

Spiritual Non-Negotiables (Part 2) – Eph 4:4-6

This is Part 2 of a message I started November 8th, focusing on spiritual non-negotiables. Core truths about God, life, and religion that are absolute and unchanging. True for all time and all people. And they come from Eph 4:4-6. So let's turn there and get at it.

➤ The Apostle Paul is writing, and after speaking of our unity in v3, he lays out the spiritual truths that undergird it and *lead* to it.

[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 a church, *the church*, is based on the exclusive, non-negotiable nature of 7 spiritual truths. Because *one* means one. No more, and no less. Not that these truths are meant to keep *people* out, but falsehood. They're exclusive of falsehood. And they're *unyielding* to compromise or accommodation. Non-negotiable.

Starting with the body of Christ.

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

One *church*. One community of redeemed *believers* past, present, and future. One true religion. Which rules out *other* religions. That's the first non-negotiable from Part 1.

The second, is that . . .

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

One *Holy Spirit*. To supernaturally connect, empower, comfort, and lead us. Which rules *other* things that claim to do the same. Other people, other philosophies, identities, organizations. There are no substitutes for the supernatural work of the Spirit.

Third, we found that . . .

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

The one hope in v4, referring to **the confident expectation of eternal life with Jesus**. Which rules *other* sources like the things of this world and this life in general. There's only *one* true hope. No more and no less. It's exclusive and non-negotiable.

➤ Which brings us to v5-6. Where we find the 4th non-negotiable.

There's one Lord – which rules out other _____ (v5)

V5. There's *one Lord*. One. Couldn't be any clearer.

Less so, less clear, is the word *Lord*. Even though it's used almost 9000 times in our English Bibles. *9000*. But it's not used that much in our culture, so its meaning is a bit fuzzy for us. Compounded by the fact that there are 4 *different* words for “Lord” in the original *languages* of the Bible. Words that mean different things, even though we translate them the same.

So I'm going to take a few minutes to explain, and hopefully make it very clear as to what the Bible is saying and to whom it refers, when you see or hear the word “Lord.”

The first word in the original languages, is . . .

• **Kyrios** (kur-ee-os) – It's a Greek word, in the New Testament, used 717x. And it means leader, master, or ruler. Most often referring to Jesus; ruler of the universe and everyone in

it. Kyrios.

The second word translated “Lord” in the Bible, is . . .

• **Despotes** (des-poe-tase)– Another Greek word, used only 10x in the New Testament. And it too means master, but emphasizes the right and power to *command*. Sometimes legitimately, as in the case of Jesus, and sometimes illegitimately in the case of despots. Tyrants. So when you see “Lord” in the New Testament, it's either a translation of Despotes or Kyrios. And most of the time, the *vast* majority, it's Kyrios.

Third, is . . .

• **Adonay** (“A-doe-nie”) – Sometimes spelled with a-i on the end. And this word is Hebrew. Used in various forms over 1200x, in the *Old Testament*. And it too means master; or *my* master. Carrying the connotation of *supreme* authority and *personal* authority.

And it's used 3 main ways in the Old Testament:

1. It's a *title*. A title of authority, referring to God most of the time; God the Father. Sometimes expressed as, “The *Lord* God,” and other times, just “The Lord.” Like we say *Governor* Reynolds; or just, the Governor. Either way, it's a title. So when you see *Lord* in the Old Testament, it's a title of authority. That's the first way it's used.

2. It's used as a term of *description* and *endearment*. Description, because the root, “Adon,” A-d-o-n, is *plural*. Most likely referring to the triune *nature* of God. It's a description.

And a-y on the end, indicates that it's first person singular. Referring to the individual *speaker* of the word. So to refer to God as Adonay, is to say, “my personal, triune God.” A term of endearment and description. That's the second way it's used in the Old Testament.

3. It's used as a *substitute*. A substitute for God's *proper* name. Because sometime around the 3rd century *BC*, Jews stopped using God's proper name, because they thought it was too sacred and too risky to utter. Fearing they might take it in vain by accident. So they used a substitute. Adonay.

Then, sometime between the 2nd and 4th centuries *AD*, religious authors in general, stopped *writing* God's name; in *extra-biblical* literature. Substituting “Adonay” there, as well.

And in the 7th century *AD*, a group of scribes called the Masoretes, took it a step further. They stopped using God's name in their translation of the *Bible*. Again, because it was too sacred and too risky. It was Adonay and *only* Adonay. Even if that wasn't entirely accurate.

