

## PRACTICING OUR UNITY

Ephesians 4:1-6

Pastor Doug Roman, Bible Baptist Church

Sunday AM, July 11, 2010, Part 2

*In the days before our national independence, the foundation of a free and prosperous country had to be laid. The foundation was unity! Benjamin Franklin's political cartoon "Join, Or Die" and Thomas Paine's pamphlet, "Common Sense" illustrate that unity was critical to liberty. The foundation of unity in the early history of our country is much like the unity that Paul called the Ephesians church to practice—not to establish an earthly kingdom but to propagate a heavenly one. This morning we will see two aspects of unity the Apostle Paul desires for us to observe as well.*

**Big Idea:** Every believer is an important link in the chain of unity in the body of Christ.

1. A Call to Practical Unity (vv. 1-3)

A. The Exhortation to Practical Unity (v. 1)

B. The Expansion of Practical Unity (vv. 2-3)

What are the qualities of a person who walks worthy of their calling and thus advances unity in the body?

1) Humble.

2) Gentle.

3) Patient.

4) Forbearance.

2. A Call to Doctrinal Unity (vv. 4-6)

This section has been identified as an early Christian *credo*, a statement of faith (Bruce, *Ephesians*, 335; cf. Barth, *Ephesians* 4-6, 462). It "consists of a sevenfold confession of the unifying realities of the faith, which provide a strong motivation for the appeal for unity" (O'Brien, *Ephesians*, 273-4). The unity theme is highlighted by the seven uses of the word "one" (cf. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 513). As we will see, to affirm these doctrines will not come cheap.

A. One body (v. 4). This is a reference to the universal church. The body of Christ comprised of all believers from Pentecost to the Rapture. It is a new phenomenon. It is also distinct from Israel. Jews do not become Gentiles and Gentiles do not become Jews. Ephesians 2:15. We need to have a Revelation 5 multi-ethnic vision, even though we live in an area dominated by the white, middle-class demographic.

B. One Spirit (v. 4). This is not a reference to the shared spirit of unity or the unity of the human spirit, kind of like the Visa commercial during the Olympics that says, "Go world." If you have an ESV, you'll find the word "Spirit" with a capital "S" signifying a reference to the Holy Spirit. This is a Spirit sourced unity.

C. One hope (v. 4)

This is a confident expectation that God will bring His promises and purposes to pass. Notice that both Jew and Gentile have this hope. Does this hope burn within your heart so that it casts light to a dark and hopeless world?

D. One Lord (v. 5)

This is a reference to Jesus Christ. Acts 2:36; 10:36; 16:31. This has tremendous implications for us doesn't it? 1 Corinthians 8:5-6.

E. One faith (v. 5)

This is an objective faith, consisting in the body of truth believed by Christians (cf. 4:13; Jude 3). In order for one to be a Christian basic Christian doctrines must be affirmed and held with conviction. Parents should not buy into a philosophy of parenting that says we will shape our children but when it comes to religion we'll let them make their own choice.

F. One baptism (v. 5) (see Barth, *Ephesians* 4-6, 469-70). This is not a reference to baptismal regeneration.

"Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §977). Martin Luther said in his catechism:

*What does Baptism give or profit?—Answer.*

It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

It appears to be a reference to the thing signified in Baptism: relationship and identification with Christ.

G. One God and Father of all (v. 6).

In the Second Vatican Council (Pope Paul VI, November 21, 1964), the Catholic Church developed a dogmatic constitution titled *Lumen Gentium*, Latin for “The Light of the Nations.” This document served as the foundation for a portion of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. In the *Catechism*, the heading is *The Church’s relationship with the Muslims*. It is a citation from the *Lumen Gentium*, “The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us adore the one, merciful God, mankind’s judge on the last day” (*Catechism*, §841).

The universal fatherhood of God is not in view in this statement. This is a reference to God as the father of all who believe.

As you can see, the doctrines will place you in the exclusivist camp rather than the inclusivist camp. There are other professing evangelicals who live in the exclusivist camp like Clark Pinnock who asserts, “Faith in God is what saves, not possessing certain minimum information . . . The issue God cares about is the direction of the heart, not the content of theology” (Pinnock, *A Wideness in God’s Mercy*, 158 in *Missions in a New Millennium*, 168). Pinnock has it wrong. Faith in faith is not sufficient to save. The *content* of faith is absolutely critical. What do these doctrines require of us?

- *This requires a response.* You can’t continue to let Christ remain one shining star in your religious sky. You must either choose or reject Him! To choose Him is to choose Him *alone*. To choose Him with others it to reject Him for He requires total allegiance.
- *This will rattle you.* We need to be less fragile. We can be like someone who has just entered a body of water reluctantly and they feel they are brushed ever so slightly by some plant and they jump out of the water. We enter into discussion and the slightest brush with opposition causes us to disengage the situation. Intolerant. Like a doctor with poison. Arrogant. It’s arrogant to ignore truth. It is humble to submit to it. Ignorant. Ignorance will always be true. More ignorance than knowledge will fill our heads. Imagine that we are in the woods and you need to get out. Do you need to know the names of all the trees, the birds, and every possible path in the woods to get out? You only need to know one.
- *This will cost you.* Paul is a *prisoner*. You will be tempted to temper your language; to temper your message. It will cost you your ambitions, it will cost you prestige, and it will cost you your comforts. Jim Elliot said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”
- *This will motivate you.* You will not let people continue to drink the poison of the lie that there are multiple ways to God. Will we be taken by the beauty of Ephesus? Or will we be overwhelmed with the condition of those around us?