

Unity in the Body of Christ

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[0 : 00] Please turn with me to our scripture reading for today found in Ephesians chapter 4 verses 1 to 16. Ephesians 4 verses 1 to 16.

Unity in the body of Christ. I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gifts. Therefore it says, when he ascended on high, he led a host of captives and he gave gifts to men.

In saying he ascended, what does this mean? But that he had also descended into the lower regions of the earth. He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens that he might fill all things.

[1 : 23] And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Amen. Thank you, Demetria. Let me apologize that the topic of today's message is different from what you see in the bulletin.

As I was preparing, it just made sense to me to make a switch. So the topic is actually unity in the body of Christ.

And I had said hello to Jordana a couple times this morning. I want to publicly acknowledge her being back with us, or should I say Dr. Daly?

[3 : 10] Your being here this morning is actually very appropriate with the message, and I think it will be obvious why. Has anybody ever been to Jamaica?

If you've been to Jamaica, just give a quick wave. Alright. If you've been to Jamaica... Good, I see the Daly's have been there. That's good. Well, if you've ever been to Jamaica, you might have heard people say, One love.

Alright. It's a very popular thing to hear. Everywhere you go, you're greeted by one love. And when you hear it, you hear an aspiration.

You hear this idyllic aspiration of achieving unity, of having harmony between everybody, having peace.

And you get a sense that great things are expected to come out of that. And it's just infectious, so right away, you really want to be a part of that.

[4 : 10] You want to be a part of one love. Well, the passage we will consider this morning, I call it the ultimate one love. I hope you will see that in it, God really calls us to have this one love.

I hope you will see that God calls believers to perfect unity, just as He is in perfect unity with God the Son and with God the Holy Spirit.

Lord, please bow your heads with me as we pray. Father, I acknowledge my weakness, and I pray, Lord, that your Spirit will lift me up in my weakness, and that you will shine through.

Father, we pray right now that the words of my mouth, that the meditations of my heart will be acceptable to you. Lord, I pray that this message will be your message, that you will live in it, you will speak to hearts through it.

May we all see you, may we all see your unity with the Son and Holy Spirit. And may you be praised, I pray in Christ's name.

[5 : 39] Amen. Well, if you're a believer, you are no doubt living in Christ. And what I mean by that is that you are striving to live in a manner that Christ calls us to live.

And that's what Ephesians 4 details. So one of the things that we ought to be doing if we're living in Christ is we ought to be living in unity with brothers and sisters.

So we should have fellowship within the body of Christ, just as there is fellowship within the Godhead. So I want to share with you today under those two very brief themes, fellowship within the body of Christ and fellowship within the Godhead.

So first, fellowship within the body of Christ. From the beginning of this chapter, chapter 4 of Ephesians, Paul urges unity in the church.

And in urging this unity, he sort of teases out how we should have fellowship with each other. He points out the individual traits that we should each be cultivating and each of us should be developing so that we could achieve unity.

[7 : 08] Then verse 2, he says, we should have all humility. We should have gentleness. We should live with patience.

And we should be bearing with one another in love. And in all these things, we ought to be eager to maintain unity.

Unity of the Spirit and that unity brings a bond of peace among us all. So that's a lot.

And we're going to try to unpack it bit by bit. All humility. unity. The longer I live, the more I see how easy it is to be prideful.

So for many of us, maybe even the majority of us, it's just really hard to be humble. Because to be humble is to be modest, is to be willing to diminish yourself, to have yourself be less significant than others.

[8 : 21] So in other words, it's not about us, but it's about other people. And truly, that's hard. Because naturally, we're the total opposite of that.

We want it to be about us. We want to have our own way. We want to have everything we could. And we are daily seeing the world living differently from this.

The world has totally different goals. In the world, people strive to get to places of honor. They want to be in the VIP section.

Who wants to be in general admission? Be honest. None of us. We want to be in the special seat. Not the \$50 tickets.

You want \$1,000 tickets, or you want someone to invite us to take it for free. Alright? You want the spotlight. And unfortunately, in many instances, that same type of mentality is seen within the church itself, within the body of Christ.

[9 : 37] So Brother Troy, for instance, might invite someone to join the praise team. Troy, if that person says, okay, I'm going to join, but I want to sing the solo, or I want to be first soprano, or first tenor, Troy, you know how you should be praying for them.

