

A Unified Church

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[0 : 0 0] I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with 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. Amen.

Now, we're all familiar with the issue of disunity in churches, aren't we? Most of us probably have some type of church hurt story. We've got some type of catastrophic, traumatic event in our past in relation to our church history that we understand what this does and what it looks like, don't we?

The symptoms of disunity among Christians are typically very obvious, sometimes even explosive, and those contentions are never random. They're never spontaneous. Disunity is not like spontaneous combustion. It doesn't just happen. There is something going on underneath the surface for quite some time before those explosions take place. Long before a congregation goes to war with itself, long before subsets of Christian groups and traditions fire shots at each other in public, a spirit of division first invades and then eventually pervades the hearts of the individuals involved.

The issues that Christians often fight about are hardly the real problem. The problem is an issue of the heart that is left unattended, unrepentant for a significant amount of time, and it always goes back to the subtle ways that we diminish Christ and his gospel as the foundation of our unity with one another. This heart issue, if I can illustrate it this way in kind of a generic way, the heart issue is often revealed in even the subtle way that we shape our prayers.

Perhaps you've prayed for God at some point or another to put another Christian in your path, assuming that because that person is a Christian, they will see everything from your perspective and help you to achieve a desired outcome. And that's not necessarily a bad thing. Of course, when it comes to things that are explicitly Christian, that the Bible gives explicit instruction for, and we're in need, we want to pray that God will bless us with other people that will help us and that will encourage us in those processes. Sometimes we let this bleed over into non-essential areas, don't we?

[3 : 2 1] What happens when your case, in a particular instance, lands on the desk of a faithful Christian who just simply disagrees with you on the issue at hand?

What happens when Christian integrity for the salesperson means that his conscience will not allow him to agree to agree to your particular request in whatever it is that you're discussing or negotiating?

When we pray that way and things don't go our way, our tendency then is to assume that either that individual wasn't actually a true Christian or else they would have thought like I think and acted as I wanted them to act instead of acknowledging that faithful Christians sometimes disagree.

You see what I'm getting at? Sometimes we assume that if a person is a Christian, he or she must think like us on every issue, even those things unrelated to the essential truth of the gospel.

We say that we're gospel people, yet at times we judge someone else's standing with God based on things that are not the gospel. And it shows itself in subtle ways, ways that we don't always comprehend without somebody helping us to see them. It's a hard issue.

[4 : 57] Kind of divisiveness, it peaked during the pandemic years, didn't it? People started equating Christianity to particular stances on vaccinations and mask mandates and political strategies for dealing with the outbreak. The issue wasn't that there were disagreements among Christians, but that some believers started to insinuate that if someone took an opposing view to theirs, that person must not be a true Christian or at least not a faithful one who's really serious about their Christian experience.

Sometimes it's like we just can't comprehend how other Christians could think differently than we do on things. Then we get married and we find out real quick it happens a lot.

In the process of that, in the pandemic years, people left their churches that they loved. Some of them, they'd been there for decades. Why? Because they would have rathered worship with someone who responded to COVID according to their preference. Disunity surfaced that was totally unrelated to the gospel. Loved ones, this is a tragedy.

We ought not look at those situations with sympathy and say, well, they were just really passionate. No, they were being sinful. This is tragic. It's disunity. Of course, the divisive spirit, it reveals itself in what seems like an infinite amount of ways, doesn't it?

We may judge other congregations not on their gospel fidelity, but on how they employ production elements in their worship services. Turning our noses up at committed believers who take approaches to worship that make us uncomfortable. And then we like to make them our favorite punching bags when it comes to ecclesial conversations with people who think like we think. Making other faithful churches, gospel churches, the butt of our jokes.

[7 : 21] We may denigrate other Christians because of disagreements on secondary and tertiary doctrines, like divine election, like the continuing work of the Holy Spirit, like the age and mode of baptism, like Bible translations, like denominational and network affiliations, like style of preaching, and countless other things. And from there, we tend to create these factions. I'm speaking as Christians at large. We create these factions and these events and these conferences that aren't known primarily for their faithfulness to the gospel, but they're primarily mostly known for the way that they want to distinguish themselves from other Christians. And the worst of it is seen when those disagreements become slanderous and believers begin to wage war on one another, oftentimes with deceptive means and harmful rhetoric. And don't misunderstand me. I don't want you to. I don't mean to say that these disagreements are unimportant. Of course they're important. I don't mean to say that we should soften our convictions to achieve some lowest common denominator type of unity because that's not actually real unity. Still, it is ungodly and sinful to belittle, disparage, and castigate other true Christians.

