

Ephesians

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[0 : 00] Continuing our meditation upon the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, we read the fourth verse.

There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.

The fourth chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, the fourth verse. There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.

Now all of my heroes know that this time in our ministry and meditation, we are engaged upon the theme of spiritual unity as it is expressed in this chapter.

The chapter opens, as we have noticed, with a very tender, gracious, loving entreaty that the people of God should walk worthy of their vocation.

[1 : 29] And that vocation is partly the spiritual unity into which they are brought by the grace of God.

That they are to endeavor to keep that unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. That it is the most solemn and scriptural duty and responsibility of every member in the body of Jesus Christ to preserve to the utmost of their grace and ability that spiritual oneness.

For to break the unity of the Spirit or to marry is sinful in the sight of God.

I verily believe that some in standing for what they think to be right and perhaps may be right, have sinned more in the spirit in which they have stood for that and marred and broken the unity of the Spirit than that particular matter upon which the whole contention has arisen.

I firmly believe that unless anything of a really essential nature is involved, where vital and fundamental truth or the appointment that the Lord Jesus Christ has established, in the church, unless such vital and fundamental matters of faith or practice are involved, it is wrong to break the unity of the Spirit over any and every matter of disagreement between those that fear God.

[3 : 40] We should, all of us, and all who fear God everywhere, consider that the unity of the Spirit is of such a holy and gracious and Christ-exalting nature that we should endeavor in every way to keep the unity of the Spirit.

It is a unity of the Spirit. It is a unity of the Spirit that is invisible in its nature, especially as embracing the whole body of believers.

I won't go into that again this morning as I did last Lord's Day. There is a unity of the Holy Spirit. There is a unity that is already existing.

It isn't a question of creating it or forming it. It's there. It is a unity that embraces all who, being born again of the Holy Spirit, and are brought to believe in Jesus Christ, are one in Him.

And that is a deeper unity than any visible unity of organizations or denominations or anything of that nature.

[5 : 06] It is spiritual. That is the unity, first, of this text and of this chapter. My friends, there is more unity, more spiritual unity, between all who are really spiritual, even though they belong, for various reasons and causes, to different professing bodies.

There is more spiritual union between them, although there may be differences in other ways than there is, or could be, between any one visible body or organization in which some were alive to God and some still dead to Him, some justified by faith and some still in a state of condemnation.

Some in the way to heaven, and some in the way to hell. There is more spiritual unity between all who are spiritual, in all bodies, than there could be in any one body in which there was a heterogeneous mixture of some and some.

Now, there is another aspect of this unity that I have set before you, and I must refer to it again this morning.

And that is, the visible unity of all who are brought together in one church or a community, unity, and, according to that word, first, give themselves unto the Lord and unto us by the will of God.

[7 : 07] There is the unity of distinct churches, as well as the one unity of the whole church, invisible, of Jesus Christ in all the world.

Now, because this instruction and exhortation is directed to an established community or church at Ephesus, I feel it bears especially upon that application of it.

all are joined together, one with another, in a personal unity to walk together, worship together, and practice the appointed ordinances of the gospel together.

They constitute the body of Christ in that particular place. and it beholds every one of them and every one of us having been brought into that unity to endeavor with all the grace and the tenderness and the love and the meekness and the steadfastness that the Lord will give us to keep the unity of the Spirit.

and it is in the bond of peace and that's a good word but as I say I mustn't go back on to the third verse again this morning but some do not hear me on this very instructive and very important matter that I might perhaps be permitted a little liberty in this endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

[9 : 11] I will only say what a bond real spiritual holy peace is. What a bond it is.

How it unites and binds and keeps together all who feel that sacred influence in their own hearts and who can feel a response of it to it in others.