Because obviously, there's not humility there. And sometimes it's not sad, but in our actions, in the things that we push for, in this inordinate ambition to be out front, it comes through.

We see that sometimes we're not as humble as we ought to be, but we're prideful. That's not what we're called to be.

We're called to be servants. Each of us is to look to serve the other, and it's not optional.

That's the manner that we're worthy, we're called to be worthy of, called to walk in. You're called to literally check your ego.

[10 : 51] And notice Paul says, all humility. Alright? Sometimes it's good, it's easy for us to show humility. humility, here and there.

Some occasions our lives can be sprinkled with humility. But the language that Paul uses doesn't indicate here or there.

Sometimes yes and sometimes no. It indicates a state of being. All humility, we have to be humble in all aspects of our lives.

We are to defer to others. And that's an amazing thing to be. Along with that we need to be gentle.

We sometimes come up with a lot of reasons to not be gentle. We have excuses to be a little rough with people, you know, to rough them up. But that's not what Paul says.

[11 : 53] Paul says we are called to be gentle. Whether it's in correcting people, whether it's through calling people to serve, we are to act in a gentle way towards them.

And we should do that if for no other reason than it communicates something. When we deal with people gently it communicates that we are actually concerned about them. we actually have care for how they're feeling.

We definitely don't want to as a body of Christ, as members of the body of Christ be communicating to people that we really don't care how you take it. We don't care how you take what we say.

We don't care what the outcome of your feelings are. We don't want to communicate that we are callous or unconcerned about them. In a similar way we are called to be patient.

bearing with one another in love. And that phrase bearing with one another it means exactly what it sounds like. It means that literally we have to put up with each other.

[13 : 04] And we all know as human beings sometimes there's a lot that we ask people to put up with with us. And it really means that we are called to forgive one another.

and we are called to forgive one another often over and over and over again. I know that you may complain that some people are difficult and you might be right.

Some people probably require more love and more forgiveness than others. They may be cranky, they may be irritable, they may be selfish. selfish.

But no matter what the circumstance we are still called to bear with one another. And a little secret I can be cranky, I can be irritable, I can be difficult and I think that's the same for every one of us.

no matter what at some point we are difficult to deal with and we would want other people to bear with us. And the truth is we are imperfect and we've been saved from the penalty of our sins by the grace of God but we're not being saved from sinning completely.

[14 : 34] So we will offend others from time to time sometimes often that's inevitable. But in offending others and in others offending us we are called to forgive and to keep bearing with one another.

And this is how we get to unity. How we get to living in peace with each other simply because we forgive.

And I say simply but we all know it's difficult sometimes to forgive. But if there's no reconciliation then we are sort of living in separation.

We have one group over here, one group over there, maybe another group in the corner. We are divided. but Paul urges forgiveness and he urges unity.

And as we look at our second and final point we get to look at why we ought to be eager to forgive and why we ought to eagerly pursue unity.

[15 : 50] So let's look at fellowship within the Godhead. Paul says beginning in verse 4 there's one body and one spirit just as you were called to one hope that belongs to your calling.

One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

Now these verses point out that there is a fellowship that predates us. There's a fellowship that goes back before the beginning of time and it's a perfect fellowship.

We have God who is one God but existing in three persons. And there's absolutely no division between those three.

they are in perfect unity. It's not the slightest variance between them. Just perfect unity.

[17 : 05] So our fellowship with one another brother to brother is not something that exists in isolation. God intends that our fellowship with each other should actually reflect the fellowship that exists within the Godhead.

So just as there is one God there's also one body. There's just one communion of believers.

And yes we're all from different countries and in those different countries there may be different congregations but if we look at the big picture what God is doing is actually choosing one people for himself throughout the world and throughout all time.

And that's why in Revelation chapter 7 we see a great multitude that no one could number from every nation from every tribe from every people and every language.

They're standing before the Lamb and they are worshipping. That's the gathering of the church.

Now John did not see a few great multitudes.

[18 : 37] He saw one great multitude one gathering. That's the one people that God is assembling for himself.

And each one who was gathered before God and before his Lamb had been sealed by one spirit. Alright?

That's the Holy Spirit that seals us. Not many spirits. So we read about that in Ephesians chapter 4 that there's this one spirit.

But if we look back at Ephesians 1, Paul tells us that the believers have been predestined to an inheritance of eternal life.

