

**Ephesians 4: 4-6; “One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism”, Message # 26 in a series
entitled – “The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, A Bible Study
prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 17th, 2021.**

Paul began this chapter by beseeching us to walk worthy of the calling with which we were called. He told us to not to carry ourselves in a proud way, but with lowliness of mind and heart. He told us that we need to be gentle; not harsh or forceful, but to bear with one another in love. He told us to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. He now proceeds to show us the basis of our unity, spiritually and practically, both as those who are members of the Universal Church, and also as those who are members of a local church.

So, this evening I want to explain to you, that the basis of our spiritual unity as Christ’s Universal Church is 1st of all – That we are one body, all of us having received the one Holy Spirit. 2nd – That we all were all called with one hope of our calling. 3rd – That we all have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. And 4th – That we all have one God and Father who is above all, and through all, and in us all. Let us now wade into these truths and pray that each point that is made will contribute to our own personal pursuit of unity in the body of Christ.

1st of all – All of us who are true Christians are a part of one body, all of us having received the one Holy Spirit.

“There is one body and one Spirit”, it says there in verse 4. This truth is important for us to grasp; that we might understand our oneness in Christ. And so turn with me over to 1st Corinthians 12, verses 12 and 13. “For as the body is one and has many members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink in to one Spirit.” “For in fact the body is not one member but many.” How important it is to realize, conceptually, that all believers have been united into one spiritual body in the Universal Church of Jesus Christ. And then from seeing that truth, we are to understand that this one body, in its local expression, is also one body because of this blessed spiritual unity.

Paul wants us to understand that these two concepts are vitally linked; the Universal Church and the local church. We, as Christians, are one, spiritually, in both. It is amazing how few Christians understand that these two concepts are linked together, and it is because many Christians have not conceived them as being together. For them, it is either one or the other. Either we all belong to the Universal Church of Christ, and for those folks, they do not think that they need to join a local church, and become a member of a local. Or they see these words as just relating to the local church, and they are very concerned that you belong to their local church and they have questions about whether others who are not of their denomination are Christians at all.

Both of these these beliefs are not Biblically correct. And we see it better explained for us here than in any place in the Bible. Let’s start with the fact that the body of Christ is one and has many members. This cannot simply be speaking of the local church because verse 12 says that the body is one, even as Christ is one. If we are to understand this of the local church only, we would have to understand it in terms of what any given group of people calling themselves a church thinks that it means when they say that they believe in Christ. But there is only one Christ, and He is risen from the dead, and since the Day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was sent to Church, there has only been one body of believers. And that body is composed of all the true Christians of all generations who have believed in the one Christ.

Verse 13 explains this well. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” Now, Paul is not simply saying this to the church at Corinth, he is saying it to all the Christians who

would ever read this letter of 1st Corinthians, in all generations of the Church age. There is only one body of Christ, spiritually, as regards the Universal Church, and all believers in Christ are members of it. We have all been baptized into that one body. We have all been placed in it spiritually. We have all been born again by the Spirit of God, and we have all received the Spirit, the Spirit being sealed to us when we first believed. We were all, as Christians caused to drink into one Spirit, and thus became part of the body, the Universal Mystical Spiritual body of Jesus Christ; that which we call the church. The Lord Himself, by His Spirit, has brought about this spiritual unity which we are supposed to preserve in the bond of peace.

Now, since there is not one local church upon the earth, but many, this same truth of being in the one body, is to be most practically lived out by the members of the local church. Joining a local church is something that you do, after you have believed in Christ. You tell the elders of the church that you want to join, and they ask you whether you have believed, and how you came to believe, and then if they are satisfied that the Lord has done a work in your heart and saved you, they bring it to the attention of the whole church. And the the church, if they agree with the elders, they will bring you into the church, after the church has baptized you, if you haven't been baptized with believer's baptism before. Water baptism is a local church ordinance, administered by the elders of the church that you are baptized in. But that is not Spirit baptism.

We will talk about this in our next point more. I simply want you to see, here in this first point, that these two concepts of Universal and local church are linked together by the Spirit's working. When you first believe in Christ, the Spirit places you into His Universal spiritual body, together with all believers in every place, in heaven and earth. And then He is also active in leading and guiding you to a local church where you will grow together with other believers, learning more of Christ, and how you can contribute with your gifts and graces to the building of that local church. That is God's one plan for each Christian. Whether they see these two concepts of Universal and local church correctly or not, this is His plan. How a person responds to His plan, and what local church they will join, is left in their hands.

But if they are a true Christian, the Spirit will be working with them, striving with them, to see that they better understand these concepts Biblically, as they go forward to live their Christian life to Him. It may take some Christians many years to understand that they are a part of the Universal Church, and it may take others many years to understand that they should join a local church. But the Spirit will strive with them to come to the place where they practically live their life to Christ from a right Biblical understanding of both of these concepts. We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord. Each of us has much to learn in relation to what this means in living our life to God, and being a contributing part of a local church.

2nd – We are part of one body because we are all called with one hope of our calling.

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling...” This too, shows us the truth of the Universal Church of Jesus Christ. We all have one hope of our calling. And what is that one hope? It is the hope, the sure hope that we shall all one day be perfectly holy and we shall all be together in heaven, and abide together in the New Heavens and New Earth in which dwells righteousness. This ought to be a great motivation for us to strive to have greater practical unity in relation to all other Christians and also, and more especially, in the the local church of which we are a part. It will be important to see this truth brought out in other places of the Scripture and by another apostle. And so turn with me over to 1st Peter 1, verses 3-5.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be

revealed in the last time.” Now, according to verse 2, Peter is writing to all the elect of God in five regions that he mentions. He, indeed, is writing to all who are Christians in all generations following as well; we who hold his letter in our hands today. And he is telling us that the hope of our calling is a living hope which has come to us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that even as He has been raised from the dead and will never die, even as He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through His resurrection and by giving us all the blessings of salvation by the Spirit’s conveying them to us, each person trusting in Christ for their salvation expects to have an eternal inheritance, in corruptible and undefiled, laid up in heaven for them.

