

Rooted in Christ

The Seven Marks of All Christians

Preached by: Matthew S. Black

Text: Ephesians 4:1-6

Series: Rooted in Christ

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Living Hope Bible Church of Roselle, IL

Introduction: Open your Bibles to Ephesians. We are continuing our series: “Rooted in Christ”. The title of the message is: “The Seven Unifying Marks of All Christians”.

Illustration: Stradivarius Violin

Think about the famous Stradivarius violins. Today, literally hundreds of thousands of Stradivarius violins are being sold even though only 512 are known to be in existence today! Each one of the originals is worth from one to three million dollars. Knowing this, I decided to do a search on the online auction site Ebay recently and not surprisingly I found 82 for sale with the highest price being an amazing \$24,000. There’s a great need for authentication!

So it is with Christians! Many say they know Christ, but do they have the identifying marks?

Illustration: Amish Dinner

This past week my family and I spent time in Amish country. Two days ago we were dining in an Amish home with no electricity, no telephone. The man’s name was Joe Wingart and he thought there might be some relation to Jill’s family in the Old Country – Switzerland.

We were chasing “fainting goats” after dinner. Checking out flying peacocks, feeding chickens, and watching the team of horses plow the field. The children even got to hold a litter of pug nosed puppies!

One thing about the Amish is that there is a conformity to each other or a non-conformity how ever you want to look at it.

But as you examine it, you realize it is a man-made unity. All Amish are European. It cannot spread to different cultures, because it is a man made entity.

The church is different. It is diverse, but it is united. It is made up of every “tribe, tongue, people, and nation”.

But the church is the Body of Christ! When Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the Church, the Head of the Church confronted him and interrogated the future Apostle with the words: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute ME?”

God's primary command for the church is that we be one.

- Jesus said to the disciples in John 13 they were to love one another and because of this beautiful loving oneness the world would know they were His disciples.
- If we have this kind of love the world would recognize they had a supernatural origin.
- Our unity manifests our supernatural origin.
- In John 17 when Jesus prayed, “Father that they may be one, that the world may know that You sent Me” – Jesus was really saying that the unity of the church will manifest the supernatural character of the Leader and Head of the church.

In Ephesians 4:4-6 we have the 7 unifying marks of all Christians. Let’s read about them.

Ephesians 4:1–6 (ESV), “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

In essentials, unity; in differences, liberty; in all things charity.
Philipp Melancthon

This morning we are going to tune our spiritual instruments so that we can be unified.

The **Rigor** of Unity – eager or endeavoring! (vs. 3)

Ephesians 4:3 (ESV), “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”.

Maintain:

- Endeavor
- Spare no effort. It's a very, very strong exhortation.
- **Labor to the point of exhaustion!**
 - Work hard in biblical conflict resolution... **immediately** (Mt. 5), **privately** (Mt. 18), and with **due process** of all the facts and all sides (Prov. 18:13, 18).
 - Work hard at all the “one anothers” of the Bible: love, exhort, support, encourage

Unity takes work. Endeavor! We are told to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The Christian life is hard work.

The **Roots** of Unity – sevenfold foundation of unity (vs. 4-6)

Ephesians 4:4–6 (ESV), “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Many New Testament scholars believe verses 4-6 was an early hymn of confession in the Christian church.

Triune Unity

These seven unities are founded on the Trinity – one Spirit, one Lord, One God and Father of all Christians. The order is given this way because we experience God this way. The Spirit draws us, we yield in repentant faith to the Son who reveals and gives us access to the Father.

Believers are one. They always have been one, and they always will be one. They are not divided. Why? How is that? Our unity as believers in the Body of Christ is based on the unity of the Godhead. Here in this passage we have seven ones. We can all get that. We all understand that.

- One Body
- **One Spirit**
- One Hope of your calling
- **One Lord**
- One Faith
- One Baptism
- **One God and Father of all**
 - **Sovereign** – over all
 - **Omnipotent** – through all
 - **Omnipresent** – in you all

These seven unities are fixed realities. There is nothing we can do to change them. They are the work of a sovereign God.

