Oh, my friend, what do you do when you and another believer disagree doctrinally? How do you handle that situation? How do you treat that person? I mean do you say, “Hey, I don’t agree with you and you are so wrong.” And you walk away and you’re gonna call them a heretic and you’re not gonna have anything to do with them. And I’m not talking about a fundamental of the faith. I’m talking about some other doctrines where this is controversy. How do you behave? We’ll talk about it today.

PART ONE

When I think of the importance of what we’re about to study I think O God, this is what this program is all about. It’s discovering truth. It’s understanding truth so that we live the way that we are to live. I don’t know if you’ve ever studied church history but when you study church history you
can find out that a lot of people were put to death. A lot of people were tortured simply because they did not agree doctrinally with the church, with the established organized church of the early centuries. And when they did not agree then people were literally shut in prison. They were literally beheaded. They were put to death and they were put to death because of doctrinal differences and this is what we want to look at today. We want to see what the scriptures have to say so that you and I can live in a manner that is worthy of the high calling that we have in Christ Jesus. Well we’ve come to that practical portion of Ephesians as you know and I pray that you have downloaded the study guide, that free study guide that we have for you at “preceptsforlife.com”. You can just go there. You can learn more about us. You can find out about all the other things and the conferences and the tours and everything that we have to help you grow. You can learn about the work that we’re doing all over the world in 121 countries and in over 67 languages as we teach people to discover truth for themselves, to know and learn the skills of what we call inductive Bible study. And those skills of inductive Bible study, by inductive we mean that you go directly to the Word of God yourself to understand what it says. Now I know that if people had been doing that down through the centuries we would not have had all these Christians being put to death by others who profess to know Jesus Christ. Well, in Ephesians chapter 4, in verse 1 he says, “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, [and] patience, showing tolerance for one another in love.” (Ephesians 4:1-2) So he’s talking now about our character. This character that walks in a manner worthy but it’s also a matter of choice. Look at what he says, “Being diligent…,” being careful, “…to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (4:3) He’s saying here that you and I have to know that because we are part of this one new man, because we are part of the body of Jesus Christ, because we are God’s building, because we are God’s
household, because we are God’s family, because we are God’s church then we have to be diligent. We have to be careful that we preserve the unity of the Spirit. Now that word preserve is “t-e-r-e-o” and it means to guard. It means to watch after carefully. You see that word used in the book of Jude and I want you to go to Jude and it’s only one chapter long. But when you go to Jude which is just before Revelation, this is what he says in Jude. “Jude, a bond-servant of Jesus Christ, and [a] brother of James, to those who are…called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ.” (Jude 1:1) That word “kept” is the same Greek word. The Greek is what the New Testament was written in and that word means you’re kept, you’re guarded, you are preserved and so as you are kept by God for Jesus Christ and when you come to the end of Jude in verse 24 it says, “Now to Him who is able to keep you…,” (Jude 1:24a) to guard you, to preserve you. It’s the same word. To guard you, to preserve you, “…to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.” (1:24b) So he’s telling here that we are to do something and we are to be careful to do that. We are to give it due diligence. We are to make this a goal, to make it a priority and that is to preserve. Not to make but “…to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:3) Now remember what he has told us that through the death of Jesus Christ, He has taken Jew and He has taken Gentile and He’s put them in one body. He has removed the enmity that is between them, the enmity in the law of commandments, why? Because they held different thoughts, they held different values and he says, through Christ now we have been brought together. We have been brought together in peace. Peace is a key and important word in Ephesians. Let’s look at it. It says in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 14, “For He Himself…,” speaking of Jesus, “…is our peace….” (Ephesians 2:14a) And then in chapter 2, verse 15 it says, “…so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace.” (2:15b) Then you come to verse 17, “And He came and [He]