And of course the disunity is as much an issue inside local churches as it is between local churches. We tend to take matters that fit the dynamics of Christian freedom and individual conscience of Romans 14 and we treat them as cases that demand correction and separation.

Rather than letting the love and the grace of God rule our hearts, we draw lines of fellowship based on what someone does or does not eat or drink. That's directly from Romans 14.

Which media companies we allow our kids to enjoy for entertainment? Whether we use traditional or natural medicines. How we choose to educate our kids.

What celebrity preachers or networks we want to associate with. In what ways we respond to issues of race in our community. And on and on and on the list of issues goes.

[10 : 10] Again, it's not that these things are unimportant. But neither are they the things that bind us together as a people. To make these matters issues of Christian fellowship is to significantly diminish and functionally deny the centrality of the gospel in the unity of God's people.

Again, we say we're gospel people. We say we're centered on the gospel in all things. And yet, the way that we relate to one another, the way that we relate to other believers outside of our congregation even, is not based on gospel unity.

It's based on secondary unity and secondary divisions that are unrelated to the gospel message. This ought not be so. I'm happy to be a Calvinist.

Arminians are not lesser Christians. And they are not less serious about Bible doctrine than I am. They are not my enemies.

They are my brothers and sisters. And they're yours too. If you're in Christ as they are. I am Baptist by conviction.

[11 : 31] If I can be honest, one of my biggest regrets for when we started the church is that we didn't just say that we're a Baptist church. And we can save that conversation for another day.

But I'm Baptist by conviction. But the many denominations and churches that practice infant baptism or follow other forms of church polity that aren't congregationalism, look, they're not our enemies.

They're our brothers. Continuationists. They're not my enemies. Congregations with more contemporary worship styles.

They're not my enemies. What binds us together is not these things. What binds us together is God's work of grace in our common salvation.

I love that Spurgeon quote. I'm sure you've heard it before. Spurgeon said, I would propose that the subject of the ministry in this house, that is the Metropolitan Tabernacle where he pastored in London, as long as this platform shall stand and as long as this house shall be frequented by worshipers, shall be the person of Jesus Christ.

[12 : 43] I'm never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist. I do not hesitate to take the name Baptist. But if I am asked what is my creed, I reply, it is Jesus Christ.

Now Spurgeon had deep convictions. Spurgeon was honest about those convictions. Yet he understood that the basis of Christian unity is not those things.

unity is not uniformity. Unity is not freedom from disagreement. So if you're looking for a church where everybody's gonna agree with you and think like you, you might as well just do it at home because you're never gonna find it.

You're not meant to. Unity is freedom from unnecessary divisions. among true Christians. It's freedom from a derisive spirit regarding things unrelated to what God has used to bring us together.

Namely, the gospel of Jesus. And these six verses in Ephesians 4 provide explicit instruction. This is not implicit.

[14 : 05] It is straightforward. Explicit. On how to relate to one another in the church. And to unbelievers outside of the church.

And I want you to notice that this command leads off with tremendous urgency. Look again at verse one. Paul says, I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.

There's nothing casual about this. Obedience to this instruction is not optional. Urge here, of course, is the root word for urgency.

Emphasizing the critical importance of the concerns Paul addressed in the final three chapters of this letter. This urgency that he speaks of here, it implies that what follows are matters of success and failure.

We might even say matters of life and death when it comes to local churches. And the umbrella principle that he introduces in verse one and is gonna continue, everything in chapters four through six is gonna follow underneath this first verse in chapter four.

[15 : 18] The principle thing that he introduces here is the necessity of walking worthy of our call. Living up to the reality of who we are in Christ.

That's the umbrella thing. Walk worthy of your call. Walk, of course, it indicates motion. You know this. It refers to our manner of life.

