

Series: Unsearchable Riches in Christ (Ephesians)

Text: Ephesians 4:4-6

Message #17 (January 14, 2007)

## WHY WE ARE ONE

### Introduction

1. Our goal as believers is to walk worthy of the calling to which we have been called. We have been called into a relationship with Christ. We have been called out of darkness into light. We have been called to a holy calling. We have been called into a union with Christ. Based on this calling, we are to walk worthy of it. Nothing else really matters. Paul begged his readers to walk worthy of this calling.
2. Last week we gave some attention to the characteristics of this worthy walk. Did you notice that the worthy walk was not based on a list of things to do or things to avoid or rules and regulations? Rather Paul listed several inward graces – inward attitudes that should permeate our behavior. All of these things have to do with the inner man. When we studied Paul’s prayer in chapter 3, we discovered that the first thing we need in order to be filled with the fullness of Christ – to be mature in Christ, is to be strengthened in the inner man. We tend to major on the outer stuff. God calls us to give attention to the inner man. When the inner man is strong, our walk will be a worthy one.
3. A worthy walk is a testimony to a divine origin. When we walk worthy of our calling, our lives broadcast the message, “God is at work here!” As we exercise humility and meekness and patience and forbearing/forgiving love, we are maintaining the unity that God designed when He called His church together. Since God is the origin of His church as both its creator and redeemer, this one church must be characterized by unity. What God put together by design is described here by Paul as “one body, 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.”
4. The whole thing gives testimony to God as its creator and designer; for it is one. To mess with this unity is to mess with God’s design for His church.
5. You could say that Paul seems to be building his argument around the three persons of the Trinity. One body, one Spirit, one hope, center on the person and work of the Holy

Spirit. One Lord, one faith, one baptism seem to focus on the person and work of Christ. One God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all is focused on the person of God the Father. The church belongs to God and was created as one. We are called to maintain that unity. Let's consider the three persons of the Trinity and what that has to do with the unity of the church.

## **I. IN REGARD TO THE HOLY SPIRIT**

### **A. There is one body...**

1. How many bodies are there? Only one! There is not a Baptist body and a Lutheran body and a Methodist body and a Presbyterian body. There is one body. There is not a body in Russia and a body in Europe and a body in China and a body in North America. There is only one body.
2. It does not matter who you are or where you were born or what language you speak or what personality you have. When you are drawn to Christ you are brought into His family, into His body. Essentially you are joined together with every other believer. We are all one in Christ.
3. This one body has one head, and that head is Christ. There is only one way you can be part of the body. You must be placed into the body by Christ through the new birth, which comes as the Father draws us and as the Spirit regenerates us and as the Son forgives us and redeems us.
4. Certainly in heaven for all eternity we will function as one body. Paul beseeches us to function that way now.

### **B. There is one Spirit...**

1. How many Spirits are there? Only one! The church is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit. He works both in producing (through regeneration) and in maintaining (through sanctification) the body of Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit guarantees unity.
2. One of the great ministries of the Holy Spirit is to convict us of sin. We need to be brought low (humility) in order that we might be built up. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. One of the reasons the church struggles with unity is because we ignore the Holy Spirit's conviction in regard to sin.

3. Remember that the Holy Spirit is involved in regenerating or quickening the person to new life. One of the problems on the local church level is that there are professing believers who are still dead in their sins. They have not been regenerated. Light and darkness do not mix. There cannot be unity in the body if there is a mixed multitude. But in the true church, there is one Spirit and since there is one Spirit there ought to be unity. Those who are regenerate have one Spirit.

C. There is one hope...

1. In chapter one we learned that the Holy Spirit was given to us as a down payment, as an engagement ring, if you will. Though we have been redeemed, during this present time we remain in unredeemed bodies. The Holy Spirit is a promise that what God began in us in regeneration, He will complete when we receive a new body at the coming of Christ.
2. The promise of the Holy Spirit of that completed redemption is part of that hope which all who are in Christ share. While it is true that we were saved from sin and it is true that we were saved under various circumstances, what is important here is what we were saved to. That is where we encounter some problems in the area of unity. Permit me to illustrate. Someone of somewhat noble class is converted and about the same time a drunken bum is converted. Is one better than the other? By no means. It is not a matter of what we were saved from, but what we were saved to. (And the issue was never so much related to life style good or bad, but to relationship with God as "far off.")
3. Here is another illustration regarding the experience. During Jesus' earthly ministry according to Mark 8, Jesus healed a blind man by spitting on his eyes. In John 9, Jesus healed a blind person by spitting in some dirt and making some mud and smearing the mud on the person's eyes. Can you imagine if those two men met one day and began to discuss their experience? There would have been two denominations: the mudders and the plain spitters! It is not about how we came to Christ, but about what we were saved to. We were saved in one hope. There is one body, one Spirit, one hope of your calling to which you were called. That is the work of the Holy Spirit in the unity of the body of Christ!

