

Ephesians 4:4-6 ⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as also 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 over all and through all and in all.*

Last week we touched on one of the most important aspects our faith in Christ and what that should produce in the lives of God's people. Paul says in verse 2, "to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which [we've] been called."

There is a sense of understanding that this high calling of God on our lives is one which is meant to be a high privilege. To walk after God is to show oneself as being enlisted in the company of Jesus.

This was the comment made of two of the disciples in ACT 4:13 "When they [leaders of Jerusalem] saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that *these men had been with Jesus.*"

Following Jesus was the distinguishing mark in the lives of Peter and John, together with the rest of the apostles. And here in Act 4:13, in a show of boldness in the power of the Spirit, Peter bears witness to the resurrected Christ who was handed over by these leaders to be crucified by the Romans.

These were simple fisherman and yet the Jewish leaders could see in them a similar wisdom and knowledge which Jesus displayed when He confronted these same religious leaders. The Lord made a difference in the lives of His disciples as they walked with Christ prior to His crucifixion, as well as after His resurrection.

And what Paul would show us here is that just as he was willing to walk with Christ in a manner worthy of that high calling, so too, should all of God's people who have placed their faith in this Messiah who calls us to follow Him.

The idea of walking with Christ is to progress as we continue forward. But this forward progress is always in the context of faith in Christ. That's the only way we can walk effectively. Even Abraham's walk was by faith.

ROM 4:12 "... And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised."

Abraham's faith was demonstrated through a life of obedience as he followed the Lord. And so as we contemplate this "walking in a manner worthy of the calling to which we've been called", it begins to take on the characteristics of faith, love and obedience.

And out of gratitude we walk, or progress in a way that shows us to have been with Jesus. But this ability to walk with our Lord is only because our God is walking with us and is there for us as He indwells us with His Spirit. We see this in what our Lord told the Israelites in LEV 26:12 "I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people."

This is what encourages us to go forward even in adversity. This is what enabled Paul to rejoice even in a Roman jail cell. He knew his walk was one which followed Christ and it led him to Rome and imprisonment, and yet he can call himself of prisoner of Christ.

But even there, Paul could walk with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to others in love. And this is what our walk with Christ should characterize. This is that agape love we hear so much about. It is a love that is gentle with people and patient when wronged and loving when we're not being loved.

It is others oriented. It is not self-focused, always looking to our "rights". Rather it is considering one another as more important than ourselves. And it is only in this light that we can begin to see the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Some have mistakenly concluded that unity of the Spirit is everyone believing exactly the same in every area of life. Jesus probably summed it up best when He said in JOH 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

This is where we see the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. This doesn't mean we aren't unified in the truth. To have unity in the Spirit without God's truth is like having a hot fudge sundae without chocolate; there's something conspicuously missing.

Jesus expands on this unity when He prays to the Father in JOH 17:20-21 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those

who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

This unity that Jesus is expressing here is a unity of relationship. The relationship that Jesus has with the Father and the Holy Spirit is one which is personal and is expressed in a way that shows purpose.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one in essence as they have always been from all eternity. There is only one God, and yet He has revealed Himself in three persons who have fellowship with each other with a common goal of bringing glory to God.

In a similar way our unity in the Spirit speaks of a relationship with the living Almighty God who has called us out of darkness into light to show forth the glory of God in our lives as we "walk worthy of the calling with which we've been called." This is how the unity of the Spirit shows itself in a tangible way.

As we love God above all, we in turn extend that love to the world. It is in this process that the light of the world, who came to take away the sin of the world, shows forth His life and light in us as He has called us to be lights which are not to be hid under a basket, but set up on a hill for all to see.

But what Christ wants the world to see is Himself in us. In this way we bring glory to God, not ourselves. This is part of walking in humility and gentleness and patience, with Jesus Christ being the supreme example of how He lived that life so that He might humble Himself unto death, even the death of a cross, paying our debt to reconcile us to Himself.

