

Ephesians

Lesson Twelve Unity in the Church

4:1-6

Introduction:

1. After explaining the revelation of God's mystery – the establishment and importance of the church – Paul focused his attention to the heart of the matter at Ephesus.
2. Paul wrote to encourage unity in the church.
3. The lessons to be learned at Ephesus apply to every congregation of God's people.

The Bible Doctrine of Unity

I. Definition of Terms

- A. The Greek word translated "unity" is *henotes* (ενοτης).
 1. It means, "Unity, unanimity, agreement; oneness."
 2. The root of this word is *heis* (εις), the Greek word for the numeral 'one.'
 3. This word is found only twice in the New Testament, both times in Ephesians (4:3 and 4:13).
- B. The Hebrew for "unity" is a combining of two words.
 1. *Gam* comes from a root that means, "To gather or assemble."
 2. *Yachad* refers to a unit; thus, "unitedly, unitedness; all together or alike."
 3. So, this word means, "To gather together as a unit."
 4. It is found only once in the Old Testament (Psalm 133:1).
- C. Much of what the Bible teaches about unity is seen in its teaching about division – its causes and consequences.
- D. Biblically, unity is a bringing together of many as one in agreement.

II. Demand for Unity

- A. God has always desired and demanded unity.
 1. From the beginning, the seed principle (Gen. 1:11-12; Luke 8:11)
 2. The presence of one Tabernacle / Temple (cf. Psalm 133)
 3. The vine and the branches (John 15:1-11)
 4. The example of Jesus (cf. John 17)
- B. God desires and demands unity in the church (Gen. 12:3; Eph. 2:14-16; 3:1-6).

III. Distinctiveness of Unity

- A. All union is not unity; and, unity is more than mere union.
- B. "Unity in Diversity" is not true unity.
- C. "Agreeing to Disagree" is not true unity.
- D. Denying the attainability of unity is not true unity (cf. Acts 2:44, 46; 4:24, 32; 5:12).
 1. Read Deuteronomy 30:11-20
 2. Read Philippians 4:2
- E. Ignoring division is not true unity (cf. 1 Corinthians)

IV. Description of Unity

- A. Based on a knowledge and understanding of Scripture

1. John 8:32; 12:48; Ephesians 3:4; 5:17
2. 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 1:27; 3:16
- B. Based on an obedience of Scripture
 1. 1 Peter 1:22; Hebrews 5:8-9
 2. John 8:31; 1 John 1:7; 2 John 9-11; 3 John 4
- C. Based on a true love for God and for Scripture
 1. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12
 2. John 14:15; 1 John 3:18; Matthew 10:37-38; Luke 14:26

4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called

- A. Again, Paul reminded the Ephesians that he was imprisoned for his faith in the Lord, and for preaching the Gospel of Christ.
 1. He referred to Jesus as “the Lord.”
 2. This indicates that Paul suffered for Him because He was the Master of Paul’s life.
 3. It should serve as encouragement to the Ephesians (and all Christians) to obey what Paul commanded with the same attitude of service.
- B. Still, the humble – yet, authoritative – apostle implored them with an attitude of begging to live faithfully the life of a Christian.
- C. Having the knowledge revealed in this epistle, they were to walk worthy of their calling.
 1. The word ‘walk’ indicates living, continuous action, or a way of life.
 2. They were to live appropriately, suitably, or in a manner worthy of their calling.
 3. The word ‘vocation’ refers to an invitation or a calling.
- D. Their calling had been explained in the previous chapters – a calling out of the world into the blood-bought body of Christ.
 1. They had been adopted into God’s family according to His predestined and foreordained plan and purpose.
 2. By the Gospel, they had been invited into body of the saved, wherein God is served, praised, magnified and glorified.
- E. Thus, by their free will, they must chose to live the worthy life of a Christian.

4:2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love

- A. To walk worthy, one must possess and develop the right attitudes.
- B. “Lowliness” is humility, modesty – a deep sense of one’s (moral) littleness.
 1. The Jew needed to remember that he was just as lost as all others.
 2. The Gentile must not become lifted up with pride or arrogance.
- C. “Meekness” is gentleness or mildness – resulting in submission to truth and calmness during provocation.
 1. They needed meekness in facing a hostile world.
 2. Yet, they also needed meekness in dealing with one another in the church.
- D. “Longsuffering” is patience, endurance, steadfastness and a slowness in avenging wrongs.
- E. “Forbearance” is the ability to sustain, endure and put up with annoyances and difficulties.