But rest assured, in *our* Bibles it is. When you see *Lord* in the Old Testament referring to God – capital L, small o-r-d – it translates Adonay. Meaning the supreme authority in our lives, and in the universe.

And then 4th, the 4th word translated “Lord” in our Bibles, is . . .

• **Yahweh** – The *proper* name for God, that so many avoided in days of old. That's God's name. And it too is a Hebrew word, used nearly 7000x in the Old Testament. And means something like “the God who was and is and is to come.” Eternal and sovereign.

And it's translated LORD in most English Bibles, with all *caps*. Like in **Dt 5:33** – *You shall walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you*. The way Yahweh Elohim has commanded you. Translators don't capitalize it for *emphasis*, but to indicate that the *proper* name of God is being used.*****

Which begs the question, “Why don't they just use Yahweh?” Why not spell it out? Because we don't know how. We don't know *how* to spell it. Yahweh is our best guess, but we can't be sure. Because early Hebrew manuscripts only used *consonants*; to conserve space. So it's just Y-H-W-H.

Not only that, but when Jews stopped using God's name verbally, its original *pronunciation* was lost. We don't know how to spell it, and we don't know how to pronounce it. We don't even know how many *syllables* there are.

So instead of using YHWH in our English Bibles, most translators use L-O-R-D in caps. Called the *Tetragrammaton* in theological circles. “Tetra” meaning four, and “grammaton” meaning letters. 4 letters. And while it's pronounced the same as small o-r-d, it means something very different. It's God's name.

➤ All that to say, there are 4 main words in the Bible for *Lord*. And here in Eph 4:5, it's *Kyrios*. There's one *Kyrios*. One leader, one master, one ruler.

And that *one*, is Jesus. Because that's what the Apostles *called* him in the New Testament. Matthew (22:41-45; 26:64), Peter (Acts 2:34-36), Paul (Eph 1:20-21), the book of Hebrews (1:13). Over and over again they called Jesus, Lord. And *only* Jesus. Because there's only one. (See also David in Ps 110:1.)

Which rules out other lords. (v5)

There's one Lord, which rules out other lords. Small l. Like Caesar in Rome and Artemis in Ephesus. Those were the rulers in *Paul's* day who were considered lords. And even *called* lords.

And Paul's like, “No!” There's *one* Lord. *One* ultimate authority for our lives. That's the point. We have God-ordained *earthly* authorities – from government leaders and law enforcement, to spiritual leaders and parents – but none of them are *ultimate* authorities. None of them are *Lord*.

Does that mean we should resist them or ignore them? Not at all. Earthly authorities are put in *place* by the Lord. And to the extent they *agree* with him, we should *follow* them; submit to them. (1 Cor 11:1) But to the extent they don't, we should follow *him*. Because he alone has the right and power to rule and reign. That's the 4th non-negotiable.

5th, and moving quicker, is that . . .

There's one faith – which rules out other _____. (v5)

V5 again. There's one Lord and *one faith*. As in one set of true *beliefs*. *True* beliefs.

He's not saying there's only one *way* to believe; one *perspective* on life and godliness. That wouldn't be true. There are *thousands* of different beliefs out there. Thousands of faiths.

He's saying there's one God-given set of beliefs. One faith that's *true*. One deposit of doctrine and content that stands the test of time and eternity. The doctrine found in *Scripture*; the Bible. The set of truths leading to life and godliness. There's only one.

Which rules out other beliefs. (v5)

Biblical Christianity rules out all other beliefs. There aren't many ways to God, but one. There aren't *multiple* paths to forgiveness, but one. There aren't *many* routes to salvation, but one. It's mutually exclusive. One means one.

Does that mean we have a lock on every *nuance* in the Bible? Every gray area? Every difficult interpretation? No. But it does mean that beliefs *contrary* to the Bible are wrong. *Contrary* to the essentials. *Contrary* to salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Anything other than the *one faith* of Biblical Christianity, is ruled out. And leads to death. Eternal damnation. So whatever you do, embrace the faith, and live. Know it and keep it. Don't compromise. It's non-negotiable.

6th, the 6th non-negotiable, is that . . .

There's one baptism – which rules out other _____. (v5)

One Lord, one faith [v5; and], *one baptism*. As in one baptism in the *Spirit*, demonstrated by one baptism in *water*, to identify as a follower of Christ. It's an identity thing.