When we all see ourselves as sinners saved by grace there is no way we can walk with Christ other than in humbleness and gentleness. This is our unity. And it's found in Jesus Christ, but it's found as we live out this unity among each other in relationships which promote the encouraging of each other to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we've been called.

It's not enough to simply say, 'well, I'd better only be concerned with my walk with Christ and hope everyone else is moving in the same direction.' No, that excludes the relational aspect of this salvation which we all share in Christ.

This is what the writer of Hebrews meant in HEB 10:22-25 "let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

In these verses he speaks of individual responsibility to draw near to God, but it's in the context of being built up in our faith so that we in turn can encourage each other to grow in this faith, who then in turn encourage their neighbor God-ward to the glory of our Lord.

It's all about relationships; relationship with Christ and each other. And this is where Paul is going in the next few verses.

EPH 4:4-6 "There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Do you get the idea that God is trying to tell us there is only one way? The world is trying to convince us that there are many ways to God and many gods to follow. In fact, this is one of the reasons the world is so antagonistic toward Christianity.

It would be okay if we Christians would simply worship our God and let everyone else alone to worship the god of their own making without making, what they believe to be, these "judgment calls."

'You Christians keep telling us there's only one way and when you do that it makes us feel as though we're spiritual idiots and that you are somehow superior to us.'

Have you ever heard this: "Why do you keep trying to push your religious beliefs on us?", which when translated is: "why can't we all just worship whoever we want without you telling us we're going to be lost if we don't believe in your "Jesus"?"

And so the world is asking for a unity with us, but they want it on their terms. Here Paul lays out the terms by which there is true unity with God and with each other in Christ. It cannot happen any other way. There is only one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Jesus clearly tells us, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man comes to the Father but by Me." And the reason He can say that is because He is the one true God and Creator. And so for each of us in Christ we need to begin to realize that no matter how true believers may differ, we're part of the same family.

There aren't many families, there's only one body in Christ. Our unity is in Him because there's only one of Him, as there is only one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all.

Let's look at these different elements. There is one body. Paul puts it this way in ROM 12:5 "so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

This also has been the theme early on in this letter as Paul has tried to give us God's perspective that the Jew is no longer the exclusive recipient of the grace of God, but every man now shares in this gift by faith.

EPH 2:15-16 "[Christ's] purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility."

He speaks here of the Jew and the Gentile coming under one roof in a spiritual sense in that we are now of the same house and family in Christ. We may be made up of many parts, but God unites those parts in the Spirit into one body.

1CO 12:12-14 "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized in one Spirit into one body -whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many."

And so, here Paul is saying that God has made this one body the way He did, made up of many parts. And so, as hard as it may seem at times, believers within one denomination which preaches and teaches the true gospel of Jesus Christ are spiritually tied to true believers who are part of a non-denominational church, for example, who teach and preach the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

There will be differences between one group of people in America and those in Taiwan. The language is different, the customs are different, the form of worship may be different; but the one thing

which cannot be different is the truth about Jesus Christ being fully God and fully man, who lived a sinless life, and then took our penalty to the cross and died in our place. And then who rose bodily from the dead three days later defeating sin and death and giving us the victory.

There will always be differences when you're dealing with human beings which is why Paul begins this 4th chapter by saying that we should show humility and gentleness, and with patience showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

This does not mean that we condone bad teaching where the word of God is not handled accurately. But where the gospel is going forward and Christ is being exalted then we must try to understand that these people are not our enemies if they don't happen to see certain teachings the same way we do, that would not detract from the saving message found in Jesus Christ.

I've known of people who will not fellowship with other believers who don't have the same skin color, or who don't baptize people the way they do. I've had people want to go to war over whether or not we should baptize in the "name of Jesus" as opposed to baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as Jesus Himself prescribes.

I've also had people actually snub us because they saw one of our members dancing to the oldies in a public place. It seems we can find a variety of things upon which we can divide. Paul is trying to help us see the one thing which unites us, which is really the thing that counts for eternity.

