

Studies in Ephesians: “The Unity of the Spirit” Ephesians 4:4-16

Introduction:

1. Currently we are studying the book of Ephesians – largely on a verse by verse basis.
2. Our last lesson was based on Eph. 4:1-3, and was entitled “Attitudes for Maintaining Unity.” In these verses the apostle Paul:
 - a. Exhorted the saints at Ephesus to “*walk worthy of the vocation,*” wherewith they were called, v. 1.
 - b. Exhorted these brethren to endeavor to “*keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,*” v. 3.
 - c. Set forth the attitudinal qualities which make unity possible, namely:
 - (1) Lowliness or humility, v. 2.
 - (2) Meekness or gentleness, v. 2.
 - (3) Longsuffering, v. 2.
 - (4) Forbearance, v. 2.
 - (5) Love, v. 2.
3. The world often focuses on diversity, but the Lord is interested in unity. To that end, Jesus:
 - a. Prayed for unity, John 17:20-21.
 - b. Died to make unity possible between both Jews and Gentiles, Eph. 2:16.
 - c. Through His apostle, said “*let there be no divisions among you,*” I Cor. 1:10.
 - d. Through His apostle, specified the **kind** of unity He desires, v. 3, and gave the doctrinal platform upon which it is based, Eph. 4:4-16.
4. This lesson is a continuation of the same theme – “*the unity of the Spirit,*” and is based upon verses 4-16.

Discussion:

- I. **The Doctrinal Basis upon which the “Unity of the Spirit” consists.**
 - A. “*There is one body,*” Eph. 4:4 – Unity of Membership.
 1. The body is the church Jesus is the head of and which He built, Eph. 1:22-23; Matt. 16:18.
 2. It is the body, or church, Jesus purchased with His blood, Acts 20:28.
 3. It is the body in which both Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to God, Eph. 2:16; Eph. 3:6.
 4. It is the church to which God adds the saved, Acts 2:47.
 5. It is the church of which Jesus is “*the Savior,*” Eph. 5:23.
 - B. “*There is one Spirit,*” Eph. 4:4 – Unity of Revelation.
 1. Already described in this book as “*the Holy Spirit of promise,*” Eph. 1:13.
 2. The Spirit Who revealed “*the mystery,*” Eph. 3:3-5, to the apostles and prophets.
 3. The One Spirit Who guided the apostles into “*all truth,*” John 16:12-13.
 4. It has been observed that “*God purposes, Christ executes, the Holy Spirit reveals,*” I Cor. 2:10-13.
 - a. We are guided by the Holy Spirit when we allow ourselves to be governed by the instructions in the New Testament, which the Holy Spirit both revealed and confirmed, Heb. 2:3-4.
 - C. There is “*one hope,*” Eph. 4:4 – Unity of Desire and Expectation.
 1. Hope has been defined as “*desire coupled with expectation.*”
 2. We share the hope of “*eternal life,*” Titus 1:2.
 3. Hope serves as an “*anchor of the soul,*” Heb. 6:18-19.
 4. Hope relates to “*the resurrection of the dead,*” Acts 23:6; 24:15.
 - D. There is “*one Lord,*” Eph. 4:5 – Unity of Authority.
 1. Two main ideas associated with Lordship.
 - a. One is ownership. Christians belong to Jesus! Acts 20:28; I Cor. 6:19-20; I Peter 1:18-19.
 - b. One is authority. Christ has all authority! Matt. 28:18.
 2. We must therefore submit in all things to Christ, Col. 3:17, respecting His authority in all things!
 - E. There is “*One Faith,*” Eph. 4:5 – Unity of doctrine.
 1. This is “*the faith*” or “*the gospel,*” Gal. 1:11,23.
 2. It is “*the faith*” once delivered, Jude 3.
 3. It is the body of doctrine which man must not pervert, go beyond, or add to, Gal. 1:8-9; 2 John 9; Rev. 22:18-19.
 4. The body of doctrine which may be distinguished from Judaism, Islam, Catholicism, Denominationalism, etc.

