

The Sevenfold Unity of the Bible

Ephesians 4:1-6

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*”

In our last study of this epistle we looked at the answer to the "mystery" that God had kept on His heart through the ages - and that being the birth and foundation of the church, where Jew and Gentile alike would come together as the one body of Christ. As we continue our study in Ephesians, we are going to continue to have our attention centered around church unity.

One of the saddest things that can happen in a church is when people begin to fight against each other instead of working together. Yet it happens all the time. History is full of sad stories about Christians fighting among themselves. Let me share one that I recently read about.

Tradition claims that Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulcher is built over the cave where Christ was buried. In July 2002 the church became the scene of ugly fighting between the monks who run it. It turns out that Ethiopian and Coptic monks have been arguing over the rooftop of the church for centuries. In 1752 the Ottoman Sultan issued an edict declaring which parts of the church belong to each of six different Christian groups.

The rooftop had been controlled by the Ethiopians, but they lost control to the Coptic monks when they were hit by a disease epidemic in the 1800s. Then in the 1970s the Ethiopians regained

control when the Coptic monks were absent for a short period. The Ethiopians have been squatting there ever since with at least one monk always remaining on the roof to assert their rights. But in response to this, a Coptic monk has also been living on the roof to maintain the Coptic claim to the church's roof. Thus, in July 2002, when the Coptic monk on the roof moved his chair into the shade where the Ethiopian monk was sitting, harsh words led to pushing and shoving and then to an all-out brawl. Eleven monks were injured, including one who was taken to the hospital unconscious. Amazingly, all this took place in a church that is supposedly built on the same location of Jesus' tomb.

When the church is divided it produces some very tragic results. On the other hand, when the church is *unified* it unleashes a power that can hardly be stopped.

In the book of Ephesians, more than any of Paul's other letters, he calls the church to be *unified*. Paul mentions the *unity* of the church 18 times in Ephesians. Both Paul and Jesus agree on this: *unity in the church is not just a good thing. Unity is essential.*

Moments before he went to the cross, Jesus prayed for the church that he knew would be established after his death and resurrection. He didn't pray for large buildings. He didn't pray for *ministry programs* or *administrative finesse* or *creative worship*. He asked for only one thing: "I pray that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you." If we are going to be the kind of people God intends, then we need to take this to heart.

As the world looks at the church, people are amazed at what we believe and then they are scandalized by the way we act. Bertrand Russell, the great atheist philosopher, once said that "if Christians practiced what they believed they would change the world." Ghandi said he would love to become a Christian. He was just waiting to meet someone who sincerely lived out what Jesus taught.

Therefore, look at verses 1-3, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Paul is saying there are *two* things that we must do in our church if we are going to get the job done that God wants us to do.

First, we as Christian must “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.” The Christian “walk” is not according to the standards of this world as seen in James 4:4, “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” This is what we have been told in 2 Corinthians 6:16, “And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

In our daily walk, believers are to express both the life and the presence of righteousness. The fruit we bear **outwardly** testifies of that we possess **inwardly**, as seen in Luke 6:45, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” In this same manner, Jesus told us in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

We present the only Christ the world will ever know, therefore, it is imperative that we show the world that Christ is still in the soul saving, life changing business.

Second, we as Christians must show forth a unified front against the onslaught of Satan. For example: If a person takes a small stick and gives it to a child, the child could probably break it with ease. But if a person were to take four or five sticks and put them together, chances are pretty good that even an adult could not break them. **In**

other words, there is strength in unity. You will notice that the Bible does not tell us to make unity, but to maintain unity. Salvation brings love and unity; it is our responsibility to maintain the unity.

The danger of disunity is brought out for us in Matthew 12:25, “But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.” If Satan can get the churches fighting among themselves, he is assured of this one thing - we will be doing nothing for the cause of Christ.

Now look with me as we study the sevenfold unity of Christian doctrine. Verses 4-6 give us this insight, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” Paul brings us face-to-face with the foundation of Christian unity.

First, he says, “There is one body...” We believers are the body of Christ as seen in Romans 12:35, “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” **The author of the church is God.** The leader of the church is Jesus Christ. The moving and quickenings Spirit of the church is the Holy Spirit. The rule and standard of the church is the Word of God.

