a niche for Osiris, one for Isis, one for Artemis...all the gods they needed. “Welcome to the Pantheon. Bring your gods and we will worship your gods.” The Christians came along and the Romans said, “Sure we will believe in Jesus. You bring Jesus down to the Pantheon we’ll put him on a shelf and he can be Lord with all those other lords.” The Christians said, “Absolutely NOT! He is not Lord among lords he is Lord of Lords. He is not a King among kings he is King of Kings!” They refused to bow their knee to those other gods. They refused to bow their knee to Emperor Augustus, whom the Romans claimed was lord. They refused to bow their knee to Zeus and Artemis and all those other gods and because of that the Romans killed them.

The legal charge most often brought against Christians before they were executed ironically was atheism, because they would not believe in all those other gods. You can read about it in the history books. They put teenage Christians who refused to bow their knees to any other lord and put them in leather sacks with poisonous serpents and scorpions and they would sew the leather sack closed and throw them in the Tiber River. Female Christians who refused to bow their knees to any other lord and were tied to the horns of a bull and sent into the arena to fight against a lion. Of course, they were torn to pieces in the ensuing fight. Christian were burned them at the stake and rammed through with spears. Why? Because they said, “There is only one Lord and his name is Jesus!” Is it any different today? Do you know what the world out there says to you? “Hey Jesus is okay, just keep him in your Sunday niche. Don’t bring him to the workplace. Don’t bring him down here to school. Don’t bring him into your social life. Keep him in his nice, little neat shelf there on Sunday morning religion. If Jesus is not Lord of all, he is not Lord *at all*. When you refuse to bow down to the gods of materialism and pleasure in America today, you will be persecuted as well. The problem in America is not that we don’t have ENOUGH gods; America is not godless. The problem in America is we have TOO MANY gods! There can only be one Lord! “He is Lord, he is Lord He is risen from the dead and he is Lord. Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord!”

The question is not, “Will you confess Jesus as Lord?” It is “When will you confess Jesus as Lord?” Because if you are a believer and you just confessed him in joy in that song *wonderful!* But the Bible says in Philippians 3, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus is Lord. Confess him now in joy so you don’t have to confess him later in judgment.

Pillar #5: There is one faith

Number five: There is one faith. What is the one faith? It is the true gospel. In the New Testament the word “faith” has a dual meaning. It can mean a “saving belief.” It says in Ephesians 2, “for by grace are you saved through faith.” That is an action. Also, the word “faith” can be used to describe a body of beliefs as it says in Jude 3, “I urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.” In other words, there is a body of belief we ought to hold—one faith—and it is found right here in this book. God is not writing any new scriptures.

There are a lot of religious nuts out there on television and radio saying there is some “new truth,” some “new gospel” they have received, some “new revelation” from God. That’s heresy. The Bible says, “The faith was once and for all delivered to the saints.” That’s the faith we must believe what we find written in the Bible. You don’t need a Book of Mormon; you don’t need the New World translation of the scriptures. What you have in your hand is the true gospel of Jesus Christ. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, and he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” That is the true gospel.

Pillar #6: There is one baptism

Number six: There is one baptism. There are different kinds of spirits, and different kinds of baptism. What is the one baptism? According to Hebrews 6:2, there is something the Bible calls the doctrine of baptisms. There are different baptisms in the Bible. The word, baptism, means “immerse.” In Matthew 3:11, John the Baptist gives three different kinds of baptism. He said, “I baptize you with water.” That’s one kind. Water baptism. Actually, John’s baptism was even different than Christian baptism. But, then he said, “But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry.” It’s Jesus. “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” That’s a different kind of baptism. That’s what Jesus wants to do, totally immerse you in the life of the Spirit. Then he says, “And he’ll baptize you with fire.” I believe that’s talking about the baptism of suffering he talks about in Matthew 20. He said to James and John “Are you able to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” meaning I’m going to suffer can you suffer? There are three different kinds of baptisms right there, but I don’t think any of those represent the one baptism he is talking about here. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, it says, “For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body.” I think the one baptism he is talking about here is the one baptism into the body. Baptism into the body of Christ. It has nothing to do with water. It has everything to do with the act of the Holy Spirit.

