

Spiritual Non-Negotiables (Part 1) – Eph 4:4-6

Eph 4:1-6. We're going to focus on v4 this morning, in the first of a two-part message that includes v4-6. Talking about spiritual non-negotiables. Core truths about God, life, and religion that are absolute and unchanging. True for all time and all people.

In fact, they're unchange-able. Like gravity in the realm of science. If you're falling from an airplane, there's no negotiating your descent. Because the *truth* of gravity, the force of gravity, the effect of gravity, and the gravitational constant is set. It's non-negotiable.

So too the spiritual constants we find here. So follow along as we start back in v1, just to capture the flow of thought. Paul says . . .

[1] *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, [2] with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, [3] eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (ESV)

Walk worthy he says. Live up to your calling as a *child* of God, by maintaining your unity in the *family* of God.

Then, in v4-6, he lays out the spiritual truths that undergird and *lead* to such unity.

[4] *There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—[5] one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.*

➤ The point is this: Our unity and very existence as the church, is based on the exclusive nature of 7 spiritual truths. 7 non-negotiables. Because *one* means one. Period. No more and no less.

There aren't *multiple* ways to God. There aren't *many* paths to forgiveness. There aren't *different* gods. And there aren't a bunch of *religions* to choose from. That's where Paul starts.

There's one body – which rules out other _____. (v4a)

One. That's what it says. V4. First 4 words. *There is one body.*

Referring to the body of Christ. The church. The community of redeemed believers past, present, and future. The body is the church.

I say that because of Eph 1:23; a few chapters back. Where it says God gave Christ *as head over all things to the church, which is his body*. So the *body* is the church. The "ecclesia" in Greek. The called out ones. Called out from the world to be saved; and holy; and sent.

The point being, there's only one. Only *one* body. Only *one* family of God. Only *one* community of believers. Only *one* church. Manifested and represented by many *local* churches, but connected and comprising only one *universal* church.

Which rules out other religions. (v4a)

There's one body, which rules out *other* bodies. Other religions.

All churches are not true churches. Biblical churches. All gatherings are not God's gatherings. All religion is not true religion. In fact, based on this text, there's only one.

Which rules out Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism; Mormonism, Watch Tower; even Judaism and Catholicism. True.

Judaism because it rejects Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah. And **1 John 2:23** says – *No one who denies the Son has the Father*. Has God the Father as their God. They're not part of his family. His body.

And Catholicism is ruled out because among other things, it teaches a false gospel. I say that not to condemn, but to clarify. And plead. Catholicism teaches a gospel of faith *plus* works for salvation. Which Paul says in **Eph 2:8-9**, is wrong.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith [period; not faith *plus* works]. And this is not your own doing [this saving]; it is the gift of God, not a result of works.*

A gospel of faith plus works is not biblical Christianity. And churches or religions that teach it, by *whatever* name, are not part of the body.*****

Does that mean that Catholicism gets *everything* wrong? Not at all. Praise God for that. From their stand on life, *pro*-life issues, to their support of heterosexual marriage, to their sensitivity to the things of God, they're spot on.

Nor does *Judaism* get everything wrong. Like their teaching to seek the Lord. And live a holy life. Same for Mormons. Those things are good.

But they're not salvific; they don't lead to salvation. Or even sanctification. And other things *aren't* good. *Core* things; core truths. Which rules those religions out as being part of the *one body*.

It's the first non-negotiable for life and unity.

Second, the second non-negotiable, is that . . .

There's one Spirit – which rules out other _____. (v4a)

V4 again. *There is one body and one Spirit*. Referring to the Holy Spirit. The one described by Jesus as our helper. The one who apportions to each one of us spiritual gifts.

And here in Ephesians, the one who seals us, like we saw in chapter one, and guarantees our inheritance of eternal life (Eph 1:13). The one who gives us access to the Father (2:18). The one who knits our hearts together as a dwelling place for God (2:22). The one who strengthens us in our inner being (3:16). And the one who unifies us (4:3).

The third person of the Trinity does all that, all by himself. There's *one* Spirit.