The Spirit is the Agent of Salvation: Regeneration

I. One **Body – the Spirit’s community – community of the regenerate, a called out congregation!**

Matt Black got saved!

When I came to know Christ, the next day in my public school I had a hundred new friends! They said Matt Black got saved! I didn’t even know what “saved” meant!

This speaks of all who have been regeneration.

One Body is not just about church unity – it is, but it is also about missions. It is about expanding to every tribe, tongue, people, and nation!

God tears down the walls of hostility between people groups in the Gospel.

Jesus said, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”. The gates of hell cannot hold back those to whom God is calling out of darkness.

1. This is the one body that does the work of Christ on earth. All who are part of it have Jesus Christ as the Head and Lord of their life. Jesus says to Saul of Tarsus when that Pharisee persecuted the church: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute ME?” We are Christ’s if we are His Body.

In Rome, Christianity a Death Sentence

We have lost the beauty and significance of this foundation stone of the Body of Christ in America. We have such an individualistic nature. There is no doubt that it is virtuous to stand alone. But in the Roman Empire, confessing Christ was an automatic death sentence, so it is comforting that the Holy Spirit gives us this foundation of unity first.

God is in the business of saving a *community* of people. Whether you are single or married, we are all in a community if we know Christ.

Church is not an event.

Church is not an event – it is a community of people doing life together. Never forget that. This is a non-negotiable of Christianity.

There is one community of believers for all times. In the Psalms we read of the godly and the wicked.

The Psalmist of **Psalm 119:63** (likely David) says (ESV), “I am a companion of all who fear you, of those who keep your precepts.”

This is our “forever family” that God planned before the foundation of the world. The Spirit places people into the Body of Christ.

The Body is organic

It isn’t put together piece by piece. It isn’t that you add two more fingers—add another arm. Now put an ear on that head. The Body all grows organically together. The systems in the Body are connected. They are mutually dependant. You really cannot separate them. How are you going to separate your **respiratory** system from your **nervous** system? God says just like the physical Body cannot be separated because it is organically one, so every believer is part of one Body.

- **1 Corinthians 12:12-25**, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. 14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no

need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, 25 that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.”

The Body not united on earthly similarities.

The basis of our unity in the Body is not racial. There are diversity of cultures. **Revelation 5:9** tells us that God has redeemed a people out of every “kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation”.

The basis of our unity is not circumstantial either.

In the twin epistle to Ephesians (Colossians), Paul writes virtually the same truths. **Colossians 3:11** (ESV), “Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.” The unity that we have is not based upon the fact that we are **free** or **not free**. It is not based upon whether we are **rich** or **poor**. It’s not based on your **gifts** or **skills** or **abilities**. It has nothing to do with your circumstances. If you are a believer and have no money, you are on the same level as a millionaire in our congregation. With God there is no respect of persons. What is money compared to the precious and priceless blood of Christ? And you were all bought with that precious blood and placed into **One Body**.

The world has superficial unity based on human abilities or circumstances. A sports team can have a pep rally. When I worked for MCI phone services we had pep rallies for the biggest sellers. That’s earthly. That’s natural. This is something SUPERNatural.

II. One Spirit - Regeneration

Ephesians 4:4 (ESV), “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—”

1 John 3:24, “Whoever keeps his commandments abides in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.”

Remember we are Sealed by the Spirit: Regeneration

Ephesians 1:13–14 (ESV), “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

When we are saved, we are baptized into Christ’s Body by the Spirit. The Spirit is the One that draws us from our mother’s womb. I know that sometimes we might think we are saved because we have felt the Spirit’s working and conviction at an early age. But the Spirit’s drawing is different from His regenerating and sealing.

When we are regenerated there is a change of principle. **Romans 8:2** (ESV), “For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.” Not just death, but SIN and death. No longer am I totally captivated by the things of the flesh. Now I am captivated

by the things of the Spirit. Verse 5, “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.”

I am no longer in bondage to the “law of sin” but I am now bound to the “Law of Christ”. The indwelling Christ lives in me by His Spirit, and I am now a bondsman to Christ by His Spirit.