- F. There is “*One Baptism*,” Eph. 4:5 – Unity of obedience.
 - 1. The baptism of the Great Commission, Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15-16.
 - 2. Baptism which is in water, Acts 8:36, and “*for the remission of*” sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16.
 - 3. Baptism which puts one “*into Christ*,” Gal. 3:27, wherein is salvation, 2 Tim. 2:10.
 - 4. Baptism which puts one “*into one body*,” I Cor. 12:13, wherein is reconciliation, Eph. 2:16.
- G. There is “*One God*,” Eph. 4:6 – Unity of Worship.
 - 1. The Father, Who with the Son, and the Holy Spirit make up the “*Godhead*,” Col. 2:9.
 - 2. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. 1:3.
 - 3. The Father from Whom comes every good and perfect gift, James 1:17.
 - 4. The Father in Whom we live, move, and have our being, Acts 17:28.
 - 5. The Father Who is the Object of our worship, Matt. 4:10; John 4:24.

II. The “*Gifts*” Which Enable this Unity to Exist, Ephesians 4:7-11.

- A. The Source of these Gifts.
 - 1. They come from the One who “*led captivity Captive*,” Eph 4:7-8. Cf. Rev. 1:17-18; Heb. 2:14-15.
 - 2. They come from the One Who both descended and ascended, Eph. 4:9-10; John 6:38; Acts 1:9-11.
 - 3. Note that “*gifts*” is not from *charisma* (spiritual, or miraculous gifts), but *domata*, the word for “*gifts*” in general. Cf. Matt. 7:11; Phil. 4:17.
 - a. In this case the “*gifts*” refer to functions, or to those who function in certain capacities.
 - b. Note also that verses 9 and 10 are parenthetical, so verse 11 continues the thought in verse eight.
- B. The “*Gifts*” He Gave. He Gave Some:
 - 1. “*Apostles*,” v. 11.
 - a. People chosen by Jesus, eyewitnesses of Jesus, Whom He sent. Acts 1:15-22; I Cor. 9:1.
 - b. God sent Jesus; Jesus sent the apostles, John 13:20; Matt 10:40.
 - c. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth, John 16:13.
 - d. People whose message was confirmed with signs following, Hebrews 2:3-4.
 - 2. “*Prophets*,” v. 11.
 - a. Inspired men to whom the message of salvation was also delivered, Eph. 3:5; 2:20.
 - 3. “*Evangelists*,” v. 11.
 - a. Men sent forth to preach the word, or to evangelize. 2 Tim. 4:1-5; Acts 21:8.
 - 4. “*Pastors*,” v. 11.
 - a. Word taken from *poimen*, denoting a shepherd or one who tends a flock.
 - b. One of three words (*poimen*, *presbuteros*, *episkopos*) to refer to the elders, bishops, or overseers of a local church. Cf. Acts 20:17,28; I Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:5,7; I Peter 5: 1-2, etc.
 - 5. “*Teachers*,” v. 11.
 - a. A teacher is an instructor, one who teaches the word to another. 2 Tim. 2:2.

III. The Purpose of these Gifts, Eph. 4:12-14.

- A. They are “*For*.”
 - 1. “*The perfecting of the saints*,” v. 12
 - a. God’s people must be strengthened, developed, etc. Matt. 28:20.
 - 2. “*The work of the ministry*,” v. 12.
 - a. “*Ministry*” (*diakonias*) denotes serving, aiding, attending, relieving, etc.
 - b. It can denote providing for material needs of the saints, 2 Cor. 9:1. The word itself denotes the idea of service; it may be either spiritual or physical.
 - 3. “*The edifying of the body of Christ*,” v. 12.
 - a. “*Edifying*” (*oikodomen*) denotes the building up of a structure; in this case the body of Christ.
 - b. The church is to be built up through the preaching of the word of God, I Tim. 3:15
- B. The Noble Objective of these gifts:
 - 1. That we “*all come in the unity of the faith...*,” v. 13.
 - 2. That we “*grow up*,” v. 14-15.
 - 3. That the “*whole body*” will be built up “*in love*,” v. 16.

Conclusion:

- 1. Let us hold fast the attitude necessary for unity, vs 1-3, embrace the right doctrine, and make the right effort!
--Bobby Witherington, Feb. 1, 2015