

Ephesians 4:4-10

Christain Unity

4 ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

- Ephesians 4:4-6 New King James Version

“...There is one hope in our calling. We are all proceeding towards the same goal. This is the great secret of the unity of Christians. Our methods, our organization, even some of our beliefs may be different; but we are all striving towards the one goal of a world redeemed in Christ.”

—William Barclay, The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, 1976, p. 162

When You First Believed

- Did you feel called to redeem the whole world through belief in Jesus Christ?
- Did you yourself feel redeemed?
- Many of the concepts of Christian theology are not even imagined when we first accept Christ as our savior.
- Unity is one of those concepts.
- And the Great Commission is another.

The Lesson

- So what are we talking about here when Paul writes about 'one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called with one hope of your calling?'
- I think he is speaking to those more mature Christians who have felt called upon to walk more closely with their Lord.
- And he emphasizes that there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all.
- Of those He has called to be leaders of His church and to preserve it.

“The ‘one body’ is the church, the universal body of believers in the present age (1:23; 2:16; 3:6). The ‘one spirit’ is the Holy Spirit, who indwells the church as a whole, as well as every individual believer in the church (2:22; 1 Cor. 12:13). The ‘one hope’ is the hope of the future, that each Christian has, and that the whole church has (cf. 1 Pet. 1:3; 3:15). The hope began when God called us to salvation (1:4, 18; 2:7; 4:1). These identifications seem clear from their occurrences elsewhere in the epistle.”

Dr. Constables Notes on Ephesians, p.55

“...There is one baptism. In the early Church, baptism was usually adult baptism, because men and women were coming direct from the worship of other gods into the Christian faith. Therefore, above all, baptism was a public confession of faith. There was only one way for a Roman soldier to join the army: he had to take the oath that he would be true forever to his emperor. Similarly, there was only one way to enter the Christian Church — the way of public confession of Jesus Christ.”

—William Barclay, The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, 1976, p. 163

“...Although God by his power upholds, and maintains, and rules, all things, yet Paul is not now speaking of the universal, but of the spiritual government which belongs to the church. By the Spirit of sanctification, God spreads himself through all the members of the church, embraces all in his government, and dwells in all; but God is not inconsistent with himself, and therefore we cannot but be united to him in one body.

The spiritual unity is mentioned by our Lord:

‘Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are.’ (John 17:11 KJV)”

– Calvin's Complete Commentaries, Ephesians, 1540

9 "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. 10 And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. 11 Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep ^[et] through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are."

-John 17:9-11 NKJV

Comments?

The Gifts of Grace

4⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore He says:

“When He ascended on high,
He led captivity captive,
And gave gifts to men.”

⁹(Now this, “He ascended”—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

—Ephesians 4:7-10 New King James Version

Gifts From Christ

- Christ conquered death by His resurrection.
- So — He is the conqueror.
- But God allows us to be participants in the victory through the free gift of grace.
- “To each one of you grace has been given as it has been measured out to you by the free gift of Christ.”
- We are called upon to preserve the unity of the Church with our gifts.

“You have ascended on high,
You have led captivity captive;
You have received gifts among men,
Even from the rebellious,
That the Lord God might dwell there.”

– Psalm 68:18 NKJV

“When He ascended on high,
He led captivity captive,
And gave gifts to men.””

– Ephesians 4:8 NKJV

“To make his point about Christ the giver of gifts, Paul quotes, with a very significant difference, from Psalm 68:18. The psalm describes a king's conquering return. He ascends on high; that is to say, he climbs the steep road of Mount Zion into the streets of the holy city. He brings in his captive band of prisoners; that is to say, he marches through the streets with his prisoners in chains behind him to demonstrate his conquering power. Now comes the difference. The psalm speaks next about the conqueror receiving gifts. Paul changes it and says that he gave gifts to his people.”

—William Barclay, The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, 1976, p. 165

“In the Old Testament, the conquering king demanded and received gifts. In the New Testament, the conqueror Christ offers and gives gifts. This is the essential difference between the two testaments. In the Old Testament, a jealous God insists on tribute being paid. In the New Testament, a loving God pours out his love to men and women. That indeed is the good news.”

—William Barclay, The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, 1976, p. 165

“Pauls’s great thought is that the christ who ascended and the Christ who descended are one and the same person. What does this mean? It means that the Christ of glory is the same as the Jesus who trod this earth.

To Paul, the ascension of Jesus meant not a Christ-deserted but a Christ-filled world.”

—William Barclay, The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians, 1976, p. 166

Application

- When I began this lesson on unity, my first thought was that despite the various creeds, Christians are all united in our belief in Christ. But we differ on what authority we grant Christ in our lives and in our hearts.
- From the scriptures, I have to add that we also are granted different types and levels of gifts by God's authority and through the Holy Spirit.
- And, I guess we all have received differing levels of grace as well.
- But whatever grace or gift received thereby, we are to use our giftedness to build up the church and spread the gospel with the love of Christ to the world.