preached peace to [those] who were far away, and peace to those who were near.” (2:17) Now the Bible tells us that Jesus said, “In the world [you’re gonna] have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33b, NASB & KJV mix) So we’re going to have tribulation. We do not need to have tribulation in the church. I don’t need to be getting flack from other Christians. I don’t need to be getting them threatening me or separating themselves from me or tearing me down. I need, in a sense, I need to be loved. I need to remember hey, we’re members of each other. Every single believer is part of the body of Jesus Christ. So should one hand be saying to the other “I don’t like you. You’re not doing what’s right” and smack that hand back and forth and beat it up? No and yet that’s what you find a lot of Christians doing and they’re doing it because they are not preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. You say, “But they are wrong. They’re teaching what is wrong. I don’t like that study. I don’t like that book that’s so popular that’s going all around the country. I don’t like it because it’s not just the way it ought to be in every page.” Listen to me very, very carefully. Are you keeping? Are you preserving? Are you guarding? Are you protecting the unity of the Spirit? You say, “But they’re doctrinally wrong.” Let me ask you a question. Do they meet the six fundamentals that we are all going to believe and hold to? You say, “Well what are they?” Well this is exactly what he’s going to tell us in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 3. So listen, verse 3 and 4 and 5 and 6. Okay, so it says, “Being diligent,” you’re to keep on being diligent. This is something that is to be your lifestyle. This is something that you’re not just diligent one day and slothful the next day. You are to keep on as a habit of life “Being diligent to preserve...,” not to make, to preserve, “…the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:3) And then he’s telling you what the unity of the Spirit is and he’s showing you the unity because unity simply means oneness and he says, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as...you were [also] called in one hope of your calling; [there is] one Lord, [there is] one faith, [there is] one
baptism, [and there is] **one God and Father of all who is over all,** [who is] **through all and** [who is] **in all.**” (Ephesians 4:4-6) Now that is the basis of our unity. Jesus prayed in John 17, [“Father, that they may be one even as we are one that the world may know that You have sent Me.”] (PARAPHRASE, John 17:11) So unity is very important but there is to be unity based on these “ones” that he says here. The one Lord, one faith, one baptism all of that and we’re going to look at those in just a minute but before I lose you in your thinking and in the questions that are coming to your mind and it’s good that you have questions, Beloved. I mean a questioning mind one that just doesn’t swallow everything that is said because of whoever is saying in because you like them or because they hold the same belief system you do. But a questioning mind to say, “Listen, I’ve got to understand this for myself. I’ve got to know if this is truth.” That’s good. That’s good and that’s what this program is all about. So let’s look at it. He says, “[We are to be] **diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**” (Ephesians 4:3) And then he gives us those “ones.” Then you drop down and you watch what he’s saying and then you understand it better I think. He says in verse 13, “**Until we all attain to the unity of the faith....**” (4:13a) “Until...,” time phrase, clock over there, “**...we all attain to the unity of the faith....**” (4:13a) So what you see is you see two phrases that are very important and what I’ve done is I’ve marked those in my Bible so that I can look down and immediately see them. That’s why I could tell you it was in verse 13 immediately and what I did for “unity,” I just put a triangle there. And then I underline “**...the unity of the Spirit....**” (4:3b) Then I went down and in verse 13 I put my triangle again and I underlined “**...the unity of the faith....**” (4:13a) And what you see is that we are to preserve the unity of the Spirit until we attain to the unity of the faith. Now what does that mean and how does it work out practically when we differ with other believers doctrinally? Well this is what we’ll see but before that I want you to listen to this very important announcement.