- F. “Love” is affection, benevolence, or good will toward another – expressed in action that seeks the best for others.
 - 1. Love is the foundation on which these other attributes are built.
 - 2. It is the motivation for growth and maturity in these characteristics.
 - 3. It is the basis of true unity in Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 13).

4:3 Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace

- A. To walk worthy – to conduct one’s self as a Christian – one must desire and work toward unity among the people of God.
- B. The word “endeavoring” is important to study and to understand.
 - 1. The Greek word is *spoudazo* (σπουδαζω).
 - 2. The root is *spoude* (σπουδη), meaning, “Speed” and by implication, “Eagerness, earnestness, diligence or dispatch.” (Cf. Mark 6:25; Luke 1:39).
 - 3. Thus, the word for ‘endeavoring’ means, “To use speed, to put forth effort; to make haste or hasten; to exert one’s self; to give diligence.”
 - 4. Galatians 2:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:17; 2 Timothy 2:15; 4:9, 21; Titus 3:12; Hebrews 4:10-11; 2 Peter 1:15; 3:14
- C. The Christian is to hold unity as a goal so important that he will hurry and exert himself to see that it is gained and maintained.
 - 1. Thus, one must strive to know and understand the Word of God.
 - 2. One must strive to know and understand the nature and purpose of the church.
 - 3. One must strive to walk worthy of the name “Christian.”
 - 4. One must strive to develop the attitudes that promote unity.
 - 5. One must strive to defeat the attitudes that hinder unity.
 - 6. Finally, one must strive for unity – but, never at the cost of Truth.
- D. The word for “keep” means, “To keep watch, to guard from loss (by keeping the eye upon); to attend to carefully, to observe.”
 - 1. Unity in Christ is so important, necessary and vital that the church is to be constantly vigilant in protecting it.
 - 2. The eye of the Christians must always be upon the unity of the church, searching for anything that would threaten to disturb or destroy it.
 - a. False doctrine
 - b. Ungodly attitudes
 - c. Disagreements among brethren
 - d. And such like...
 - 3. By the way, this word is the same one used for “keeping the commandments” of God (cf. Matthew 19:17; John 14:15; etc.).
- E. **WE MUST REMEMBER THAT THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST – *WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BODY, HAPPENS TO THE LORD* (cf. Acts 9:4; John 19:1). *{It is not accidental that the first of the seven “ones” in verse 5 is the “one body.”}***
- F. The unity in the church is the unity of the Spirit.
 - 1. First, it is a unity of spirits – men and women from different backgrounds united in common salvation, purpose and joy.
 - 2. Next, it is a spiritual unity – of Christians from all parts of the planet united in one kingdom under one King and one law.
 - 3. Finally, it is a unity produced by the Holy Spirit – through the power of His inspired Word.

- G. The word “bond” is the word for the ligaments that unite together the human body – “a band, a bond, a joint tie; a uniting principle, control” (cf. vs. 16; Acts 8:23; Colossians 2:19; 3:14).
 - 1. This further emphasizes the illustration of the church as a body – joined together with bonds like the human body is bound by joints.
 - 2. Christians must labor to maintain the “ties that bind.”
- H. The bond that holds the church together is peace; or, better, the bonds that unite the church are strengthened and preserved by peace.
 - 1. This idea of peace has been discussed in depth previously (1:2; 2:14-17).
 - 2. The Christian’s desire to remain at peace with God motivates him to strive for peace with his brethren.
 - 3. Furthermore, the Christian wants his brethren to be a peace with God.
 - 4. And, the Christian want to offer peace to a world lost in the chaos of sin.
- I. Obviously, the unity of the church is important to the Lord.