For peace unites brethren peace unites strife contention divides no matter how sound in doctrine or how sound in practice a church may be a contentious spirit will divide and break the bond of peace and besides all that any kind of bond other than a bond of peace would be bondage and union together either in a worshipping community or an established church unity together with all the discipline that is necessary to maintain it would be bondage if it was not a bond of peace it's peace brethren unites us and the bond of peace is not bondage but real liberty and comfort therefore we are to endeavour to keep the unity of the spirit not only in standing for what is right but to keep it in the bond of a peaceful spirit now that observed the apostle goes on to enlarge upon this principle of the unity of the spirit in a way that is very instructive and he expresses it in this way there is one body and one spirit even as you are called in one hope of your calling one

Lord one faith one baptism one God and Father of all who is above all and through all and in you all notice seven ones seven ones and you know that it is considered that seven in the scripture and it quite often occurs is a perfect number seven is a perfect number as that thought occurred to me I turned up this morning at that passage in James about the wisdom which is from above to see what it held of that the wisdom which is from above is first pure then peaceable then gentle easy to be entreated full of good words and without partiality and without hypocrisy and all there's a seven five positives and two negatives it shows that it's perfect wisdom and it would not be perfect wisdom if one of those seven features were lacking now in this unity you get seven features of it seven ones which shows that it is a unity in which there's nothing lacking to its perfection and nothing superfluous in our text then we have these three considerations one body one spirit one hope of your calling you'll take first now and may the holy spirit give us a right understanding of what is so necessary for us to understand and so necessary for us to experience there is one body in other words the unity of the spirit is compared to the unity of the body and this is a quite frequent metaphor in the new testament and in the epistles especially and especially in Paul's epistles it is a frequent metaphor to express the true unity of the body of Christ it is like the unity of the natural body in fact the whole church of

Jesus Christ is often spoken of as his body for just as Jesus Christ as a personal actual body his own body personally so he has what it's usually spoken of as his mystical body that is the church and there is only one body of Jesus Christ no organisation can claim that they are exclusively the body of Christ because then there will be several bodies of Christ there's only one body of Christ one and there are three considerations in this metaphor of one body there is first unity there is secondly diversity and there is thirdly usefulness of course my mind has been led this way by the chapter that was read in our worship this morning in which the diversity the unity and the usefulness of the whole body is brought out in a very striking and full manner now first there is unity in the one body just as in our natural body there is a perfect unity in every member and every part of it if the body is healthy there is no part of the body that is not in unity so it is with

[16 : 45] Christ the whole body is in unity with Christ he is the head of the body the church it is his body because he is its one soul supreme and most blessed head now the unity of the body of Christ mystical the church whether the whole church or every distinct church the unity lies first in this that every member of the body is in union with the head Jesus Christ is the center the head of all union it is not possible for anyone anywhere to be in union with another member of the body apart from being in union with the head and where there is union with the head there is union in union with the head with every member of his body there is one body now if I have been clear about that and that is the essential principle that there is a perfect unity in the body because of unity with the head we may raise the question as to what is this unity with Jesus

Christ and how is it brought about because no one is naturally in unity with Jesus Christ spiritually no one to be in unity with Christ everyone must be brought into that unity in a personal way mark it must be a personal way there is no such thing as being in unity with Christ by association with any particular body nor by observance of any ceremonies there really isn't it is one of the great mistakes in the religious world to represent it that by ceremonies or uniting with any particular church they become members of the body of Jesus Christ I put it to you in this threefold way which is all

I think I have time to deal with this morning now first of all to be in the unity of the body and in unity with Christ there must be a new birth I know I'm always bringing that before you but not unnecessarily as the Lord shall help me the nature and the necessity of the new birth will always be heard from this whole thing the Lord helping me the Lord words to Nicodemus shall be heard in this chapel he must be born again brethren there is no such thing as reaching heaven by bypassing the new birth neither can there be any spiritual union with Jesus Christ apart from the new birth the new birth as you know is that mysterious operation of the one spirit of

