

# "The Glorious Church of our Lord Jesus" Ephesians 4:1-6

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## **Ephesians 4:1-6**

*"1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are 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."* (Eph 4:1-6)

The work of the Spirit requires the strength of the Spirit. Before Paul commands the church to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, he bows his knees:

*"unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."* (Eph 3:14-19)

The work of the Holy Spirit can only be done by the power of the Holy Spirit. The unity of the Spirit is the gift of the Spirit and we are called to endeavor to keep the unity; not to make the unity. The word "keep" has the idea of guarding, of watching. We must be diligently on guard to maintain and keep the unity of the spirit. It is not automatic. There are churches that are torn apart by dissension and strife This is the devil's best work. Where you see hatred and lies you will find the work of the devil, because the Holy Spirit does not deal in such stuff. You will find nothing of hatred and lies and strife in the storehouse of the Holy Spirit; you must go to the establishment of the devil to find such things.

Love does not work any ill to his neighbor, but this love is not the work of the flesh but of the Holy Spirit and it can be found only in the Gospel store, for it is not the work of the law or the work of the flesh. Love is rooted in the forgiveness of sin and mercy and grace. Love is certainly a duty that the law requires, but a duty that the flesh cannot fulfill. The natural man can no more love his neighbor as himself as love the Lord His God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind. Except and man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

It is only when Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, that we will be rooted and grounded in love.

THEN, we will be able to comprehend with all the saints the breadth, and length, and depth, and height...and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.”

The Love of Christ which is the result of the Holy Spirit “passeth knowledge” If a person claims to know something but does not understand that he must love the people of God, he doesn’t know anything about the love of God. He may profess to love. Calvin says that the “breadth and length and height and depth refer to the love of Christ and that all knowledge is to be occupied with that: Any knowledge that is not related to the love of Christ is useless and foolish, for all things are contained in the love of Christ.

How can you say you love God when you hate your neighbor, or hate his ministers, or despise his elders, or set aside the lawful and proper rule of the church. If you do not know the love of Christ you have nothing to measure anything by, for that is the only measure that is given to us.

So Paul, having prayed that the church would have the proper measure to measure itself by, passes on to commandment; to the imperative, as Elder Freeman pointed out last week. He has declared the unity of the Spirit; and now he commands us to guard, to keep, to preserve the unity lest we become a synagogue of Satan, rather than the church of the Living God. It is not optional for the church to preserve the unity of the Spirit; it is the very command of Christ, without which we are nothing, as Paul tells us in I Corinthians 13. Turbulent and restless spirits that disturb the peace of the church are to be resisted in our own souls and in our churches. This is what is meant by the very strong word “endeavoring” which means to hasten, to hurry, to give diligence. If the house is on fire, you do not take your time and ponder your action. If you are a wise man, you have already thought about what to do, and you take the action immediately. That is why wise officers in the church know what to do when the unity of the church is breached. Wise action must be taken immediately, to first of all keep the fire from starting; but if it does, to put it out immediately. But let us come to the words of Ephesians 4:4-6

I. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Eph 4:4,5) Here we have the reasons for the commandment to keep the unity of the Spirit.

A. There is one Spirit.

1. There is only one Holy Spirit and He does not contradict himself. He does not lead you to despise the ministers of the Gospel when He has commanded us in the Scripture to “esteem them highly.” He does not contradict Himself and give you different instructions than He has already given to the church in the Scriptures. Therefore, if we have disagreements, we have an obligation to sit down together and hammer out what the Scriptures teach us.

2. But we do not have to re-invent the wheel; we have the results of such efforts of the saints of days gone by in the catechism and confessions of the church. We use the Three forms of unity, but they are expressions of the uniform teachings of the Scriptures.

3. But the unity of love “passes knowledge.” Knowledge is an ingredient of the

unity, for unity of mind is very important, but of equal importance is the unity of charity and forbearance and mercy; for we are all ignorant of many things and come short in many things.

4. There is only one knowledge taught by the Spirit; one love taught by the Spirit; one hope taught by the Spirit, and one baptism of the Spirit, and one communion of the Spirit.

B. There is one body. Christ has only one body. You and I are made members of the body of Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit; there is no other way. This is not the same as joining the church, or even mouthing the words of the creed. A parrot can mouth the words [or bill the word]. Otherwise we would just get a cd of the creed and play it—no, your confession is to come from the heart and soul, not just the lips. We are members of Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. As the catechism puts it:

Q65: Since, then, we are made partakers of Christ and all his benefits by faith only, where does this faith come from?