Walking worthy, in this case, means that our lives are characterized by our call. But what exactly is our call? Well, that was answered for us.

Beginning first in chapter one in verse five. Just set your eyes on it. Notice what Paul says. God predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will.

What is our call? We were chosen. We were called by God to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ.

[16 : 27] In other words, our call from God is to be his children, taking his name as our own, living in a manner that is worthy of that name that we receive through the gracious work of Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection.

This text and text like it always reminds me of something that my dad used to say when we were growing up. Whenever I went somewhere without him, perhaps your parents did something like this.

He understood the potential of embarrassment that I might bring on the family name. And dad would always ask me to tell him my full name and we would go, we would rehearse this whole process and he would remind me that everything that I did was a reflection on the name that he and I share.

The Blankenship name. As Harold Blankenship's son, I represent him to some extent.

And he wanted me to be mindful of that whenever he wasn't around in case I did something stupid. But he would always follow the statement by arguing from the lesser to the greater.

[17 : 45] That's what the writer of Hebrews so often does. First, he would say, what's your name? I'd say, Jared Blankenship, you need to remember that you and I share a name and what you do reflects on me.

He said, but more important than that, you're a child of God. You share his name. And living worthy of that name is far more important than living worthy of the Blankenship name.

As Christians, everything we do, it reflects on the name of our Father, on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is the idea Paul was conveying here with such urgency in this opening verse.

He's saying, Christians, live worthy of the name to which you have been called and adopted into the family of God. And eventually, Paul's gonna get to various areas of purity and holiness in this book.

Areas that must be tended to if we are going to walk worthy of our call. But the very first issue he tackled is Christian unity.

[18 : 49] Many of you know my brother. And you know that there's a lot of things that Jonathan and I are similar in. There's a lot of things that Jonathan and I are dissimilar in.

And you know us both well enough to know that. We can argue. We can annoy each other to no end. But on Thursday, when I called and said, hey, Julie had to be taken to the hospital.

I'm not there. Can you help me get the girls? You know what he did? He didn't say, well, if you had a better perspective of the plurality of elders in a local congregation, maybe I would consider helping you.

No, he said, I'll be right there. You know why? Because he's my brother. What binds us together is our family name.

And Paul's saying right from the very beginning, what binds us together is our call, our common call to salvation in Jesus Christ that we share the same Father.

[20 : 01] And it is with that understanding that he works into these principles of Christian unity. Just three basic ones that are easy to figure out. You can, you're sensible people. You can sort this out on your own.

But let me just give you some direction here. The first thing I want you to see is the mandate for unity. The mandate for unity. And for this, we're going to directly to verse three. We're going to come back to verse two, but we're going to go first to verse three.

Notice what Paul says. We are to be eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. All of the instruction in these verses here, in verses two through six, all of them revolve around this statement.

Pay very close attention to the language that he's using. Notice that the Christian's task is not to achieve unity, but to maintain the unity that the Holy Spirit has already provided.

Do you see that? Just look at the verse again. Eager to maintain the unity of the spirit. No Christian can create unity.

[21 : 14] And if you're here today and you're not a Christian, I'm glad you're here. I really am. We have the greatest news in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It will change your life.

But you cannot create what Paul is talking about here. It's not possible. It is something that is provided to us in Christ.

God himself is the creator and sustainer of the church's unity. The Father determined it in divine election.

That's chapter one. The Son secured it through his death and resurrection. That's chapter two. The Holy Spirit supplies it as he regenerates, seals, and indwells each believer.

That's all through the letter. The mandate here is not for us to create something that isn't there. The mandate is to maintain something that God has already supplied.

[22 : 21] It is already ours in Christ. We are united. We are one. We are brothers and sisters.

He has done that. Now I want you to notice the spirit with which we are to maintain the unity of the spirit.

Look again at the verse. Paul says we are to be eager. This is important language. What does he mean here?

Eager. Enthusiastic. Ambitious. Yearning to pursue this unity.

unity. We are all eager about a lot of things. We have a lot of passions. Many really good and important things.