Now, I'm not saying that there shouldn't be diligence in teaching the whole counsel of God's word on any particular area of the Christian life, or that there aren't legitimate reasons for division when it comes to teaching against heresy within the church, but those things aside, every true believer who has placed his or her faith in Christ belongs to the same family I do and you do in Christ.

There is only one Spirit who indwells each one of us. He unites us to Christ and allows us to have fellowship with Christ and each other. Paul has already brought this up in this letter as well.

EPH 2:18-19 "For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. 19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and

aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,..."

It is the Spirit of God who has called us to Christ and united us to Him by faith. And in calling us to Himself He calls us to the same hope that Paul looked forward to, the same hope Abraham looked forward to, the same hope Martin Luther, John Wesley and others looked forward to, and the same hope you and I look forward to.

EPH 1:18 "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,..."

That hope looks to the One who gives the hope. The same hope Abraham knew when he was looking forward to the city whose architect and builder is God. His hope included a place, the new heavens and the new earth, and a person, our Lord and Master and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Our hope is all we have to hold on to. What else does this world offer? Our hope is eternal in nature. And though we live in a physical world our hope lies beyond what we can see to the One who holds our futures. And that hope has everything to do with real life.

That life is in Christ which is demonstrated with power in His resurrection. This was Paul's hope as well. In fact, when he was being interrogated by the religious leaders in Jerusalem on one occasion he told them what his hope was.

ACT 23:6 "Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead."

Paul's hope was not in this present world full of sin and the curse, but in a real life to come where resurrected believers in their glorified physical bodies will live in a restored universe which includes the new earth where Christ will dwell with His people forever.

Revelation 21:1-5 ^{NAU} Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell

among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

This is the hope to which Paul longed as he understood the essential nature of a resurrection life in Christ who is the first fruits of that life.

1CO 15:19-22 "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. ²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive."

This is a real hope. But often we confuse hope with what we think we should have today. You see, hope by its very nature always looks to the future. It realizes that we do not fully possess all that we have hoped in. This is why we live by faith in what is to come, not in what we presently see, for this world is passing away.

ROM 8:24-26 "For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. ²⁶ In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness...."

God knows how hard it is to wait and be patient for the future hope which is why the Spirit is there to strengthen us and help us keep our eye on the prize at the end of the race, as Paul puts it. We need to re-focus our eyes on our hope and get them off of this world, where everyone in the world says, we've got to have everything today.

May we wait for it patiently, as we are actively extending this hope to the rest of the world through the one faith Paul speaks of in our text. There is only one faith and that faith rests in the object of our faith, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here the word faith in our text is not talking about the activity of faith, where each one is in the process of believing, rather it is speaking of the substance of our faith, which suggests that there is only one gospel, one way to heaven through Christ.

Paul also says there is only one Lord. The Greek word for Lord in our text is *kurios* which speaks of one who is supreme in authority, a title reserved for God alone. We've all heard the expression at one time or another, 'he received Christ as Savior but not as Lord.'

There's something wrong with that kind of thinking because we cannot pick and choose what we will decide God is. Now, I know what people mean by that statement. They mean that they have not submitted to Christ as one submits to the supreme Master. But, again, if we are to come to Christ and to this one hope we can only come in a way that He has prescribed.

To suggest that Jesus Christ can be our Savior without being Lord is to divide Christ. And therefore we approach a Savior of our own making. At best we have a lopsided view of God and we act accordingly in our faith. At worst we've created a Christ who is not real as we dictate to Him how we will accept Him.

There is only one way to accept Him. And Peter made it clear in ACT 2:36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, ***both Lord and Christ.***"

It's not a matter of making Christ Lord of our lives; He is Lord of our lives and we need to be willing to submit to our loving Master who desires to direct us according to His will. If we understand that we have been bought at a great price by a new Master, who delivers us from the master of darkness, then out of gratitude we must love and submit to the Lord of lords.