## II. IN REGARD TO THE LORD JESUS

### A. There is one Lord...

1. How many Lords are there? Just one! Acts 4:12 reminds us that, “there is salvation in no one else; there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Paul told the Galatians, there is only one true Gospel about one true Lord. If He is Lord and in fact Lord of all, and we are subject to His Lordship, there must be unity!
2. Somewhere along the way we forgot that He is Lord. Christianity is about Christ, the Lord. Take away the Lord and Christianity does not exist. There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who happens to be Lord of all! He is Lord in His person and Lord in His work.
3. Jesus is Lord whether we acknowledge it or not. Preachers sometimes plead for us to “make Jesus Lord.” He already is. We can’t make Him anything. But we can acknowledge His lordship and live in light of it. If we can settle the issue of His Lordship, that satisfies the issue of unity in the church. If He is Lord of me and Lord of you, we are together as one. Our only assignment then is together to walk worthy of the calling to which we have been called.

### B. There is one faith...

1. There is some debate as to whether this is objective or subjective faith. Subjective faith has reference to my believing. Objective faith is the body of truth that I believe. I think Paul is talking here about objective faith here. There is one Gospel that must be believed. There are not many messages that are equally acceptable. There are not many ways to God. There is one gospel and to depart from that gospel and to believe something different is to embrace another gospel, a false gospel, a gospel that does not save, a gospel that is not of God!
2. If there is only one faith, then why are there so many differences? Some differences are due to our own humanness and sinfulness. Some differences may be due to our lack of study or understanding (like Apollos who had to be instructed by Priscilla and Aquila). Some differences may be due to our unexamined traditions. Some differences are due to preferences in relation to areas that are not particularly clear in

Scripture. While there is a place to agree to disagree, there is one faith. That objective faith is recorded in the pages of this book, the Bible. There is one faith.

C. There is one baptism...

1. This may seem odd to include in the section on the Son. Some would suggest that this should belong with the discussion on the Holy Spirit. Baptism could be the ritual in water or the initiation into the body of Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit. I am not dogmatic here, but I am inclined to think that water baptism may be in Paul's mind here.
2. I know there is a debate about baptism. There is a debate concerning its application (as a covenant sign or as a testimony of belief). There are debates concerning the mode of baptism (sprinkling, pouring, immersion). If water is in view, how could there be one baptism, when there seems to be so many varied ideas about it? Baptism was very important to the early church. An unbaptized believer was simply not known in the first century church. To be baptized into the name of Christ (or following the formula in Matthew 28, "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit") was to recognize and to publicly declare one's allegiance to Jesus and a turning away from any other allegiance. It was and is a big deal to identify with Jesus. There is one Lord and He is Jesus Christ. There is one faith and this faith is in the Lord Jesus. And there is one baptism and this is identification with the Lord Jesus Christ! Our identity and thus our unity, is found in the Lord Jesus Christ!

### **III. IN REGARD TO THE FATHER**

A. There is one Father who is over all

1. How many gods are there? There is really only one God. There is no God like our God. Other so-called gods are not gods at all. There is one God and Father who is over all. He is unique. Everything else is created; He is the creator God. He stands by Himself.
2. This is the apex of Paul's pleading for the application of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There are many who would try to take this statement and make a case for the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men. Though God is the Father of all in that He alone is ultimately responsible for our existence, He is only our Father if

we are in Christ. Otherwise, we belong to our father, the devil! (John 8:44)

3. Believers are all in the same family because we all have the same Father and He has called us to get along together! We belong to the household of God and He is the benevolent dictator of that household! The fact that the Father is over all speaks of His sovereign control over all that belongs to Him (which is everything, but especially those who belong to the family of the redeemed).

B. There is one Father who is through all

1. He is also the One Father who is through all. That refers to His providential working throughout His entire creation. He not only made everything, but He also upholds everything.
2. For those who belong to Him, we can be certain that all things work together for our good and for His glory because He loves us and we are in His family! There is one Father who is over all and through all, and ...

C. There is one Father who is in all

1. The Bible speaks of God as a Triunity. There are three persons and yet one essence – one God. There are times when it makes sense to distinguish between the persons of this Triunity. Certainly it was Jesus who was incarnate and died for sinners, taking the holy wrath of the Father against sin upon Himself. Jesus told His disciples that He was sending the Holy Spirit who had been with them but who would be in them. But there are times when this distinction is somewhat blurred. We read “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” The Bible makes much of the indwelling Christ. Paul makes clear that the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us. In fact, Paul told the Corinthians that if they did not have the Holy Spirit, they did not belong to Christ! Jesus told His disciples that both He and the Father would come and make their abode in them.
2. Whatever else we might make of this, we should be able to affirm there is one body and one Spirit and one hope and one Lord and one faith and one baptism and one God and Father who is over all and through all and in you all! And it is on the basis of the work of this Triune God in the lives of those who have been called to walk this incredible worthy walk, that we are one in Him!

## **Conclusion**

1. Let me see if I can put this all together. Being above all, God the Father's purpose is to bring all things together in Christ (1:10). Things have been divided by sin, but He is above all and He will bring everything back together in Christ. If God's purpose involves the work of uniting, why would we ever be in the position of trying to cause division?
2. Since God is through all, He is exercising His power and He desires that we know this power (1:19-20). He who was able to raise Jesus from the dead is able to bring believers together in one body.
3. And if we know Christ Jesus, God is in us and since He is in us and He is able to bring us together and He desires that we walk as one and He has called us to this worthy walk – what are we going to do?
4. James Boice summarized it this way: *Whatever else you may say about the church, the church is God's church. It is composed of God's people, it is the result of God's work, and it exists for God's glory. So let that be our vision. If it is, we will not find it difficult to keep or make visible the unity that God himself has already worked into the very fabric of our experience together as Christ's body.*” **Amen!**