[23 : 22] But when was the last time that you yearned to maintain unity and peace with other believers?

believers. Most of the time our objective with other believers in relation to disagreement is to try to win them to our side.

And there's a place for that. But when's the last time you entered in a conversation with a believer with whom you have a significant disagreement and your goal was to find the path of peace.

That what you were enthusiastic about in that moment was not whether or not they believed the same thing about the Holy Spirit and his continuing work as you. What you wanted to find was a way that despite your disagreement you can maintain the unity of the body.

That's what he's saying. When was the last time you went out of your way to pursue peace because your heart's longing is to preserve the unity with your Christian brothers and sisters that was won for you on the cross and supplied to you by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[24 : 43] In our zeal for truth we must remain zealous for the unity of the Spirit. That's the mandate here.

Eager enthusiastic pursuant of. Finally notice the expression of unity is listed as the bond of peace.

When was the last time that other believers could genuinely refer to you as peaceful? A peacemaker that Jesus said will inherit the earth and will be blessed.

peace. Of course the peace that Paul is referring to here is first of all peace with God. Isn't it? It's all rooted in the gospel. This peace with God is what makes possible our peace with one another.

That's what John says in 1 John chapter 1. He uses that koinonia word that I like so much. He says as we have koinonia fellowship unity with the Father through Jesus Christ we then have fellowship with one another.

[25 : 57] And how is it that God has made this peace possible? Through the gospel. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus for those who are called to be God's children.

This gospel of peace Paul says is our bond. The gospel is sticky. That even when we're running different directions the thing that keeps pulling us back together like a magnet is the bond of the peace of Jesus Christ provided on the cross.

And God has called us to it. And he has saved us. And he has made us one with him so that we might now be one with one another. It's peace. It's our bond.

It's the gospel. Paul didn't say that we are to be eager for the bond of Calvinism. He didn't say we have to be eager for the bond of denominationalism or non denominationalism.

He didn't say we need to be eager for the bond of cessationism or continuationism or whatever. Fill in the blank with whatever isms. He said we are to be eager for the bond of the peace, the gospel of Jesus Christ, pursuant of it.

[27 : 14] Now if that isn't enough for you to recognize how serious of a matter Christian unity is, let me just give you a few other examples in the New Testament. John chapter 10 and verse 16.

Jesus said I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

In the end, there is one flock, there is one bride, there is one people of God. John 17.

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. Why? How? Just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

The glory that you have given me, I have given to them, that they may be one. Even as we are one, I in them, you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them as you love me.

[28 : 28] Oh, that's a powerful passage. What is Jesus' illustration for our unity together? His unity with the Father and the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 1, verse 2, to the church of God that is in Corinth, to the sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.

1 Corinthians 1, 10-13, I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

for it's been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, I follow Paul, or I follow Apollos, or I follow Cephas, or the really spiritual ones, I follow Christ.

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? What's he getting at? To a church that really struggled with this unity, he said, this ought not be so.

1 Corinthians 10, 17, because there is one bread, this is a reflection on communion, because there's one bread, we who are many are one body, for we partake of the one bread. Philippians 2, 2, complete my joy, being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

[29 : 57] Philippians 4, 2-3, I entreat Yodia and Syntyche to agree in the Lord. And then he says, and I also ask you, true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel.

How would you like to be the ones Paul called out in the letter? Romans 12, 16, live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, associate with the lowly.

Oh, here's the hard one, isn't it? Never be wise in your own sight. Isn't that where these divisions typically come from? I just think that I'm smarter than you.

And maybe I am. But that's not the spirit with which we are to approach one another, is it? Romans 14, 17 to 19, the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.

[31 : 04] Romans 16, I appeal to you brothers, watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you've been taught. Avoid them. They don't serve the Lord Christ.

Galatians 2, 11 through 14, Paul confronts Peter, but when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to the face because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, those were Jews, he was eating with the Gentiles, but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party, and the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with them, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, if you though a Jew live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?

Significant issue. You can study that on your own. How about Galatians chapter 5? Are you tired of these yet? I could go on and on and on. Galatians chapter 5. Now the works of the flesh are this, and he lists a bunch of things. Right in the middle he says enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, and then he says just in case he missed something that we would try to excuse he says and all the things that are like these things.