And it all goes back to the way Paul opened this 4th chapter in EPH 4:1 "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called..."

ROM 14:11 It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the ***Lord***, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'"

What God desires of His people is that we bow before Him in this world as we confess to the world that Jesus Christ is both Lord and Savior to the glory of God, by the way we show Him to be our Master and Lord.

"One Lord, one faith, one baptism." This phrase, "one baptism" is an interesting one here in our text. Questions have arisen as to what this is referring to. After all, in the Christian faith we can probably name at least 2 baptisms. There is water baptism and the

baptism of the Holy Spirit. You might say there is even a third and possibly a 4th baptism.

ROM 6:3-5 "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection."

And so one might conclude that there is a baptism into Christ's death and a baptism into Christ's resurrection. So, what in the world is Paul talking about when he says there is only one baptism?

We need to keep this in the context of our passage. Paul is describing our salvation, and the One person we have salvation in. Everything up to this point has been speaking of spiritual realities. One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith.

It would make no sense to all of a sudden interject a Christian ordinance which describes someone being water baptized, and the reason for this is because water baptism has nothing to do with securing this one faith, this one salvation in this one Savior.

I've repeatedly described what the word baptism means. Essentially the word conveys three basic things which we can hang on the acronym U.F.I. Union, fellowship, and identification. When we talk of baptism this is what we mean, whether we talk of water baptism, baptism of the Holy Spirit, or being baptized into Christ's death and resurrection.

Water baptism is an outward expression of an inward reality. That outward expression demonstrates that we have union and fellowship with our God through faith in Christ as we are now identified with what He did for us on the cross and in His resurrection.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit is an inward reality that we have a union and fellowship with the Spirit of God's ministry in our life as we are identified with His power working in our lives enabling us to love and serve our God with the gifts He gives.

But when we talk about one baptism we must understand it in the light of our salvation which is what Paul has been speaking of here

in Ephesians. And the best way to describe this is in the unity Paul has been describing.

Our unity comes from being united to Christ. Well, how are we united to Christ? We are united to Christ by coming into a union to where we are in Him, and He in us. We are united to Christ by fellowshiping with Christ in this union. But this union and fellowship is the result of being identified with what Christ did on our behalf.

This is what we saw earlier in ROM 6:3-5 "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. 5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection."

This identification doesn't initially come through water baptism. Water baptism simply confirms what we've already received in the Spirit. This one baptism which Paul speaks of is the one act of regeneration where we enabled by the Holy Spirit to believe in what Christ did on our behalf. In that act of relinquishing any attempt to get to God on our own and embracing the one true Savior immediately identifies us with Christ's life death and resurrection.

It becomes ours. We are identified with His death to the degree that we have died in Him. We come into a union with Him by faith to where are in Him, or in His life, and we have fellowship with Him in this life never to separated from this fellowship.

This is the one baptism Paul speaks of. It wouldn't preclude being expressed in water baptism, but water baptism is simply a picture of what has already happened in a spiritual sense. We've become one with our God through faith in Christ. That's a true spiritual baptism, not to be confused with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

It is this awesome, Almighty and loving God with whom we have come into fellowship, and our response should be one of allegiance and love and gratitude.

EPH 4:6 "one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

There is only one God and one way to God. This loving and merciful God is over all and in all. He is our all in all. There is

nothing else and no one else we can go to to find life, and there is nothing and no one who can sustain us in this life and empower us to walk in this life other than our one true God.

Paul is saying, put your eyes on the One who is our all in all; there is no other. If He's given us eternal life, let's seek Him today for our daily life and in the process seek Him to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which we've been called. This one God and one Savior has called each of us one by one. He has placed His love and life on us one by one.

Let's walk with Him in this one on one relationship as He has placed us in the Body of Christ which is one, and yet made up of many members that we can bless and be blessed by.

Paul put it well in 1CO 8:6 "yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live."