A65: The Holy Ghost works faith in our hearts [1] by the preaching of the Holy Gospel, and confirms it by the use of the holy sacraments.[2]

Q76: What does it mean to eat the crucified body and drink the shed blood of Christ? A76: It means not only to embrace with a believing heart all the sufferings and death of Christ, and thereby to obtain the forgiveness of sins and life eternal;[1] but moreover, also, to be so united more and more to His sacred body by the Holy Spirit,[2] who dwells both in Christ and in us, that, although He is in heaven [3] and we on earth, we are nevertheless flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone,[4] and live and are governed forever by one Spirit, as members of the same body are governed by one soul.[5]

C. There is one hope of our calling. Everyone of us has been predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ and to enjoy the blessings and favor of God forever. If you don't like God's people now, then you will have no joy in heaven, because no one will be there but Christians. You better learn to get along with them now. God has only one people, and there is

“26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Ga 3:26-29)

D. There is one Lord. We have but one master in Heaven, and we are all called to submit to Him.

1. Who are we to judge another man's servant? Will we thrust ourselves into the place of God, when such is forbidden to us.

2. This you must do: keep your own heart; follow your lord faithfully;
3. Support those who contend for the doctrine of the church; the government of the church; the spirit of the church; Avoid the others.

- a) Ro 16:17 Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.
- b) 2Ti 2:23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.
- c) Tit 3:9 But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain.

E. One baptism. He is not speaking of the mode of baptism; but the meaning of baptism. "Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." If they have been baptized into the Triune God then it is a valid and acceptable baptism. Let us not contend about ceremonies. Shall the ceremony of our unity be used to divide us. Shall communion be used for non-communion; Shall peace be used to destroy peace? Satan is very subtle about such things. "By peace he shall destroy many," the Scripture says. In the name of God he destroys the people of God.

II. "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph 4:6) Here the Apostle passed to the chief reason of all for endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit: there is but one God.

A. This is the Triune God, who is the Father of all, the creator, sustainer, and Lord of all.

1. Especially the church, for that is considered here, and not primarily the whole world, although that application could be made.
2. God is the Father; we are the children. We are not Lord's over each other, although government is appointed for the church.
3. Just as there is but One Creator of all things; There is only one creator of the church.

B. There are three phrases which are used to point to the incommunicable attributes of God.

1. He is above all. This speaks of his infinity. He is above all limits. He knows no boundaries. He will not fit into any boxes. He is transcendent.
  - a) Infinity of Space: Immensity. He fills all space yet is contained in none of it. He is everywhere present in all space; wholly present in all space. All kinds of space.

b) Infinity of Time: Eternity. He fills all time and yet is equally in all time. He is the great I Am.

c) He does not change at all at any time. He could not change if He is above all limits of time and space.

2. He is in all. He must be in all if He is above all.

a) But this speaks of immanence. He is everywhere present in all time and space but not included in all

b) God is a Spirit; he is not contained in time and space; but is never absent from time and space. Space and time do apply to Him.

3. Through you all: This speaks of His dwelling by His Spirit in the hearts of His people. He dwells in us by His word and Spirit. He is in the believer in a way that He is not in the unbeliever. He is present in love, in faith, in hope. Faith, hope, and charity do not dwell in the heart of unbelief; they are found only in the saints and is the meaning of Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith.

C. We will speak more of this in our Sunday School lessons on the knowledge of God.

III. This means that our unity depends ultimately upon our view of God.

A. Not only our theological knowledge of God:

B. But also our love of God, which passes knowledge. If you do not love Him, then you do not truly know Him. Your knowledge is as dry and barren as the sands of Death Valley in California. You are like the disciples of John who baptized, but didn't even know if there were such a person as the Holy Spirit. How formal and how dead was their knowledge! Fit only to destroy each other and tear each other apart, for knowledge puffs up,

“1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. 2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. 3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him.” (1Co 8:1-3)

C. What good is our knowledge of God if He has no knowledge of us!! I can love what I do not understand; but I cannot understand something that I do not love. If we do not love God and our neighbor, then we have no true knowledge at all of God.

### **Application:**

1. Let us endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.
2. Let us do good to all men, especially the household of faith.

3. Let us pray for one another; that we all would be strengthened with might in the inner man; so that we might be filled with the fullness of God—that is, with faith, hope, and charity, for these are the things that the Holy Spirit brings by faith.

Amen and Amen.

God bless you.