These are the works of the flesh he says but instead we are to be filled with the fruit of the spirit which is the opposite of these things. It's love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

- [32 : 55] There are many more but is this not enough? is this not enough for us to see what it is that God actually desires of his people? Need we any more proof that walking worthy as a Christian means being ambitious to maintain the peace that the Holy Spirit has supplied through the gospel?

That's the mandate. Maintain what is already yours in Christ and maintain it with joy and eagerness and ambition. Second, notice the method for maintaining Christian unity.

This is where we go back to verse 2. Look at it with me. We do this with all humility. See, this is hard. These little words, they make a difference, don't they?

He doesn't say, we do this with a little bit of humility. Oh, no. He says, all humility and gentleness with patience, bearing with one another in love.

eagerness to maintain the unity of the spirit is a fundamental mark of Christian maturity. Just set your eyes on verses 12 and 13 to see that in the same chapter.

- [34 : 12] That Christ gives leaders to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for the building up of 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.

Disunity, then, is a mark of spiritual immaturity. No matter how well-versed one may be in their doctrinal understanding and convictions, disunity reveals spiritual immaturity.

humility. Fortunately for us, God doesn't make the demand for maintaining unity without telling us how to do it. Five intentional attitudes of the heart are listed here.

The first, humility. Unity cannot exist apart from it. Disunity is always, always the result of pride, self-promoting arrogance.

The one who is humble is the one who constantly understands himself in relation to the gospel and therefore never sees himself as better or more significant than anyone else.

- [35 : 40] Good theology has produced many arrogant jerks, others. But the gospel always leads to humility of heart.

It can only lead to humility of heart. Paul described it this way to the Philippians, do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourself.

let each of you look not only on his own interests, but also to the interest of others. Oh, and here's the nail in the coffin, isn't it? Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

And that's when he gives us that wonderful Christology, isn't it? He says, be humble like Jesus is humble. The second one is gentleness.

Gentleness. This word is often translated as meekness, isn't it? Biblical gentleness is often misunderstood. It doesn't mean soft. It doesn't mean delicate.

- [36 : 52] It doesn't mean weak. It's the same word we used for taming a horse. Sometimes we may call it gentling a horse, don't we? To gentle a horse does not remove its power.

It doesn't remove its knowledge. It doesn't handicap it. It brings all of those things under control, doesn't it? That's the word Paul's using here. It's the word that's often employed in the New Testament.

So it is what the essential characteristic of gentleness among Christians. It is power under control. It is zeal that is ruled by humility.

That's gentleness. It's the opposite of harsh. It's the opposite of judgmental. It's the opposite of sarcastic. It's the opposite of degrading.

It's self-control. Thirdly, and fourthly, we'll bring these two together. He says we do this with patience and with bearing with one another.

[37 : 57] And here's the thing that I want to note about this. These twin characteristics, they expose the work that it takes to maintain unity. Patience is endurance, which implies suffering.

Oh, give me your eyes on this one. What Paul is calling us to in Christian unity is a call to willingly suffer, to bear with one another.

Forbearance, it indicates the reality that we will encounter irritating, annoying, difficult people in our faith that belong to Jesus the same way that we belong to Jesus.

That's hard. If unity were an easy thing, if it was something that we could just put on autopilot and it just work out, there would be no threat of disunity among Christians.

And while some of us battle more with arrogance or harshness, others of us battle with more of a persevering kindness with people that, let's just be honest, we just really don't like that much.

[39 : 18] Some people are just hard to like. Paul says, no, if we're going to do this, we're going to have to be patient. We're going to have to suffer through some difficult relationships.

relationships. We're going to have to bring a burden, and that burden is other Christians sometimes, and we're going to have to bear it in order that we might enthusiastically maintain the unity of the Spirit.

And then finally, the fifth one is love. Bearing with one another in love. Love is what binds it all together, isn't it? Of course, we have to understand love the right way.

We can't understand it as an emotional state. We have to understand it as a relational commitment. That's the biblical presentation of love. And if we're going to be obedient to the Lord, we're going to have to get over the fact that sometimes our emotions just don't want to like other people, or we're moody, or whatever.