4:4 There is one body

- A. The number “one” is significant and important in Paul’s teaching here.
 - 1. It seems silly to emphasize the point, but “one” means “one.”
 - 2. In the beginning, all men could communicate because there was “one language” and “one speech” (Genesis 11:1).
 - 3. The butler and the baker had their dreams in “one night” – the same night (Genesis 40:5).
 - 4. This number describes the perfect unity between and among the Father and the Son (John 17:21).
- B. As Paul has explained, the body is the church (1:22-23; 2:16; 3:6; cf. 4:12, 16; 5:23, 30).
 - 1. It is worth noting that the first plank on God’s platform of unity is one of the most disputed in the religious world.
 - a. No one who claims to be a Christian disagrees about the fact that there is one God, one Lord or one Spirit.
 - b. No one argues about the “one hope” of Heaven.
 - c. Yet, many believe and teach that there is more than one body!
 - 2. The one body is the one, true, universal church.
 - a. It is comprised of many different members – individual Christians.
 - b. These individual members make up local congregations.
 - i. Local, autonomous congregations are all part of the one body.
 - ii. Though divided by location, they are united in faith and practice.
 - iii. The doctrine is the same for each congregation in every place (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:17; 14:33).
 - c. These local congregations are called “churches.”
 - i. The plural “churches” is found 37 times in the NT (Acts 9:31; 15:41; 16:5; 19:37; Romans 16:4, 16; 1 Corinthians 7:17; 11:16; 14:33, 34; 16:1, 19; 2 Corinthians 8:1, 18, 19, 23, 24; 11:8, 28; 12:13; Galatians 1:2, 22; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; Revelation 1:4, 11, 20; 2:7, 11, 17, 23, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 22:16).
 - ii. The reference is always to individual congregations.

- d. These churches were not denominations – divided over matters of doctrine, worship, work or salvation.
- e. Instead, they were local assemblies of the one body of Christ.
 - i. In Romans 16:16, they are called “churches of Christ.”
 - ii. This was not a denominational name, but a descriptive phrase.
 - iii. They were simply congregations that belonged to and wore the name of Christ.
- f. The remedy for denominationalism is found in 1 Corinthians.
- 3. The symbolism of the church as the body of Christ is meant to emphasize two things.
 - a. First, Jesus is the head of the church – He has all authority and His law is final.
 - b. Second, as a body, the church is to do three things.
 - i. Submit to the authority of the head, Jesus.
 - ii. Maintain unity with others of “like precious faith.”
 - iii. Work together for the common cause of Christ.
- C. Though it is one body, it is made up of many members.
 - 1. This means that every individual Christian has a place, a purpose and a work to do in the kingdom of Christ.
 - 2. This means that there is unity in plurality.
 - a. This is true of God – one God, but three personalities (John 1:1; 10:30; 17:21; 1 John 5:7; cf. Matthew 3:16-17; Acts 2:33).
 - b. Many members become one in heart, mind, faith and purpose (cf. Acts 4:24, 32; Romans 12:5; 15:5-6; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:12-20; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 1:27; 2:2).
 - 3. In the context of Ephesians, this means that Jew and Gentile are one in Christ.
 - a. Of “twain,” God has made “one body” (2:15-16).
 - b. There was not a Jewish church and a Gentile church.
 - c. Instead, there is one body – made up of Jew and Gentile, united in faith and love.
- D. Today, we must continue to strive for unity in the one body of Christ.

And one Spirit

- A. Just like a human being is comprised of body and spirit, so the church is one body with one spirit.
 - 1. Many members make up one body.
 - 2. Yet, the many share one heart, one mind and one will (cf. 2:2, 22).
 - 3. This is not a result of a cultic brainwashing, but an honest and open study of the Scriptures.
- B. However, the real meaning here is that there is one Holy Spirit.
 - 1. This truth is as clear as the fact that there is one God and one Lord.
 - 2. To claim otherwise is to deny the existence of the Holy Spirit or to practice polytheism – a belief in many gods.
- C. The one Spirit is the source of one Truth – the one and only Word of God.
 - 1. The Holy Spirit was sent to guide the apostles into all truth (John 16:13).
 - a. Imagine a guide giving different and contradictory directions to different people depending upon his help.
 - b. Yet, many in the religious world practice very different and contradictory things, claiming that they all come from the Holy Spirit.
 - c. Any teaching that contradicts the Bible **cannot** be from the Holy Spirit!
 - 2. The Bible is the complete and final revelation from God (2 Timothy 3:15-17; Jude 1:3).