Which rules out other substitutes. (v4a)

Substitutes like pagan rituals in animistic cultures, that draw on *demonic* spirits. Hoping they can do what only the *Holy* Spirit can do. Same for any kind of dabbling in the occult, the mystical and paranormal in *our* culture.

But even closer to home are the substitutes of common *affinities* and common interests, to

connect us. From book clubs to bowling; crafting to knitting; sports to music. Those are the substitutes in *our* culture we use to connect us and unify us.

Not that those things are bad in and of themselves, but that they're often cheap substitutes for the *real* thing. The *real* means of connection. The *real* source of strength. The *real* fountain of life.

And they don't satisfy. It doesn't matter *what* club you're a part of. What hobby you do. What Facebook group you're in. What guru you know. What career you pursue. There's no substitute for the Spirit. He's non-negotiable. Individually *and* corporately.

Third . . .

There's one hope – which rules out other _____. (v4b)

And boy does this have implications. V4 again.

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call.

Your call, referring God's call on your *life*. His summons to adopt you as his child. His irresistible beckon to be saved; to be a part of his ecclesia; the called *out* ones.

That's your *call*. Having chosen us, as we saw in chapter 1, he calls us.

➤ And with that calling, comes *hope*. Not just any hope, or hope in general, but *the one hope* it says. *The one hope*. Implying a very *specific* hope. The hope that belongs to your call; goes hand in *hand* with it.

Referring, to **the confident expectation of eternal life with Jesus**. That's the one hope to which Paul refers. It's the hope of our salvation. That he will finish what he started by gathering us to himself one day, to dwell with him in person, forever and ever.

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one [confident expectation of eternal life with Christ] that belongs to your call. That's our hope.

Which rules out other sources. (v4b)

Other sources of hope. Sources of security. Sources of confidence.

Like your bank account. Your calling and future are not based on your money. And shouldn't be any *part* of your hope. Any *part* of your confident expectation of life to the full and life forever.

Nor should *elections* be part of your hope. Or the government. Not ultimately. There's only *one* hope it says. One.

➤ Last Sunday morning, I came to the office thinking about what I would preach *this* Sunday; after the election. That's not my norm for me. Usually I'm focused on the passage at hand. But with the election looming, it was heavy on my mind. What am I going to say? I had been asking the Lord several weeks.

And he laid on my heart 5 thoughts in about 60 seconds. So I wrote them down and set them aside until Tuesday morning, when I started thinking about *these* verses.

And I realized they fit right here. As true sources of hope, juxtaposed against *false* sources. Sources of hope that we often latch onto and get sucked into, as we live our lives. Especially around elections.

So I want to share them with you, with the hope that they help your perspective.

➤ The first is the world. That's the first source of false hope. This place in which we live. Where we put down roots, lay foundations, and build towers as if this is our permanent home. When the fact is, it's not.

• **This world is not our home – heaven is.**

That's the first thought; the first contrast.

Just like the saints of old, we are *strangers and exiles on the earth*; Heb 11:13. Seeking a homeland. A *heavenly* country it says. The place God has *prepared* for us.

Just like Jesus said in **John 14:2-3**.

I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

Which is heaven. The new heavens and new earth; Rev 21. That's the place he's *preparing*; and the place we ought to be seeking.*****

So this world is *definitely* not our home. We're just a passin' through. *Heaven* is the permanent destination. Put your hope in that.

Second, the second source of false hope we often latch onto, is the President. And yet . . .

• **The President is not our Savior – Jesus is.**

Salvation doesn't come out of Washington, but Zion. It doesn't ride on Air Force One, but the clouds. It doesn't wear a suit, but a robe dipped in blood.

Our Savior is the Lion of *Judah*, not the leader of *men*. The Lamb of *God*, not the priest of *politics*. The Alpha and Omega, not a footnote of history.

And the Bible says in **Ps 118:8-9** – *It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. [9] It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.*

Make no mistake. There's one hope and one Savior.***** And his name is Jesus. Not Trump, not Biden, not Caesar, not anybody. So by all means and any means, put your hope in him.