When you are born again, when you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit immerses you into the body. You become a part of the body of Christ. It is possible to be baptized in water many, many times. In fact when I was in college, we had a class where we practiced baptizing. I had a friend who played on the football team and was 6’8” tall, and weighed 280 pounds. We practiced baptizing a little bit and somebody asked the question, “Well, Professor. How do you baptize somebody who is really, really big?” All eyes in that class turned and looked at Tommy. So he climbed into the baptistry and got baptized 32 times on that one day. The true, sad fact of that was I kept up with Tommy through the years and he is living such a godless life right now, he doesn’t even claim to be a Christian at this time. If water baptism saved you, he would be more saved than any of us in this room. But it’s not water baptism that saves you—it’s being baptized into the body of Christ, because water baptism is something a man does Spirit baptism is what the Holy Spirit does and He makes you part of the body.

Pillar #7: There is one God, He is the Father

Number seven. He says, “There is one God.” We believe there is one God, but what do we believe about this one God? We believe he is the Father. I am so glad the Bible doesn’t call God a warrior or a policeman or some kind of angry, cosmic being. It says he’s a Father. Think about

how God relates to you and how you should relate to God.

When I was growing up, I loved my father. My father loved me. I have always admired my dad. Even until the day he died, I loved him and admired him. He quit school when he was 12 after his father died and went to work at two jobs to support his mother and five sisters. Then he joined the Navy and when he got out of the Navy, even though he never went to high school a day in his life, he took a college entrance exam and went to Louisiana Tech in Ruston and graduated. He had to work hard to do that and I always admired him. He was a godly man. He took us to church. I can remember seeing my dad’s Bible and how it was marked up. What an impact that had upon me as a kid to see that my dad had marked up his Bible. That led me to know this book really was saying something important. I can remember the relationship I had with my dad. We’d go fishing together and when he came into my room early in the morning for us to go fishing, he didn’t have to say more than once, “Time to go.” I’d jump out of that bed and go. I can remember when I played sports I was always performing on the field or on the court thinking, “My dad is up there and he is watching.” So, I know what it is to have a positive experience with a father. That’s how I relate to God. I am also a dad, a father, so I can understand how God relates to me. When I was a father for the first time, I learned more about the nature of God in five seconds as a father than I learned in seven years of seminary. When that baby was born our first child I just loved her! Even though she sometimes didn’t return my love to start with (she kept us awake at night and didn’t always smell too good and kind of disrupted our schedule) I still loved her. I began to understand how even though I sometimes fail the Lord and I don’t meet his expectations, he still loves me and he cares for me. I remember how deeply I cared for my children and still do but, especially when they were little and seemed to be helpless.

CONCLUSION

One Friday night after a football game when Laura Grace was about three, we were walking out of the stadium and she was holding my hand. You know how little girls are full of excitement little boys are too. It was a hot night and our hands were sweaty and she slipped out of my hand. I was really trying to hold her as tightly as I could, but she slipped out of my hand and fell. We were walking on gravel and she hit her head on a sharp piece of gravel. You know how your scalp bleeds profusely. She was bleeding profusely and I was trying to stop the bleeding with a handkerchief. I can’t tell you how much that hurt me. Number one, that I was unable to hold her hand and number two, she was hurting and bleeding. Any parent in this room knows what I am talking about. I would much rather have fallen and cut myself than for her to do that.

When I think about how God cares for me and loves me like that, Wow! It is such a blessing to me! To relate to him as Father and to know how he relates to me. When I was a youth minister, I was talking about the fatherhood of God to the teens and I said, “Think about how much you love your father and how much your father loves you, and you multiply that a million times and that’s God.” There was a 15-year-old girl who literally spat in response to that. She said, “My father! I hate my father! He used to beat my mother and beat us kids and he left us and I haven’t seen him since. I hate my father!” For the first time, I realized there are people out there who did not have the positive experience I had with a father. There are some fathers today who aren’t very good. So whatever kind of relationship you had with your father, you need to break through any negative experience you had and cancel it out, then any positive experience you had with

your father, you need to multiply it a billion times and that's how you can relate to God and that's how God wants to relate to you.

Do you believe all that? Do you believe there is one body that is the church? Do you believe there is one Spirit, the Holy Spirit? Do you believe there is one hope, the second coming of Jesus? Do you believe there is one Lord, and Jesus is that Lord? Do you believe there is one faith, one baptism and one God? Well, you can believe all of that and still not be a Christian, because it's not what you believe it's whom you receive. It says in John 1:12, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

OUTLINE

The seven pillars of Biblical Christianity:

1. One body, the Church
2. One Spirit, the Holy Spirit
3. One hope, the return of Jesus
4. One Lord: Jesus Christ
5. One faith
6. One baptism
7. One God, He is the Father



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes