

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

Mission and Unity

Ephesians 4:1-16

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SermonAudio Blurb: As Missio Dei Fellowship has just launched a new campus seeks to remind them what they must ever and always keep in focus. The unity of the Spirit is something that every church and every Christian must hold to jealously. Once disunity is tolerated, sin and shame is sure to follow. But what is it? And how do we go about maintaining it? These are explored in this message.

I. Introduction.

- A. As we consider the road before us as Missio Dei, what is our responsibility toward one another?
 - 1. How do we judge the effectiveness of this church before the world, before one another and before our Lord?
 - 2. If I were to think of one thing we must pursue relentlessly, it would be the command to have unity. But not some sort of vague unity but one that is biblical and consistent with the character and person of God
 - 3. It was the burden of our Lord at the time of His death. In his high priestly prayer in John 17 he asks His heavenly father, John 17:20-23:

“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even 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 sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”

- 4. The Apostle Paul consistently urges the various churches to be of one mind. That they would labor together, building one another up in the faith and growing in love for one another.
 - a. In 1 Timothy he wants the men to pray with holy hands, not having wrath or dissension.

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- b. We are commanded in Romans 16 to watch very carefully those who are creating disunity. And more than that, we are to not allow them to be with us.
- c. In Titus 3 it is even more blunt. We are to reject those who create disunity within the church.
- 5. Read through any of the other books of the New Testament and you will find unity as a key element running through them all.
- 6. Therefore, because of the strong commands regarding people like this it is imperative to know what is meant by “unity.”
- B. So read along with me in Ephesians 4:1-16 where we will take a bird’s eye view of this important passage on the infinite value of true, Christian unity.

Propositional Statement

Over the next two sermons I want to show you that there are two types of unity within the church. There is a present, existing one that we must be diligent to protect. And there is a imperfect, growing one that we must be diligent to promote. In our passage Paul commands us to preserve the unity of the Spirit while we are continuing to grow and work toward a true unity of the faith.

II. Preserve The Unity of The Spirit (1-6).

- A. Note first the passion Paul has for this issue of unity, “I entreat you.”
 - 1. It comes as he is turning the corner from serious theology to the practical living of that theology.
 - 2. It means to beg or strongly urge. It literally means “to call to one’s side” with the word picture being coming along side another with the desire to be of true help to him.
 - 3. This is a task that your elders will often find themselves needing to do. They are tasked with the job of pulling people aside to speak with them about something that needs to change.
- B. Question: How, then, will we maintain unity.
 - 1. First by understanding our calling.
 - a. This is the key point. It is the purpose of Paul’s strong urging.
 - b. This calling is a work of God where He calls people to be saved. He draws them to His Son, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit gives

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- them new life and a new heart, out of which they believe and are saved.
- c. The calling is defined for us in Ephesians 1.
 - (1) It is to grasp that because of God, we are all “in Christ.”
 - (2) We are all destined to become conformed into Christ.
 - (3) We are all fully redeemed from our sin. We are all forgiven.
 - (4) All of us have had the love of God lavished upon us.
 - (5) And, this is key, all of us are sealed with the Holy Spirit.
 - d. This calling is not an individual calling. It is a corporate, or collective calling.
 - e. **And if this is not understood, then you will see little need for the Body of Christ, much less the need to preserve the unity within the Body.**
 - f. But if you see that this is our calling, to grow into fulness of Christ and to display it to the world, then you and I can become much more focused on what we do and why we do it.
2. Second by living in humility.
- a. Humility is the grease that moves the church along. In this list of godly attitudes it is the root attitude which causes the others to flower and come into being.
 - b. It is a common command and expectation of all believers. Pride has no place in the church and yet it is found at the root of all sin and foolishness that the church finds herself in.
 - c. To understand the blessings that have been given to each of us purely out of grace should promote humility.
 - d. In fact, it would be a true statement to understand that all pride in the church comes from a forgetting who we were apart from the grace of God
 - (1) Ephesians 2:1-3 — This is what we were.
 - (2) Ephesians 2:4 — This is what we are!
3. Third by showing gentleness.
- a. Perhaps your translation has the word “meekness.”