Paul tells us that we are sealed with God’s stamp of ownership – we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.

Do You Feel the Holy Spirit?

I often ask my children – “Do you feel the Holy Spirit?”

- Do you feel His conviction? (“convict the world of sin...”)
- Do you feel His love for truth (“Spirit of Truth”)
- Do you feel His comfort (“Comforter”)
- Do you feel His joy as you lift up Jesus in worship? (speaks of Christ)

Cause you to Walk in my Statutes

Ezekiel 36:26–27 (ESV), “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my judgments.”

There is not one Holy Spirit for the independent churches and one for the Southern Baptists and one for the Free Presbyterians. No one can call Jesus Lord except by the revelation of the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit reveals Christ, He regenerates us; He convinces us of sin. Nobody has ever been convinced of sin and seen the cross of Christ lifted up without the Holy Spirit. Jesus said about the Holy Spirit in **John 14:16**, “He shall glorify me”. The Holy Spirit always points to Christ as the answer for our sins. Ephesians 1:13 tells us we were “sealed with that holy Spirit of promise”. Where were we sealed? Into the Body of Christ. The Spirit is the “the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession” (verse 14). And every believer that comes to that knowledge, no matter what local church he happens to be a part of has come to faith by only One Holy Spirit. This One Holy Spirit fills the One Body. What is the Body? We just said that as Ephesians 1:22 that God the Father has “put all things under his [Jesus’] feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body...” So there is one Holy Spirit for all who have Christ Jesus as their head in local churches scattered throughout the world!

He’s our Comforter, Counselor, Keeper... He expresses the love poured out from the Father. He unites us to each other. He regenerates us (Eze. 36:25-27).

III. One Hope of Your Calling: **Glorification & Sanctification, i.e., Conformity to Christ’s Image**

Ephesians 4:4 (ESV), “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call”.

Our hope of glory is Jesus Christ in us, transforming us – Christ being formed in us. Our blessed hope is when He returns and eradicates our sinful nature. He transforms us. In the twinkling of an eye, He changes us, and our mortal bodies put on immortality. Our corrupted bodies put on incorruption!

The Spirit is constantly calling and moving us to this great hope of conformity to Jesus Christ.

Salvation: Past, Present, Future

Salvation can be spoken of in three ways:

- Past
- Present
- Future

Past – conversion – date I was saved, line of demarcation in my life

Present – sanctification – daily being conformed into the character of Christ

Future – glorification – this occurs at the Second Coming! Final Redemption

- Lift up your heads, for your redemption draws nigh!

The only thing we live for is that final glorification when Jesus comes again! This is ultimately the purpose of our living: to be conformed to the image of Jesus; to change moment by moment in our character to be more and more Christlike!

We know that everything we see is going to pass away! Together in the one Body, and by the one Spirit we are journeying on to our One Hope!

There was Paradise Lost. In Christ, paradise is regained! The image of God was marred. In Christ, the image of God is restored.

The Second Coming, final redemption, glorification.

I want you to see the hope of our calling in a few passages.

- Romans 8:29, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”
- 1 John 3:2, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

Next week we will cover...

IV. One Lord – Absolute surrender to our Master

V. One Faith – our conversion

VI. One Baptism – our confession

Ephesians 4:5 (ESV), “one Lord, one faith, one baptism”.

VII. One God and Father of All – God actively at work in us!

Ephesians 4:6 (ESV), “one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Conclusion: There are several who are with child in our congregation – Muneera and Betsy and of course Grace is with TWIN girls! And the argument that always occurs when a child is born is: “Who does the baby look like?” Is it Mommy or Daddy? Of course at first they all come out looking like raisins. They need to stretch out a bit! But one thing is true about the child of God. There are those identifying characteristics that disclose our supernatural origin. We are touched by the Triune God – One Spirit, One Lord, One God and Father. Oh, those who know that triune God all have the same **likeness** – conformed to Jesus – and the same **language** – prayer and praise – and the same **love** – what an all consuming love! And we have these seven identifying marks: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father! Let us be sure we are not playing games with God, but that we truly are marked by Him with His fingerprints. God grant us mercy that it be so!