And God places his Holy Spirit in us as a guarantee of that inheritance. So Ephesians 1, 13 and 14 says, in him you also when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed in him was sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

[20 : 01] God said, they're not different spirits carrying out the ceiling. As I said, there's one spirit. And that one spirit is not on a random independent mission.

He is a mission that is in agreement with all the persons of the Godhead. As I said, they are in complete unity.

So in Ephesians 1, we see this promise of an eternal inheritance. And then we look at Revelation 7 into eternity and we see the fulfillment of that promise.

We see one body completely united in praising God. But there's a transition between the promise and the fulfillment of the promise.

In Revelation 7, we see the church in which every member has been transformed. Every member is living in an eternal incorruptible body and be able to worship God fully and be able to worship God without blemish.

[21 : 18] But that simply is not the case now. In the here and now, we're living in mortal fallen bodies and we have a very high capacity for blemish.

So we cannot perfectly worship God now. We will offend each other and we will be needing to extend forgiveness because of that.

God and what's so beautiful about the way we are called to reflect the fellowship of the Godhead is that the Godhead has already modeled what it is that we should follow.

Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit have demonstrated to us all what we ought to be doing, how we ought to be living.

they're giving us the example and this is even true with forgiveness. But let me follow up for a moment on another point.

[22 : 38] This is about the Godhead. In verses 4 to 6 of Ephesians 4, Paul points out that there's one spirit, one Lord, one father.

So each member of the Godhead is identified here, father, son, and Holy Spirit. But it all still points to one being. Throughout the Old Testament, we know that God is one.

There's one God that has given us one faith that we proclaim. And that one faith is that salvation is a free gift of God given to us through Christ's punishment for our sins on the cross.

So that's the one hope that Paul refers to. We're saved by faith alone in Christ alone. And it still points to the unity of the Godhead.

Godhead. And what I mean by that is that the Godhead didn't come up with the plan for our salvation due to some emergency.

[23 : 52] Adam and Eve sinned. And when Adam and Eve sinned, God wasn't scrambling around for a remedy for that sin, a solution.

He didn't need to scramble because God knows everything at all times. So before time began, God determined that He would create this earth.

He knew that Adam and Eve would sin, and He knew that there had to be a remedy for that sin. So before this earth was created, before time began, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were in complete agreement about how we would be redeemed from our sins.

They were in agreement that God would send the Son to redeem us, and then the Son would send the Spirit to seal us for our eternal inheritance.

And in this passage we see evidence of the perfect unity and fellowship of the Godhead because it says that there's one baptism.

[25 : 16] And yesterday we had the privilege, as you heard earlier, of witnessing the baptism of Alexandria. and that's always a reminder and a very vivid illustration of this unity of the Godhead because as Pastor Moss gives us instructions and as he speaks about what baptism is, and as someone is baptized, just before that, you'd hear the words that Christ gave us, how he instructed us to baptize.

And Christ didn't just say baptize in my name. In Matthew 28, he says that baptizing is to be in the name of all the Godhead, in the name of the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Holy Spirit.

So we see this unity of purpose. We see this unity of existence. And again, our relationship with each other should reflect that.

So when we are saved by God's grace, we are brought into fellowship with all of the persons of the Godhead. And it's really a sacred relationship.

We are brought into relationship with the triune God who is in perfect unity, and we really ought to reverence that fellowship.

[27 : 01] We ought to reverence that fellowship by keeping our unity with our brothers and sisters. as I said earlier, the Godhead demonstrates how we are to have fellowship and unity with each other.

But because this passage really focuses on Christ's example, I'll stick closely to Christ where the emphasis is placed in this passage.

So, at the beginning of Ephesians 4, Paul is talking about what we are called to do. And before I go on to what Christ has given us an example, I just want to be clear that God doesn't call us to do anything before he himself does something for us.

And I think it's important to establish that else it's easy for us to confuse how God's redemption and our sanctification work. Scripture makes it clear that before God calls us to do any work and before he commands us to reform our character or to form any moral deed he first brings us to salvation.

So salvation comes first and then our works come. If we don't emphasize that like I said it's easy for us to begin to think that we have to perform a certain way to be saved.

[28 : 42] And we can end up thinking that we have to work hard to be humble. And if bear with each other well enough then we somehow earn this salvation.