There is only one church, there has never been but one. There might be many, and varied denominations; but there is only one body of Christ.

Second, he says, “There is...one Spirit...” The quickening power that makes us one in the body of Christ is Holy Spirit, as seen in John 6:63, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words

that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” When Paul speaks of “one Spirit,” he is referring to “Spirit of truth,” as seen in John 15:26 where Jesus said, “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” Therefore, we have this advice given in 1 John 4:1, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” **Any spirit that denies the virgin birth, the blood atonement, the verbal inspiration of the Bible, the reality of sin and hell, that spirit of not the Holy Spirit, but the spirit of antichrist.**

Third, he says, “There is...one hope of your calling...” **The word "hope" here is objective, and refers to a heavenly inheritance.** This is the same truth that we see in 1 John 3:2-3, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” **Our hope is rooted and grounded in Christ; not just in what He has already done (on Calvary), and not just in what He is doing right now (making intercession), but in what He is going to do at the consummation of the age when He comes to bring the church to himself.**

Four, he says, “There is...one Lord...” There is only One that was willing, and able, to purchase us with His own blood, and His name is Jesus, as seen in Revelation 5:1-13, “And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals? And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals. And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain,

having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth. Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing! And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

Child of God, there is no other name under heaven whereby men might be saved.

Five, he says, "There is...one faith..." There is but one true faith, and that faith is based on the Word of God as seen in Romans 10:17, "So, then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The faith that brings salvation is faith in the finished work of Christ, according to the scriptures, as seen in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." This great truth is seen once more in Romans 10:8-10, "But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and

with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” There is but one saving faith, and that faith is directed at Jesus Christ.

Six, he says, “There is...one baptism...” The baptism here is not that which is done in the church baptistery, it is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as seen in 1 Corinthians 12:13, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” **Books are written, seminars are held, and sermons are preached concerning the “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” but the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not something that you pray for, beg for, or work – it is a work of the Holy Spirit Himself.** In other words, when you invite Jesus Christ to come into your life, forgive you of your sins, and make you a Christian, a part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to come into your life and place that life into the Body of Christ, which is the universal, mystical church. Colossians 1:13 tells us that at that moment, we are “...delivered...from the power of darkness and conveyed (or transferred)...into the kingdom of the Son of His love” From that day forward we belong to the Body of Christ and our sins are charged to Calvary.

Someone might ask, “Does that mean that we do away with water baptism?” **Absolutely not.** Water baptism is an outward sign to the world of what God has done in your heart.

Seven, he says, “There is...one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all.” Our God is our heavenly Father as seen in John 1:12, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” Our God is a Father that *cares* enough to meet our every need, and one that *loves* enough to bless us with all spiritual blessings.

The true God has revealed Himself through the Person of Jesus Christ, as seen in Colossians 2:9, “For in Him (that is, in Christ) dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” **The face of God is seen in the face of Christ.** The love of God is seen in the love of Christ. The

judgment of God is seen in the righteousness of Christ. And the exaltation of God is seen in the Person of Christ, as seen in Philippians 2:9-11, “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

A few years ago at the Special Olympics in Seattle, Washington, nine physically or mentally challenged runners lined up at the starting line for the 100-meter run. At the sound of the gun, all the runners eagerly started out, except for one boy who stumbled. He tumbled over a couple of times and began to cry. The other eight runners heard the boy cry and slowly turned around and paused. Then they all turned back, every one of them. One girl with Down syndrome bent down and kissed the boy and said, “That will make it better.” Then all nine of them linked arms and walked together to the finish line. Everyone in the stadium stood and the cheering went on for a solid 10 minutes.

That race paints a picture of what God’s family is like. We are all wounded. We are all challenged in one way or another. But God, in his infinite mercy and grace, makes us part of his forever family through faith in Christ. And it is with our spiritual family that we journey through life helping each other along the way.

Therefore, the Word of God challenges us to live worthy of our calling; that we would be humble, gentle and patient; and that we would keep the unity of the Spirit.