Even as ye are called in one hope of your calling

- A. The calling is the call out of the world and into the church by God through the Gospel (referenced in 4:1).
 - 1. The word “even” indicates that as the calling was one, so the hope is one.
 - 2. There was one calling for both Jew and Gentile.
 - 3. All were (and are) called by the one Gospel message.
 - 4. There is no other calling (cf. John 12:32).
 - 5. Thus, an altered or perverted Gospel results in an erroneous calling into a false body.
- B. The result of that calling is one hope – “the hope of the Gospel” (Colossians 1:23).
- C. The one hope of the Christian is salvation.
- D. This one hope has two manifestations – salvation from sin now and eternal salvation in Heaven.
 - 1. The first time the word “hope” is found in the Bible is when hope had been lost (Ruth 1:12).
 - 2. It is used 142 times in 133 verses.
 - 3. It is found 17 times in the book of Job, as he lost and regained hope.
 - 4. It is a theme of the book of Psalms, used 26 times – three times in this exact verse. *“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? **hope** thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God”* (Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5).
 - 5. In the New Testament, it is primarily found in the sermons and writings of Paul (48 times), the book of Hebrews (5 times), and 1 Peter (4 times).
 - 6. The Greek word (*elpis* - ἐλπίς) means, “Anticipation, expectation, confidence; joyful and confident expectation.”
 - 7. It is much more than a mere wish; it is desire joined with expectation, based upon the promise of a faithful God.

- E. When one obeys the Gospel, he or she confidently expects the forgiveness of sins instantly in the here and now (cf. Romans 5:1-10).
- F. When one lives in obedience to the Gospel, he or she confidently expects eternal life in Heaven (cf. Colossians 1:5, 27; Romans 8:23-25).
- G. This hope become the “sure and steadfast” “anchor of the soul,” holding us to faithful living as the followers of Jesus (cf. Hebrews 6:18-19).

4:5 One Lord

- A. The word “Lord” refers to “one who is supreme in authority, a ruler; master, owner, sovereign; he to whom a person or thing belongs; thus, a title expressing reverence and respect.”
- B. The one Lord of the Christian is Jesus the Christ.
- C. Jesus is Lord because He is the head of the body (1:10, 22-23; etc.).
 - 1. As Lord, the church belongs to and is ruled over by Him.
 - 2. Thus, His word is the final and only authority for the Christian.
 - 3. No man has the right to be lord and master of the church.
 - a. The doctrines and traditions of men must never be placed on the same level with the word of God (cf. Matt. 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13).
 - b. Any man who follows the teachings of men instead of (and in contradiction to) the Gospel of Christ cannot rightly wear the name Christian; for, he has chosen another lord.
 - c. Any church that follows the teachings of men instead of (and in contradiction to) the Gospel of Christ is not the church of Christ; for, they have chosen another lord.
- D. This means that Lord’s church is not a democracy – or even a representative republic.
 - 1. It is a monarchy – and Jesus is King.
 - 2. We do not have the right to vote down, veto, or change His Word.
 - 3. Thankfully, He is a righteous, just, fair, loving, merciful, and compassionate King – seeking only the best for the citizens of His kingdom.
- E. Also, whenever one allows sin to rule and reign in his heart and life, he has chosen to follow another lord instead of Jesus (cf. Romans 6:12-18).

One faith

- A. The word “faith” means, “Conviction of the truth of anything; belief; trust, joined with obedience.”
- B. Thus, it may refer to one’s person faith in God, Jesus or the Bible.
 - 1. In this sense, the one faith refers to unity in belief.
 - 2. All Christians believe and obey the same Truth – the Gospel of Christ.
 - 3. Though it is individual, it is still the same as all other believers.
- C. However, this word is also used to refer to “the faith” – the Gospel system of belief (or doctrine) revealed in the New Testament (4:13; Jude 3; Acts 6:7; Gal. 1:23).
 - 1. In this sense, the one faith refers to the unity of Truth, inspired by the Holy Spirit – the “one Spirit.”
 - 2. Thus, it means that there is one record of doctrine – one system of truth – the New Testament.
- D. Either way, the unity of the church is built upon the one faith revealed in the Gospel.
- E. The “one faith” is found in the New Testament; but, it becomes my “one faith” when I hear, believe, and obey it.