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- b. This word is a wonderful one. And it is the surest indication that a person is walking in humility. Wherever humility is present, meekness is present as well.
 - c. The word was used of wild animals who were trained and brought under the control of a master.
 - (1) The word does not mean becoming weak or incapable of power or action.
 - (2) Rather, it speaks of power that is under control. The tamed horse still runs, but when and how the trainer wants him to run.
 - d. A meek or gentle person is capable of great action. He is not afraid of reacting strongly to evil, to the maligning of God, to false teaching.
 - e. But he is also a person who is under control. A meek person is not quick to react.
 - f. True, biblical meekness or gentleness is power under the control of the Holy Spirit, which is why it is a mark of one who is controlled by Him.
4. Fourth by being patient.
- a. It is not surprising that this too is a mark of one controlled by the Holy Spirit.
 - b. When you have a person who is humble and meek, you will find a person who is growing in patience.
 - c. The product of true, Christian patience is the ability to put up with others when they struggle or fall short of what they could or should be and do.
 - (1) The phrase, ‘showing forbearance to one another in love’ means to endure one another. To put up with one another.
 - (2) Paul is no fool. He knows that we rub each other the wrong way.

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- (3) But how do we learn to forebear? Where do we learn to show that heart attitude? It is found at the cross of Jesus Christ.

Transition

And so it is with these four things: an understanding of our calling to be conformed into the image of Christ, humility, gentleness and patience that we are called to protect the unity that is found in the Spirit.

5. We are called as a body to promote and preserve the unity of the Spirit.
 - a. This is not an option and it is something that we ought to throw our lives into doing.
 - b. The term means to be eager and to be hard at work to do.
 - (1) There is to be an **eager expectation** in our minds.
 - (2) We are to be **looking for ways** to protect the unity of the Spirit and when those opportunities arise we should jump into action.
 - (3) The word is in the **present tense**, indicating that it is a life-long pursuit from which none of us can sit on the sidelines.
 - (4) “This is just what we do.”
6. So, what is the unity of the Spirit? Paul describes it in the verses that follow:
 - C. The unity of the Spirit (4-6).
 1. **What word jumps out?** [one]
 2. It is this word that brings out the idea of the unity of the Spirit.
 3. There are many who will try to have unity with others, but if they don’t understand the “why” of unity then the unity they will pursue or strive after will only be a worldly substitute.
 - a. This is the error of many churches, who seek to overlook all things for the sake of unity.

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- b. Sin is rampant in the church, and yet the people continue to look the other way.
 - c. False and poor teaching is tolerated because they don't want to come across judgmental.
 - d. I have spoken to many people in other churches and am amazed at how little sin is truly spoken of in the church and dealt with in a proper manner. And all of it is usually done for the sake of unity.
 - e. I know of pastors who will teach vaguely on the doctrines of the bible simply so that they do not cause problems in the Body.
 - f. I know of churches where trouble-makers are not disciplined, rather, they are promoted into positions of influence simply to keep them happy and in the church.
 - g. But if we understand the unity that Christians are to strive to protect then we will be much more better equipped to take part of this responsibility.
4. There are seven aspects of the unity of the Spirit that are written in three distinct groupings, or triads.

This passage is really fascinating. These verses actually are **Trinitarian** in nature. Notice how the Trinity is found in them (Spirit, Lord, and Father). And each of the person of the Trinity have other things associated to them. In fact, this is seen in many places in the New Testament, in Ephesians 1:3-13 as another example for you to look at sometime. Or 1 Corinthians 12:4ff.

There is a flow that describes the work of salvation in the lives of all of us. It starts with the Spirit who brings us to Christ and it is in Christ's work that we are saved. And then we find that in and through all of this saving work is the presence, will and work is God the Father. So we see the Spirit in verse 4, our Lord Jesus Christ in verse 5 and our Father in verse 6.