Paul's not talking about how many times we should be *baptized*, but the identity we portray in *being* baptized. That we are a child of God, having been baptized in the Spirit at conversion. Brought under his influence. *One baptism* refers to our identity as a follower of Christ; a Christian. There's one baptism in the Spirit, demonstrated by one baptism in water, to identify as one follower of Christ.

And it's the only identity in life that matters. Everything else is moot. Inconsequential. Including the color of your skin, the gender of your sex, the persuasion of your politics, the prowess of your ability, and the name of your family.

Those identities don't matter one bit; not in God's eyes. Not for eternity. Only your baptism does. Your baptism in the Spirit that is, to identify you as a child of God, and connect you to his church. **1 Cor 12:13**.

For in one Spirit [under the influence of the one and only Holy Spirit] *we were all baptized into one body* [under the influence or baptism of the Holy Spirit, we were incorporated into the church; the body of Christ]—*Jews or Greeks, slaves or free* [everyone who believes; regardless of their earthly identity]—*and all were made to drink of one Spirit* [share in one Spirit; connecting us for all eternity].

When you were saved, you were baptized in the Spirit; brought under his influence. And thereby incorporated into the body of Christ; the community of believers. *Identifying* you once and for all as a child of God and member of the church. The church universal.*****

All of which is symbolized by our *water* baptism. Our immersion in water to show our immersion in the *Spirit*, our immersion in *Christ*, and our immersion in the *church*. It symbolizes our identification as a Christian.

There's one baptism in the Spirit, demonstrated by one baptism in water, to identify us as one follower, of the one true Lord. It's an identity thing.

Which rules out other identities.

If you've given your life to Christ, if you believe in him and have repented of your sin, if you follow him as Savior and Lord; your primary identity in life should be "child of God." First and foremost that's how you should think of yourself. That's how you should act. That's how you should talk.

Ruling out and completely overshadowing all *other* identities in your life. Race, sex, culture, family, vocation, everything. Because at the end of the day, there's only *one* that matters. Only *one* that saves. Only *one* that lasts.

And finally . . .

There's one God – which rules out other _____. (v6)

V6. There is *one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all*. There are 5 parts to this non-negotiable, right there in the verse.

The first, is that there aren't *many* gods, but one. Nor one God by many *names*. **Dt 6:4** says – *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one*. Yahweh Elohim, Yahweh is one. There's *one* God, with *one* name. That's the first part to this non-negotiable.

Which rules out other deities.

There's one God, which rules out *other* gods; small g. Whether idols made of stone, wood, or metal; or idols of your heart like money, position, and importance. Even safety, leisure, and work can be small-g gods.

Anything you obsess about, anything you look to for your primary satisfaction in life, anything you focus on to the exclusion of God, is an idol. Anything you give yourself to, anything that captures the affection of your heart, anything that governs your will apart from *him*, is a deity in your life.

And shouldn't be. There's only *one* God. *One* supreme being. One sovereign. Who the Bible says, will not give his glory or praise to another. **(Isaiah 42:8; 46:9)**

I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols.

For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me.

Stop worshipping lesser gods, and start worshipping the only God. Purge yourself of idols, and give your life to him.*****

➤ After all, he's your *father*. That's the *second* aspect of this non-negotiable. There is *one God and Father of all*. One provider and protector, who made us and loves us. So why look elsewhere? Why try to go it alone in life? Why try to manufacture some *thing* or someone *else* to provide and protect you?

Third, he's *over all*. Above all. Supreme, in authority and power.

Fourth, he's *through all*. Probably referring to his presence. All pervasive and everywhere.

And fifth, he's *in all*. Referring I think, to his image. Having been made in the image of God, according to his likeness and attributes, he's *in* us. Every single one of us. Giving value to our lives that exceeds all else. He's *over all and through all and in all*.

And as believers, that's especially true. We not only bear his image, but experience his presence. Personally. Continually. Powerfully. Leaving no room for any *one* or any *thing*, in opposition to him.

It's non-negotiable. There's *one* God. Which rules out all others. **(Summary)**

7 spiritual non-negotiables that are absolute and exclusive, but available to all. Be sure you embrace them, and never let go.

Prayer – Father, forgive us for the idols in our lives. We acknowledge your goodness and greatness above all else and all others, and praise you for it. Forgive us for clinging to identities that don't matter. Reveal our false beliefs and replace them with what's true. And find us faithful to follow you as Lord of our lives.