One baptism

- A. There are seven baptisms mentioned in the New Testament.
- B. However, by the time Paul wrote the book of Ephesians, there was only one.
 1. Ephesians was written around AD 62.
 2. This means that by that time, six of the seven baptisms were no longer in force or authorized by God.
 3. This is much like the fact that the Law of Moses was no longer in force when the New Testament – the Gospel – was preached.
- C. Which of the seven baptisms is the “one baptism”?
 1. Baptism of John (Matthew 3:1-6)
 - a. John’s baptism was one of repentance to prepare men for the Messiah and His kingdom (Matthew 3:7-12).
 - b. John’s baptism was one of confession of sins.
 - c. John’s baptism was one for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4).
 - d. However, it was limited to the time before Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension (cf. Acts 19:1-7).
 2. Baptism of Jesus (John 3:22, 26; 4:1-2)
 - a. Jesus’ baptism was the same as John’s – only now, it was also preached by Jesus.
 - b. This baptism was still for the purpose of preparing men for the coming of the kingdom.
 3. Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Acts 2, 10 – 11)
 - a. Holy Spirit baptism would be administered by Jesus.
 - b. The first occurrence of this baptism was on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 2:1-4, 33).
 - c. The only other occurrence of this baptism was upon the household of Cornelius (Acts 10 – 11; cf. 11:15-16).
 - d. The purpose of Holy Spirit baptism was to give the recipient miraculous powers to prove that they were affirmed and accepted by God.
 - i. For the Apostles, this meant that their message was inspired of God and should be heard by the people.
 - ii. For Cornelius, this meant that God had accepted the Gentiles and their entrance into the church should not be opposed.
 - e. This baptism was a promise, never a command.
 - f. After the occurrence at the house of Cornelius, it never happened again.
 4. Baptism of Fire (Matthew 3:11-12)
 - a. This baptism is a reference to the punishment of the wicked in the unquenchable fire of Hell.
 - b. Obviously, this baptism will not occur until the Day of Judgment.
 5. Baptism of Suffering (Matthew 20:22; Luke 12:50)
 1. This baptism refers to the overwhelming suffering and persecution that would be faced by Jesus and His disciples.
 2. It is a symbolic baptism, not a literal one.
 6. Baptism of Moses (1 Corinthians 10:2)
 1. This baptism refers to the passing of the Israelites through the Red Sea, under the leadership of Moses.
 2. This occurred during the Old Testament and is not the one baptism.

7. Baptism of the Gospel (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38)
 - a. This baptism is immersion in water for the remission of sins.
 - b. This baptism is commanded of all who would be followers of Jesus.
 - c. This baptism is to be taught and practiced until the Lord returns.
 - d. This baptism is the “one baptism”!
- D. There is one **mode** of baptism.
 1. The “one baptism” is immersion; for, this is the meaning of the Greek word *baptizo* (βαπτίζω).
 2. Sprinkling water upon someone is not baptism.
 3. Pouring water upon someone is not baptism.
 4. These acts were never consider as baptism until around 400 AD.
 - a. They were called “clinical” baptisms.
 - b. They were administered to the old who wanted to wait until just before death to be “baptized,” but were unable to be immersed.
 - c. Or, they were administered to infants who could not be immersed.
- E. There is one **element** of baptism.
 1. The “one baptism” is immersion in water (Jn. 3:23; Ac. 8:36-39; 10:47-48).
 2. Baptism in a different element (e.g., the Holy Spirit) is not the one baptism.
- F. There is one **purpose** of baptism.
 1. The “one baptism” is for the remission of sins – by which one is added by the Lord to His body, the church (Acts 2:38-47).
 2. It is not an outward sign that one has already been saved (cf. Acts 22:16).
 3. It is not to join a denominational body.
- G. There is one **candidate** for baptism.
 1. The “one baptism” is for the penitent believer who is willing to confess faith in Jesus (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:37; Rom. 10:10).
 2. No other person is qualified to be baptized into Christ.

4:6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all

- A. Obviously, there is only one God Who is Father of all mankind.
 1. God is the Father of all by creation.
 2. Yet, He is Father of those adopted into His family as His children in a special way.
- B. He is Father of all – both Jew and Gentile.
 1. The Jews long had understood that God was their Father.
 2. Now, they must admit and accept that He is also Father of the Gentiles.
- C. As a Father, God fully and completely cares for His people.
 1. He is above all – supreme in power, rule and authority.
 2. He is through all – dwelling with His children.
 3. He is in all – abiding within the hearts and lives of His family.
- D. The oneness and the Fatherhood of God is the basis for the unity of the church.