And note that these things are not commands to be done. Rather, they are simply truths [indicatives] that exist. They are not points of debate, they are truths to be believed. They are not actions, they are truths that are the foundation from which proper, godly actions should spring.

- a. The first triad speaks of the work of the Spirit.
 - (1) It is the Holy Spirit that brings us into the one Body of Christ.

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- (a) 1 Corinthians 12:13 says that we are all baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Jesus Christ.
- (b) None of us are part of the true Church without going through the Spirit.
- (2) Notice the following:
 - (a) Ephesians 1:14 (The Spirit is given as a pledge of our future inheritance)
 - (b) Ephesians 2:19-22 (one temple of God in the Spirit).
- (3) It is this reality that must be in our minds if we will seek to preserve the unity of the Spirit.
- (4) We all have the same hope and the same calling and it all comes through and by the Spirit.
 - (a) Therefore we are all in the same race and in the same work.
 - (b) There is no place for silly posturing and in-fighting; rather we need to join hands and encourage one another as we press on.
 - (c) When a brother or sister is weak we need to grab them by the hand and pull them along.
- b. The second triad speaks of our unity in Christ.
 - (1) All of us believe in only one Lord.
 - (2) We do not have competing Lords.
 - (3) Yet to watch us it seems that way as times. It is so easy for us to lose sight that we are all serving the same Lord.
 - (4) It is His agenda, His kingdom, and His will that we are to be busy doing.
 - (5) It was He who purchased us all with His blood. He owns us, He loves us, He provides for us all. We are His and He is ours. All that we are is due to His work on the Cross. And without that work of bearing away our sin, we are nothing.

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- (6) This unity in Christ creates a unique unity that goes across age, sex, race, or social position.
- (7) There is only one faith that all of us participate in. It is faith in the One Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
 - (a) **1 Corinthians 8:6** yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we *exist* for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we *exist* through Him.
 - (b) Do you believe this? Do you believe that you exist only because of Jesus Christ?
 - (c) Do you believe that you are His and not your own person?
 - (d) Do you believe in Jesus as your Lord?
 - (e) This is the one faith that all believers participate in.
 - i) I can debate with many Christians on issues of doctrine.
 - ii) But if they are true believers, then we are all able to share in our love and faith in Jesus Christ. That is our key point of commonality.
 - a) We are all partakers of Christ.
 - b) We all bowed before Him and His Cross.
 - c) We all trust in His death and resurrection for our life eternal.
 - d) We all look forward to His coming.
 - e) We all are being made into His image.
 - (f) There is a common baptism that we are participate in.
 - i) There is a natural flow in this verse.

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- ii) First comes the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - iii) Then comes faith.
 - iv) And as a result of these two, comes baptism.
- c. The third triad is that of the Father.
- (1) This whole letter makes it clear that God the Father was not some angry God that was calmed down by the work of His Son.
 - (2) Rather, the reality is that we are all saved because our Father in heaven loved us before we loved Him.
 - (3) He saved us and called us and blessed us by the greatness of His grace.
 - (4) He is at the center of all things. Jesus Christ and the Spirit all do His will and all do it for the glory of the Father.
 - (5) One man said it this way, “We are God created, God loved, God saved, God Fathered, God controlled, God sustained, God filled, and God blessed. We are one people under one sovereign (**over all**), omnipotent (**through all**), and omnipresent (**in all**) God.” (MacArthur, *Ephesians*)

III. Conclusion.

- A. This is the unity we have.
 - 1. It is in the Spirit of God.
 - 2. We are all saved by the Father by the Son through the Spirit.
 - 3. We all have One Lord and Savior whom we are to love and follow.
- B. And if we keep that stuck in the front of our heads as we move forward we will do well.
- C. When I return, Lord willing, I want to unpack vss 7-16 to show you a different kind of unity that we don't yet have, but need to pursue.