God in the soul of man whereby a new life is brought forth within and in that new life is every spiritual principle of grace just the same as when a child is born born there is every faculty of the body present if it's a normal and healthy birth and there is every faculty of the mind there every faculty only in a very immature state but it's there and thereafter is the matter of development not addition development now it's just like that spiritually when the soul is born again when the Holy Spirit causes the incorruptible seed of the word to so affect the heart that a new life springs up within as the effect of it that that's the child of

God born again and there's every spiritual principle of grace inherent in that new life that springs up in the soul and thereafter it is a matter of spiritual development but the unions there the unions there to use another figure to the same point and also that which comes within the compass of this passage one God and Father of all now there shall be a family one two or three children another baby is born into the family there's no other way in which that baby can become part of that family but by being born of that those parents not a natural part of that family and as soon as a child is born it's as much a member of that family as it will be when it grows up into youth and full and complete development the child doesn't understand its relationship in the family all the child knows as far as it gives any indication is that it needs food and care but the nature of the relationship doesn't dawn on the babe's mind until presently as the mind develops it begins to know and to understand that it has parents and brothers and sisters and the relationship becomes recognized and known and enjoyed now my friends it's like that in the new birth you know as soon as a soul is born again it doesn't realize its relationship but it realizes its need and its need is supplied but as spiritual life grows it begins to be a consciousness of being in union with the

[24 : 17] Lord's people and as Jesus Christ begins to be made known in the heart more clearly it begins to be felt that there's a union with him too first of all the unity of the body in every member lies in spiritual union with Jesus Christ by possessing the life of Jesus Christ himself in the soul and that is possessed through the new birth I hope I'm clear about this I try to be but what sometimes surprises me is that when I try in this pulpit to explain and explain and explain these things something is said almost to imply as much as though these matters were never explained at all perhaps it's that I'm not clear enough or perhaps it's that the word isn't conveyed with sufficient power to the understanding

I don't know I try to explain these things as clearly as I can now further this union with Jesus Christ is the head in which every member of the body is one one body is evidence by believing evidence for as I have said the one that is newborn hardly realises at first its position in the body neither can others perceive it very clearly at first but is the work of the one spirit in every member of the one body to bring forth a living faith in Jesus Christ he that believeth on the son of

God is a child of God faith I don't feel and I don't teach it that faith unites to Jesus Christ I fear that faith is the evidence of union with Jesus Christ what unites with Jesus Christ is to possess his life but every living soul has in that life a principle of faith to believe and presently in some cases very quickly in some cases very gradually there comes to be an actual believing in Jesus Christ especially as the Holy Spirit reveals Jesus Christ and what is it to have Jesus Christ revealed but to have it made clear in your heart and in your mind who Jesus Christ is and what a holy what a blessed saviour he is and that is made clear to your mind and you feel it in your heart your faith in Jesus

Christ becomes a definite exercise does there believe on the son of God my friends because if there's a real heart believing in Jesus Christ that's an evidence you're in union with him and there once more there is one body now this personal spiritual union with Jesus Christ is felt in the exercise of love and in the experience of his love then it's felt perhaps someone might say well that's what I want I wish I could feel my soul in union with Jesus Christ I wish I could feel that union for myself and if you were to say you believe that that union is something to feel you would be quite right it is something to feel and that is more than to so to speak reason it out logically it's more to feel it sweetly and blessedly there is such a thing as feeling to be in union with Jesus

Christ and if my experience guides me in the word of God that feeling of being in union with Jesus Christ is very largely a feeling of love to him and of his love to you now if you ever get as far as that to feel that his love to you unites in your heart with love to him and love to him unites in your heart with his love to you you've got the union in your experience for nothing unites like love nothing other things may unite the mind in a way of agreement unite a practice in life according to some particular rule but nothing can unite hearts like love brethren there's one body one and Jesus

[30 : 33] Christ is the one glorious blessed head of that one body and every member is in personal union with Jesus in that one way of life faith and love and now I must leave it this morning moment and now as he said he got out and on God's he his 29 he ■ des ■ deeply ho and go the kid him po traveler OUR ■■■■■■ practicw Kh