It's a relational commitment. It's a choice. Choosing to love other believers is the only heart attitude that can possibly produce humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearance.

[40 : 31] And if you're struggling with those areas, as I often do, it is undoubtedly because you have not loved others the way Christ has loved you and commanded you to love.

John 13, a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

By this all people will know that you're my disciples, if you have love for one another. Romans 12, let this love be genuine.

Oh, this isn't a fake it till you make it. love for one else. No, this is supplied to us when we focus on the gospel above all else. That's where this comes.

When in humility we set aside the things that are dividing us. Abhor what's evil, hold fast to what's good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

[41 : 39] That's the method. Finally, and we'll be done, the motivations for it. The motivation for Christian unity. This is verses four through six.

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.

There are seven one statements that show the reason why we should be eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

Just briefly note them. First he says there's one body. What is that? It's the church. One church. Now the reality is that we have separations.

We have lots of churches, don't we? We have lots of churches that disagree on things that are important and sometimes it's necessary. We see this even in Paul's own ministry. It's necessary to make amicable separations in order for us to best pursue peace with one another and faithfulness to the Lord.

[42 : 48] I understand that. I'm not denying that all of that's true. But at the end of the day, there's only one of us. There's only one church. There's only one body. That's a reason for us to take this serious, he says.

Second, he says there's one spirit. What is that? It's the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit that regenerates, seals, guarantees, enables, unifies all the things.

There's only one of those. There's not multiple of them. There's not like the Baptist one that's over here and he does kind of this thing over here and then there's the Presbyterian one and then there's the non-denominational one. No, there's one spirit and he's at work in all of them.

Third, let me just give you a verse on that. 1 Corinthians 12, 13. For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body. What brings us into the church?

Baptism of the Spirit. Same spirit. Jews, Greeks, slaves, free, all were made to drink of one spirit. It's clear. Third, one hope. What's the hope?

[43 : 51] The gospel. The gospel through Jesus Christ. One Lord. Who is that? Jesus. Jesus is our Lord. One faith.

This is sound doctrine especially on first order issues related to the gospel. One baptism. What is this? Well, it's water baptism but not like you think.

This is not about age and mode and all those things. This is about being baptized in the name of the Father and Son and Spirit. Whether that happened to you as a baby or whether it happened post conversion.

That's the emphasis here. Let me give you a verse on that. Galatians 3. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ, that is into the name of Christ, have put on Christ.

And in Christ there is neither Jew or Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. There's one baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. And then finally there's one God and Father.

[44 : 49] He is the one to whom we all belong. Now what's the point Paul's making? We should be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit because unified is what we are in Christ.

This is who we are. And what are the guidelines for this unity and kindness and love amongst Christians that disagree?

It's these seven marks. These seven characteristics is the basis of all Christian unity.

Nothing more and nothing less. Again, that doesn't mean that we don't have important points of disagreement that sometimes demand a measure of ecclesial separation. I understand that.

Still, it doesn't mean, it does mean that we must be ambitious about loving and displaying Christian unity with all people that share these seven characteristics with us.

[45 : 46] You say, well how am I supposed to know how friendly I am to be with this other person that claims to be a Christian? Well, are they a part of the one body? Do they have the one spirit?

Do they maintain the one hope? Do they follow the one Lord? Do they have the one faith, the gospel faith? Do they have the one baptism in the name of Jesus?

Are they a child of the one God and Father? And if that's true, all of those other disagreements are non-essential to our unity together. Everett Ferguson has such a wonderful statement here.

And in view of what unites, the things that divide seem less formidable. In a sense, to be divided, unnecessarily that is, to be divided is to say God has not done enough to produce unity.

Let me just finish with this. I truly believe we have a congregation here that is generally faithful and pure.

We expect that less pure churches like Corinth will have these problems. But we need to remember that the danger of disunity was addressed even in the most pure churches in the New Testament.

[48 : 01] Disunity was still a threat. The church in Ephesus obviously was a faithful, faithful church. And they had issues with disunity. This is not an issue that only belongs to churches that are less pure.

We will destroy this church. All the right theology will not save a congregation that is ruled by pride and division.

[illegible]