PART TWO

Welcome back, Beloved. Thank you so much, so very, very much for wanting to be everything that God wants you to be and I want you to know that what we are studying today and what we’re going to study in the next program and the next program is so essential to the health of the body of Jesus Christ. Because listening to Christian radio, we can hear all sorts of different teachings. How do we know what’s right? How do we know what’s wrong and what are the fundamentals that we are to agree on and what are the other peripheral doctrines, so to speak, that if we don’t disagree on we are still to treat each other in kindness and love and keep peace. And with the internet now, I mean, you can get on the internet and in some places you’re hailed as a real godly Christian and a blessing to the body of Jesus Christ and in others you are nailed as a heretic and they want to crucify you and they don’t want anybody to listen to you because you don’t hold the exact doctrine that they hold. Now as I say all this I just want you to know that you are the one that is responsible for discerning the difference between good and evil teaching between what is right and what is wrong. How do we do that? Well first of all we have to understand that we are to be diligent that this is a command, that we are to keep on being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And what he does is he gives us seven givens that are the fundamentals of the faith that every single born again believer is going to embrace. In other words if you are truly a child of God, once you are shown one of these seven truths you’re gonna say, “that’s right” and you’re gonna say, “that’s right,” because the Spirit within you who leads you into all truth bears witness with you that this is truth. So what are those sevens? Well he lists them for us and this is what he says and I’m gonna read verse 3 and go into verse 4 so that you can see it. “Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:3) Now this is the unity of the Spirit. This is what the Spirit holds to. “There is one body [there is]
one Spirit, just as…you were called in one hope of your calling.” (4:4) So he’s going to give us three things here. First of all he wants us to know that there is one body and what he’s saying is every single believer, every single believer belongs to the same body. There is one head and that head is Jesus Christ. This is what we studied in Ephesians chapter 2 and what we see in Ephesians chapter 3. There is one head and there is one body and every single person that comes to believe in Jesus Christ regardless of their color, regardless of their race, regardless of the nation where they live, God has made us all to be one, to be part of that one body. So the way I treat another believer is going to affect the body and it’s going to affect the head and I’m under orders, listen carefully. If I am in obedience to Jesus Christ, I am in obedience to the Word and what he has just told me is that I am to preserve the unity of the Spirit. I am to guard it. I am to keep it and I am to do it in the bond of peace. So he doesn’t want inner fighting in the body of Jesus Christ. If you study history you can watch as people come out of the organized church because they want to study the Word of God themselves, because they want to be able to say the Lord’s Prayer in their common language. Do you know that there was a time when the hierarchy of the church, the hierarchy of the church would put people in prison and many times put them to death if they sat with their children and they recited in their common language the Lord’s Prayer. Because that was reserved for the hierarchy of the church. That was reserved for the ecclesiastical leaders of the church; for the bishops, for the priests, for the for the Pope and I’m not knocking the Catholic church. I want you to know this because when the church started out there was just one church, there was just one denomination. And yet what happened was there was corruption within that denomination. And so people wanted to know the Word of God in their own language. They wanted to be able to study the Word. Well if you study the Scriptures, you see that God says, [“Study to show yourself approved unto God a workmen that needs not be ashamed accurately handling the Word of truth.”] (PARAPHRASE, 2
Timothy 2:15) And that’s a command that was given to every single believer. [“Man does not live by bread alone. Man lives by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.”] (PARAPHRASE, Deuteronomy 8:3) And so you and I are to know the Word of God. We are to study the Word of God. We are to exert ourselves to know it. So for the church to forbid the people to know the Word of God or to speak the truths of God or to have them in their own language then this brought chaos and it brought persecution and it brought murder. What was wrong with them? They didn’t know the Word. And you and I have to know the Word of God. Now we’re not putting them to death physically anymore if they disagree with us but we are putting them to death verbally and we are not preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. So he wants you to know there’s only one body and every single believer is part of that body and you’ve got to know it. This is why there can’t be any racial prejudice. This is why there can’t be any class distinctions. For instance, you go to India and you look at the different caste system and so they say that you stay in your caste for the rest of your life and then in the next life you’re in the same caste or maybe you can come up higher but they will not associate with one another. Well when we come to know Christ the castes are removed. When we come to know Christ what you see in the early church is how the masters and the slaves are worshipping together. When you look at the history of America and you see the way that people were treating their slaves and saying they were ignorant, that they were not human beings, that they shouldn’t know and yet these slaves loved Jesus Christ and professed Jesus Christ and saying biblical truth in their songs and yet they were not treated right by their masters. What the master forgot was this. Hey, that person is part of the body of Jesus Christ. You don’t amputate your arm and say that arm’s no good. So this is what he’s talking about. This is one of the givens and this is a given that you need to remember. Every time you start to attack another believer remember, if they are a genuine believer it is like cutting yourself. It is like abusing your own
body and what does God say? He says quit it! That is not worthy of the
calling that you have in Christ Jesus. Well that’s our given for today. We’ll
look at more in the next program.