But it's actually the other way around. It is God's salvation that's the engine for our works. It gets us moving toward the work of sanctification.

And so Paul really clearly establishes that in Ephesians. So before we get to chapter four in the previous chapters that's what he's been doing. He's been laying the ground work showing them all that God has done for them.

From Ephesians 1 to 3 he shows that God had predestined them for eternal life and that he had sealed them with the Holy Spirit. He also shows that when we were once separate from Christ God brings us near to Christ through his blood.

And then he explains that God always intended for our salvation to be for all people. That salvation was not just for the Jews where he started but it was for all peoples of the earth.

[29 : 53] And these Ephesians had received that salvation. These were all the things that God had done. He did it himself.

He did not require any of them. He does not require any of us to achieve to earn our own salvation. He does the work of salvation for us.

But having done that, having been saved from the punishment of our sins, the punishment that our sins deserve, God now allows us to live out our gratitude for what he has done for us.

So this is the order. God first accomplishes our salvation and then our cooperation in living holy lives comes after.

But what we should notice in this chapter is that even our cooperation with God in living sanctified lives, God has already himself fulfilled everything that he has called us to do.

[31 : 11] In this chapter we are called to humility. Well in verses 9 and 10 we see that Christ descended to the earth from heaven.

And if you remember John 1 remember that John says that Christ was in the beginning with God and he was God so he was being worshipped in heaven as God Christ really did not know what it is to have earthly sufferings to have needs and wants in an earthly body but he condescended he took on human flesh and he submitted to even death on a cross so I saw all this to say that he has given

us the ultimate example of humility in leaving his place in heaven and we are told in scripture that he did not count that as something to hold on to but in order to accomplish the work that the God had agreed that he would do he humbled himself and took on human flesh and after enjoying the cross and after being buried Christ wrote on the third day he rose and now he's ascended but still serving us he's interceding for us but specifically in verse 11 we have shown that he serves us in what he has given us in the church he gave apostles and prophets he gave evangelists shepherds teachers these are all varied gifts but they have one purpose and that purpose is that we would all use these gifts to equip each other for the work of ministry and we see that in verse 12 each of us is to be using our gifts humbly for building up the church and again if we keep our eyes on the example of

Christ we would do that we would remain humble like our Lord has shown us to be humble and the use of all those gifts culminate in verse 13 the intended result is that we all attain unity of the faith so we are to be one in how we understand and how we proclaim the gospel we are to be one in how we fellowship with each other and really that's that's why we are here we come here week after week Sunday after Sunday really to be conformed to the image of Christ we are to be growing together in our knowledge of Christ and maturing in him until we are fully like Christ so when we mature we follow sound doctrine we have sound doctrine instilled in us that's a beautiful thing when each part of the body is working together and growing together with

Christ as our head it's then that we see the unity that we are called to do because each one builds up the other so we will never be perfect in this on this side of eternity but we have a sure and a certain hope that this promise will be fulfilled just as our adoption into the family of God was sure and certain from before the foundation of the earth the vision that John saw in Revelation 7 is just as certain now God will gather all his people together and we will praise him in perfect unity but until then we still have to try to serve each other in the here and the now that means we have to forgive each other that means we have to love one another and the

[36 : 05] God has already shown the ultimate one love the God has shown the ultimate one love in sending Christ to suffer and lay down his life for us sinners so it's in him that we have eternal salvation eternal forgiveness we are forgiven by God over and over time after time so then let us let the fellowship of the saints reflect the perfect fellowship of the Godhead and the Godhead's kindness to us to the praise of the glory of God let's pray Father we see in your word that there is perfect unity between you between your son between your

Holy Spirit and Father we pray that we would be mindful that we come into fellowship with you the triune God when you bring us into your family and due to your unending undying love for us due to your kindness to us your graciousness to us over and over to forgive we pray Lord that we would see that it is only right that we ought to in turn live in unity with our brothers that we ought to bear with each other and continue to forgive Lord we look forward to the day when you transform our bodies to incorruptible immortal bodies so we can truly worship you perfectly and we pray Lord that you will receive our praises now and you receive our praises then it will be acceptable to you through your lamb through Jesus Christ may we live in light of his sacrifices for us may our actions show Lord that we are grateful for all you've accomplished for us in your mighty and perfect ways we pray this in Christ's name amen to you