It will not fade away because we are kept by the power of God unto this. For all Christians, this is true. And since this is true, we should be thankful that one day we shall all be together in heaven. It ought to go a long way in our minds towards our taking the initiative to be reconciled to brethren we are estranged from; knowing that we shall be forever together in heaven. Because you are united with all brethren in your inheritance, work toward being reconciled to all. Work toward being able to become a contributing member of the local church that you are a part of. Work at encouraging and strengthening the hands of your pastor and the other brothers and sisters in the body of Christ who need to the encouragement that you can bring.

3rd – All true Christians are part of one body because we have one Lord, one faith, and one Baptism.

Are you not glad that that God has called us to be saints; that He has called us to be His holy ones? Look with me over at 1st Corinthians 1: 1 and 2. “Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.” Notice how Paul addresses the church at Corinth as the “church of God which is at Corinth”. He shows what I was sharing with you in the first point; that the body of Christ is both Universal and it is local. The church of God is broader than just the local church at Corinth, but it is at Corinth. He says to them that they are called to be saints with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ. That for all believers in every place, Jesus is our commonly held and worshiped Lord.

We are part of one spiritual body. Further, our text in verse 5 of Ephesians 4 says that we have one faith. Here we need to carefully consider – what does this mean? It does not mean that every church shares the same perspective on doctrine. There are many different denominations in Christendom, and widely different views of doctrine exist. What is it that they all share then? We must learn to distinguish the one body having one faith with those who profess to be Christians and yet are not. All true Christians will say that they believe in Christ, but some by their doctrine they deny Him and some by their deeds they deny Him, and some by their words they deny Him. In each case, we cannot say that we are united with such people. We should not try to be united with such people.

We cannot always distinguish a true Christian from a false Christian, but there are certain things that we can do to find out if they are of like precious faith with us. Not all who have professed Christ really know Him. What can we look for? Well, in relation to the verses that I just read to you from 1st Corinthians 1, we can ask whether they call on the name of the Lord Jesus? Have they called upon His name for salvation? Romans 10: 8-13 – “But what does it say?” “The word is near you, in our mouth and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach: that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that He has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” “For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on him will not be put to shame.’ “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.” “For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

So, there is the truth of the matter. The same Lord is rich toward all who call upon Him. Let us acknowledge this as a commonality of our one faith with believers in other denominational settings. At some point we realized we were sinners. We believed in the same gospel; that Christ died for our sins. We received Him and His finished work, so that we could be saved. We called upon His name, the precious name of Jesus, and we were saved. We then confessed our faith before other believers in a local church and we were made members of that church. But we were all placed in the one body of Christ. A real Christian can tell you that at some point they prayed to receive Christ. They had real dealings with God. They believed in the gospel and they prayed to be saved. A prayerless Christian cannot really be a true Christian.

We should also be able to see righteous deeds in the life of a true Christian. Look at Luke 6: 43-46 – “For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.” “For every tree is known by its own fruit.” “For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush.” “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bring forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil.” For out of the heart his mouth speaks.” “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” You can see here that this is a real indication of a true Christian, when you do do what the Lord says you should be doing in righteousness. Your heart is a good heart because it has been changed by Christ’s grace. It is filled with this new treasure of a love for truth and righteousness; a storing up of true knowledge, and following the Lord on the path of obedience. This is the one faith which is being talked about by Paul.

And then, one baptism. Once again, we see the emphasis of Paul to stress our common faith is shown, not by our having been baptized as an infant, or even with believer’s water baptism. The one baptism being talked about here is not water baptism, but Spirit baptism which places the believer in the body of Christ. Water baptism simply shows identification and union with Christ, making public profession of what Christ has done for you, the believer. You have died with Him to sin, you have been buried with Him by spiritual baptism into His death. You have been raised to newness of life based upon His resurrection power having been shown to you and given to you in the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is not the removal of filth from the flesh by physical water that saves. It is the appeal to God for a clear conscience.

The thief on the cross did not have time to be baptized with water, but Jesus promised him that he would be in Paradise with Him that day. He was conveying spiritual baptism to Him by the Holy Spirit even then, so that his good confession could be made. In Mark 16: 16, Jesus says – “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” He does not say, that he who is not baptized with water shall not be saved. He knew that there would be numbers of people through this church age who would believe and confess their faith and then would die as martyrs before they had the chance to be baptized. No doubt, they would have loved to have had the opportunity to confess Christ in the waters of baptism. But all true Christians have been baptized with Spirit baptism and are in the one body. **4th – That we are all part of one body, in that we all have one God and Father who is above all, and through all, and in us all.**

Verse 6 – “There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” In a true Christian there is also the recognition that there is only one true and living God, and that He is a triune God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A true Christian sees God in this holy Trinitarian way. The Father is creator of all things, and He is above all people and idolatrous gods. He is through all things, filling heaven and earth with His presence. He, as the Father, is the one who has given us our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Father and the Son have sent the Holy Spirit into the hearts of every believer in Christ. This is joyfully acknowledged by all true Christians. Since these things are true, let us endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, with all Christians.