➤ Third, the third source of false hope is our *culture*. "If we only wake up and become more enlightened, we'll be better off." That's what some people say. "If we only listen up and clue in, we'll go places."

Not true.

• **The culture is not our guide – the Bible is.**

The winds of culture shouldn't determine our thinking, the Bible should. The spirit of the day shouldn't determine our direction, the Word should. *A lamp to [our] feet and a light to [our] path.* (Ps 119:105)

Everything we think and do should be in line with the Scriptures; the mind of Christ. And that's not found out there, but right [here](#).

Unfortunately, some people, some *pastors* even, have bought into an *integrated* approach to the Bible. Combining cultural *ideologies* with biblical principles. Claiming its more enlightened, or assuming it's "progressive." Progressive.

➤ Can I tell you something? There's no such thing as "Progressive Christianity;" only Biblical Christianity. Progressive Christianity is a contradiction of terms. The faith once delivered was delivered once. (Jude 3) And stands now exactly as it stood then.

The principles of Scripture never change. The reason for Jesus, to seek and to save, remains the same. The Gospel needs no adjustment. No additions; no subtractions.

So instead of allowing the latest twist of your favorite Christian *podcaster* to influence your thinking, go to the Word. Start there. And measure everything else against *it*. And instead of incorporating the popular ideologies of our day into the *Bible*, let the Bible inform the ideologies; or refute them. From cancel culture and Critical Race Theory, to sexual preference and intersectionality.

Because the *culture* is not our hope, the *culture* is not our guide, the Bible is.

➤ 4th is the government. That's the 4th source of false hope we often depend on. But . . .

• **The government is not our provider – God is.**

Does God put governments in place *to punish those who do evil and praise those who do good* as Peter says? (1 Pet 2:13-14) Absolutely. But not to provide for our every need. Protect us, yes. Keep order, yes. Foster an environment of freedom and opportunity, yes. But not solve our every problem. Not cover our every mistake; or mishap; or misfortune.

God is our provider. *He's* the one we should look to. He's the one in whom we should place our hope. And if he chooses at times to provide *through* the government, so be it. But we shouldn't look for it, hope for it, or depend on it.

Look to him. Seek him. Trust *him* to supply your need. That's our hope. Not government, but God.

And last, the 5th source of false hope, is this *life*. Thinking this is it. When all along . . .

• **This life is not the end – eternity is.**

Eternity is our final destination. A state of being and living that will last forever. Far longer than the days of our lives.

And yet, so many people put their hope in *this* life, and this life alone; what they accomplish here and *now*. Because to them, this is all there is. So why *wouldn't* you put all your eggs in this basket? Why wouldn't you pin all your hopes on what's at hand?

➤ It's a mindset we're *all* susceptible to. Even believers. We tend to be *near-sighted* in life. We tend to think and act like this is it, because it's all we know. All we've ever experienced. All we see. While much of what the *Bible* talks about is far off and requires faith.

And our culture *reinforces* that nearsightedness, doesn't it? With most people believing they live, they die, and they're done; game over. Or at most, they cling to a sappy afterlife they don't really believe. Which leaves them with the here and now.

And they settle into two main groups. Those who "eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die;" and those who eat *healthy*, drink *kombucha*, and obsess over *safety*; trying to live forever. Because this life is the end as far as they're concerned.

Those two nearsighted extremes are *rampant* in our culture. And if we're not careful, we too will succumb. Forgetting all *about* eternity.

➤ This life is *not* the end. For anybody. And believers, followers of Jesus, have an eternity of joy, peace, and blessing in store. An eternity so long, that this is just a dot on the timeline. And so good, that it's a drop in the bucket. **(Summary)**

So whatever you do, don't put your hope in sources that are transient and false. Whether it's this life, this government and President, this culture, or this world.

There's only *one* hope. *One* confident expectation. And that's life to the full and life forever, with Jesus.

Prayer – Lord, give us eyes to see and ears to hear. And hearts that are soft; soft to the truth and soft to you. Help us to embrace these truths and apply them in our lives and church. One body, with one Spirit, and one hope.